



SCHOOL OF POSTGRADUATE STUDIES

**INFLUENCE OF GENDER DYNAMICS ON THE PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN
ENTREPRENEURS IN MANUFACTURING ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN HARARE,
ZIMBABWE**

BY

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DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

(Entrepreneurship)

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**A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENT
FOR THE AWARD OF THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN
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LUSAKA**

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Declaration

I declare that this thesis is my effort and is a true reflection of the research I am executing. This research, in whole or part, has not been submitted for examination for any degree at any other university/institution.

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Dedication

I humbly dedicate this work to the Almighty God, whose infinite grace and unwavering guidance have been my anchor throughout this journey. His divine presence has been my source of strength, wisdom, and perseverance in the face of personal and academic challenges. In moments of doubt and difficulty, my faith has provided the clarity and courage to press forward. By leaning on His eternal support, I have accomplished what once seemed insurmountable. This achievement stands as a testament to the power of faith, without which I would not have reached this point in my journey of discovery and self-fulfilment. I am deeply grateful for His divine intervention and unceasing blessings that have sustained me throughout this process.

To my beloved family, I extend my deepest gratitude. With heartfelt recognition, I dedicate this work to my loving and supportive life partner, Tafadzwa Chivandire, who has stood by me through every triumph and trial. His unwavering faith in my abilities and constant encouragement represent the strength and dedication of my entire family. To my children, whose love has given me purpose and resilience, this work is also for you, as you inspire me daily to strive for excellence.

In this work, I find a testament to the power of endurance and personal growth. I dedicate it to the ongoing journey of self-discovery, where self-love and compassion have become guiding principles. This project has not only been an academic pursuit but also a journey of personal transformation and resilience, and I remain committed to nurturing these virtues. I also want to extend this dedication to my cherished friends and colleagues. Their unwavering support, encouragement, and belief in my vision have been invaluable sources of motivation. In moments of doubt, they have lifted me, and in times of achievement, they have celebrated alongside me. For their continued companionship and encouragement, I am profoundly grateful. Lastly, this work is a tribute to all who have walked this journey with me, reminding me that no accomplishment is ever genuinely solitary. Together, we grow, evolve, and succeed.

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List of Acronyms

AECF	African Enterprise Challenge Fund
AFAWA	Affirmative Finance Action for Women in Africa
AfDB	African Development Bank
GD	Gender Dynamics
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GEM	Global Entrepreneurship Monitor
HI	High Impact
HIME	High-impact manufacturing entrepreneurship
ICRW	International Center for Research on Women
ILO	International Labour Organization
KAM	Kenya Association of Manufacture
ME	Manufacturing Entrepreneurship
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics
UN	United Nations
UNICEF	United Nations Children’s Fund
WEF	World Economic Forum
WMF	World Manufacturing Foundation

Abstract

This study explored how gender dynamics shape women's involvement in manufacturing entrepreneurship, with a specific focus on gender stereotypes, gender identity, gender socialisation, and gender expression. The study was grounded in Social Role Theory, which posits that societal expectations and assigned roles significantly influence individual behaviours and opportunities, particularly in gendered contexts. The main aim was to investigate the extent to which gender dynamics influence women's participation in manufacturing entrepreneurship in Harare. Specifically, the study sought to: (i) analyse the impact of gender stereotypes on women's participation; (ii) examine the role of gender identity in women's entrepreneurial engagement; (iii) assess the influence of gender socialisation on participation; and (iv) determine how gender expression shapes women's participation. A mixed-methods survey design was adopted, targeting women entrepreneurs in both male-dominated and female-dominated manufacturing sectors in Harare. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire with a five-point Likert scale. Descriptive statistics were used to summarise the data, while Pearson correlation and logistic regression were used to test the influence of the independent variables on women's entrepreneurial participation. The findings revealed strong, positive, and statistically significant relationships between all four variables and women's participation: gender stereotypes management ($r = 0.821$, $p = 0.012$); gender identity ($r = 0.857$, $p = 0.001$); gender socialisation ($r = 0.889$, $p = 0.023$); and gender expression ($r = 0.834$, $p = 0.003$). Gender socialisation demonstrated the strongest association with participation. Qualitative insights further indicated that gender stereotypes hinder participation by reinforcing perceptions of technical incompetence and prioritising domestic responsibilities. Conversely, gender identity and socialisation promoted engagement, as women with strong self-confidence, supportive social networks, and exposure to role models were more likely to participate. Gender expression also mattered: assertiveness, professional presentation, and the ability to navigate male-dominated environments correlated with higher levels of entrepreneurial engagement. The study recommends that policymakers, business support institutions, and educators implement targeted interventions to reduce gender stereotypes, strengthen mentorship and networking platforms, and promote positive gender expression to enhance women's participation in manufacturing entrepreneurship. Future research should examine additional gender-related factors, conduct comparative studies across regions, and assess the long-term impact of policy and training interventions.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.0 Chapter Overview

Entrepreneurship is a fundamental driver of economic development, innovation, and employment creation, especially in emerging economies like Zimbabwe. Among the various sectors, manufacturing holds particular importance as it contributes to industrialisation, value addition, and export growth. The manufacturing sector, which requires higher capital investment, technical skills, and access to formal networks, continues to be dominated by men. This pattern is evident in Harare, Zimbabwe's capital and primary industrial hub, where manufacturing activity is concentrated but women-owned manufacturing enterprises remain limited. The limited participation of women in manufacturing entrepreneurship presents a significant challenge in contemporary developing economies. This study seeks to examine the influence of gender on women's engagement in this sector, offering contextual background while addressing clearly defined research objectives and questions. The relevance of the study extends to women entrepreneurs, government policymakers, the broader academic discourse on entrepreneurship, as well as the researcher and the University of Lusaka. In addition, this chapter delineates the scope of the study, acknowledges potential limitations, and provides operational definitions of key terms.

1.1 Background of the Study

This study aimed to analyse the influence of gender dynamics on women's participation in high-impact manufacturing entrepreneurship in Harare, Zimbabwe. In developing nations where formal employment options are few, entrepreneurship has emerged as a key tool for economic development and job creation (Smith, 2022; Zaidi et al., 2023). Women's entrepreneurship is increasingly seen throughout Africa as a means of achieving inclusive growth, financial independence, and poverty reduction (Henry et al., 2022). Women make up almost half of Africa's working-age population, according to the World Bank, and they play a major role in the informal sector. However, compared to men, their involvement in capital-intensive and technical industries like manufacturing is still somewhat low (Halliday et al., 2020). The manufacturing industry is acknowledged as a major force behind industrialisation and value creation on a global scale. For nations looking to lessen their reliance on raw commodity exports, it offers higher-income options and promotes economic diversification (Martirena, 2020). Despite this, systemic obstacles stemming from gendered social structures and economic disparities continue to limit women's ownership and leadership in manufacturing businesses (Martirena, 2020; Yadav, 2022).

Drawing on the foundational work of Pryzgoda and Chrisler (2000), who reported that 43.4% of participants associate “gender” with male or female, this research interrogates the multifaceted and socially constructed nature of gender. Their work is a critical starting point because it highlights the simplified perceptions of gender that often obscure its deeper complexities, particularly in entrepreneurial contexts. Seminal contributions from Simone de Beauvoir (1949), John Money (1955), Gayle Rubin (1975), Anne Fausto-Sterling (2000), Joan W. Scott (1986), and Judith Butler (1990) provide a robust theoretical grounding for this inquiry. These scholars’ diverse perspectives illuminate the complexities of gender, making them essential in developing a nuanced framework for analysing how gender dynamics influence entrepreneurship—an area often overlooked in mainstream gender discourse. Consequently, this study defines gender both in terms of its origin and its function, a methodological approach that allows a comprehensive examination of how deeply ingrained constructs shape women’s roles, identities, and opportunities in high-impact industries such as manufacturing.

Exploring these theoretical perspectives is particularly important in Harare, Zimbabwe, where the manufacturing sector has historically been male dominated. Understanding how gender expectations, roles, and identities influence women’s participation in such sectors is crucial for identifying barriers and opportunities. This not only advances understanding of gender’s impact on entrepreneurship but also highlights broader implications for women’s economic inclusion in critical growth sectors. The history of women’s engagement in manufacturing entrepreneurship underscores both continuity and change in gender dynamics. During the Industrial Revolution, women contributed significantly to manufacturing, especially in textiles, yet their contributions were largely undervalued due to prevailing gender biases (Cheryan & Markus, 2020). This historical perspective reveals the persistence of structural inequalities, even as women’s economic roles have evolved. By drawing parallels between past and present, this study situates contemporary gender disparities in a longer trajectory of exclusion and resilience.

Throughout the 20th century, women increasingly entered entrepreneurial spaces. Feminist movements played a key role in highlighting the economic potential of women, leading to the establishment of support programs, training initiatives, and funding opportunities for women entrepreneurs globally (Brush et al., 2006). These historical and policy shifts are significant for this research because they contextualise current interventions in Zimbabwe aimed at empowering women in high-impact sectors. In the 21st century, women’s participation in

manufacturing entrepreneurship has expanded globally, yet disparities persist. The International Labour Organisation (ILO, 2019) reports that women are increasingly active in manufacturing across Asia, Africa, Europe, and the Americas. In Asia, for instance, women have long played central roles in cottage industries and household-based manufacturing. However, these activities often remained informal and under-resourced, limiting women's ability to scale their businesses (Adobor, 2020). Such evidence demonstrates how systemic barriers—including limited access to resources and the dominance of informal economies—continue to constrain women's potential.

In Africa, and Zimbabwe in particular, the manufacturing sector remains male-dominated. Nonetheless, recent trends suggest increasing female participation, driven by recognition of women's entrepreneurial potential and broader efforts to reduce gender disparities in wealth creation (Mupangwa, 2023). Focusing on Harare is justified because it is Zimbabwe's economic hub and the epicentre of policy experimentation and entrepreneurship support initiatives. Here, women's cooperatives and associations have been established to promote knowledge sharing, mentorship, and financial inclusion (Setini et al., 2020). These interventions provide fertile ground for evaluating the effectiveness of existing support systems in fostering women's success in manufacturing entrepreneurship.

Despite these positive developments, women entrepreneurs in Harare face numerous challenges, including limited access to formal credit, cultural norms that reinforce male dominance, and reliance on informal markets. Moreover, balancing entrepreneurship with caregiving and household responsibilities further constrains women's ability to thrive in business (Eddleston & Powell, 2012). These challenges underscore the need for this study to focus on the structural and cultural obstacles that limit women's progress in manufacturing entrepreneurship. Through a critical examination of these barriers, the study seeks to provide practical insights that can guide the development of gender-responsive policies aimed at fostering a more inclusive and equitable entrepreneurial ecosystem in Zimbabwe.

1.1.1. Global Perspective

Entrepreneurship is widely recognised as a key engine of economic growth, innovation, and employment creation across the globe. Women entrepreneurs contribute significantly to this growth, yet they remain underrepresented, especially in high-impact sectors like manufacturing (World Bank, 2023; Madhavi, 2024). Despite global efforts to promote gender equality, gender dynamics such as stereotypes, identity, socialisation, and expression continue to shape women's entrepreneurial experiences (Gebrihet et-al, 2024; Schmitz & Gabel, 2023). Globally, women own about a third of all businesses, but their participation is heavily concentrated in low-growth, informal sectors, while men dominate capital-intensive and high-technology industries (OECD, 2023). The relationship between gender and entrepreneurship has a long history, from when women's economic engagement was primarily limited to domestic and informal economic activity (Neumeyer, 2022; Mahmoudi, 2023).

Gender stereotypes have been identified as a major barrier, with prevailing societal beliefs perceiving manufacturing as a masculine domain requiring technical prowess and risk-taking traits often socially ascribed to men (ILO, 2022). These stereotypes discourage women from pursuing or expanding manufacturing enterprises. Moreover, gender identity and expression influence how women are perceived by stakeholders, investors, and consumers. Women who deviate from traditional gender norms often face discrimination or scepticism about their competence (UNIDO, 2023). Gender socialisation also plays a significant role, as early upbringing shapes confidence, risk appetite, and leadership orientation all crucial for success in entrepreneurship (IFC, 2024). Addressing these gendered constraints has been recognised as key to unlocking the full economic potential of women entrepreneurs globally (UNCTAD, 2024).

1.1.2 Regional Perspective

Across Africa, women constitute more than half of the continent's population and contribute substantially to economic development through entrepreneurship (AfDB, 2022). However, their involvement remains predominantly in micro and small enterprises, often in agriculture, trade, or services, while their participation in manufacturing is comparatively limited (UNECA, 2024). Structural and cultural gender norms restrict women's mobility, access to credit, property ownership, and participation in decision-making. These constraints are rooted in patriarchal social systems that perpetuate gender stereotypes and unequal power relations (ILO, 2022).

African women entrepreneurs in manufacturing face additional challenges of limited access to entrepreneurial networks, technology, and markets. Gender identity plays a role in shaping their self-efficacy and how they are perceived within male-dominated industrial environments (AfDB, 2022). Gender socialization from childhood often channels women into caregiving and domestic roles rather than technical or industrial careers, reducing their likelihood of venturing into manufacturing (UNCTAD, 2024). Gender expression, including professional appearance and behavior, affects their acceptance in entrepreneurial ecosystems and influences their access to partnerships, mentorship, and funding opportunities (UNECA, 2024). Despite policy interventions and gender empowerment programs across Africa, these gendered dynamics continue to hinder women's growth and scale-up in high-impact manufacturing entrepreneurship (World Bank, 2023).

1.1.3 Local Perspective (Harare, Zimbabwe)

In Zimbabwe, and specifically in Harare, women entrepreneurs play a vital role in sustaining household incomes and contributing to national economic recovery (ZIMSTAT, 2023). However, their participation in high-impact manufacturing entrepreneurship remains relatively low compared to men. Gender dynamics are deeply rooted in local cultural, social, and institutional frameworks, and they shape women's entrepreneurial journeys (Ministry of Women Affairs, 2024). Gender stereotypes portray manufacturing as unsuitable for women, often undermining their credibility and discouraging them from entering or staying in the sector (ZIMSTAT, 2023). Gender identity intersects with these stereotypes, influencing how women perceive themselves and how they are perceived by industry stakeholders (Ministry of Women Affairs, 2024).

Furthermore, traditional gender socialisation in Zimbabwe often emphasises domesticity and caregiving for women, limiting their exposure to industrial and technical skills from an early age (ZIMSTAT, 2023). This reduces their confidence and willingness to take risks in entrepreneurship. Gender expression, including how women present themselves in professional and industrial settings, can also affect their access to business networks, investors, and market opportunities (UNCTAD, 2024). Although there are government and NGO initiatives to promote women's entrepreneurship, they have not sufficiently addressed the underlying gender dynamics that limit women's participation in high-impact manufacturing in Harare (Ministry of Women Affairs, 2024). Understanding these dynamics is therefore essential to creating targeted policies and support systems that enhance women's participation in this sector.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Drawing from Zaidi et al. (2023), the entrepreneurial ecosystem encompasses the dynamic interactions between various elements, which significantly influence not only the decision to launch a new business but also its survival, growth, and long-term success. In support of the above, a study by Ozkazanc-Pan & Muntean (2021) at a global level pointed out that this becomes particularly critical when examining gender dynamics within entrepreneurial ecosystems. Studies by Henry et al. (2022) and Rietveld & Patel (2022) looked at the disparities in entrepreneurship, such as gender-based differences in access to capital, network structures, or business growth patterns and policies. Apart from these global concerns, the main problem for Zimbabwe, as identified by Sanangura & Mwanza (2025), is that despite policy interventions aimed at promoting gender equality and women's economic empowerment, women in Harare continue to face low levels of entry, growth, and sustainability in manufacturing entrepreneurship. Zimbabwe's Constitution provides for affirmative action to promote women, including in economic development/entrepreneurship. There isn't one stand-alone "Women Entrepreneurs Act", but the basis is in the Constitution and policy/procurement measures. Section 13(3) offers measures to protect and enhance the right of the people, particularly women, to equal opportunities in development. Section 14(1)(2) also suggests measures to empower, through appropriate, transparent, fair and just affirmative action, all marginalised persons, groups and communities in Zimbabwe. Section 17 of the constitution further notes that the State must promote full gender balance in Zimbabwean society, and. This gap persists even as women demonstrate entrepreneurial potential in other sectors. The underrepresentation suggests that structural and social factors beyond access to capital and skills are limiting women's participation. Interestingly, female entrepreneurs constitute a significant and untapped resource that has the potential to unleash transformative changes in societies worldwide.

The problem centres on the fact that despite advancements in gender equality and women's empowerment, disparities in entrepreneurship between men and women persist across the manufacturing sector of Zimbabwe. This is supported by the African Development Bank's (2024) estimate that Africa loses about 20 per cent of its growth potential due to gender inequality, which illustrates the economic cost of sidelining women. Chigumwe (2024) further elaborated on the problem by suggesting that Zimbabwean policies are beginning to evolve, supporting female entrepreneurship through initiatives like the Women's Bank and various microfinance programmes targeting women-owned businesses. However, despite these strides,

Zimbabwean businesswomen still face structural challenges that impede their ability to contribute more effectively to economic growth, including those in the manufacturing sector. They continue to face limited access to capital, legal barriers, social norms, and a lack of representation in corporate leadership, yet women made up 52.8% of the total population in 2022 (World Bank, 2022). Yet, despite this demographic advantage, their participation in high-impact entrepreneurial ventures remains minimal.

1.3 Research Objectives

The research aimed to attain the broad and sub-objectives outlined below.

1.4 Main Objective

The general objective was to explore the influence of gender dynamics on the participation of women entrepreneurs in manufacturing entrepreneurship in Harare, Zimbabwe.

1.4.1 Specific Objectives

- i. To understand the effect of gender stereotypes on women's participation in high-impact manufacturing entrepreneurship in Harare.
- ii. To discover the effect of gender identity on the involvement of women in high-impact manufacturing entrepreneurship in Harare.
- iii. To evaluate the effect of gender socialisation on the participation of women in high-impact manufacturing entrepreneurship in Harare.
- iv. To establish how women's gender expression influences their participation in high-impact manufacturing entrepreneurship in Harare.

1.5 Research Hypothesis

- i. Gender stereotypes do not influence women's participation in high-impact manufacturing entrepreneurship in Harare.
- ii. Gender identity does not influence the level of involvement of women in high-impact manufacturing entrepreneurship in Harare.
- iii. Gender socialisation patterns do not influence women's participation in high-impact manufacturing entrepreneurship in Harare.
- iv. Women's gender expression does not influence their opportunities and participation in high-impact manufacturing entrepreneurship in Harare.

1.6 Significance of the Study

This research aimed to establish the influence of gender dynamics on women entrepreneurs' participation in manufacturing sectors, which was important to various industries. The study's findings sought to encourage corporations, institutions, and individuals to adopt policies that lead to greater engagement.

1.6.1 Corporate level

The findings can support organisations in fostering more diverse and inclusive work environments, which are widely recognised as drivers of innovation, creativity, and problem-solving (Kumar, Singh, & Dwivedi, 2020). Greater diversity can enhance the effectiveness of both established manufacturing enterprises and newly formed female-led ventures, contributing to competitiveness and long-term sustainability. Additionally, the study's insights can guide corporate strategies for attracting, retaining, and advancing female talent in manufacturing and entrepreneurial roles, thereby expanding the talent pool and strengthening team performance. Corporations also stand to benefit by better understanding the needs and preferences of female entrepreneurs in the manufacturing sector. This knowledge can inform the development of products, services, and support systems tailored to this segment, promoting market expansion. Furthermore, visible commitment to gender equity can improve corporate reputation, align with corporate social responsibility (CSR) objectives, and appeal to socially conscious consumers and investors.

1.6.2 Institutional level

The research can provide policymakers and institutions with valuable insights into women's challenges and opportunities in high-impact manufacturing entrepreneurship. This knowledge can lead to the development of policies and initiatives to support women's participation in this sector, aligning with corporate social responsibility goals (ILO, 2022). Educational institutions can also tailor programs and training for aspiring women entrepreneurs in manufacturing, ensuring they receive the necessary support and guidance to thrive. The study will also contribute to the knowledge of gender dynamics and entrepreneurship, benefiting academic institutions, researchers, and think tanks focusing on gender and entrepreneurship studies.

1.6.3 Individual level

Empowering women in high-impact manufacturing entrepreneurship fosters innovation, drives economic progress, and creates a more equitable society. The study aims to inspire and guide individual women entrepreneurs in their career aspirations by providing insights into the

challenges and opportunities specific to this field. Understanding the impact of gender dynamics can help navigate emotional and mental difficulties, enhancing overall well-being. The findings can also aid in identifying support networks and mentors, addressing barriers, and reducing biases to promote women's participation in manufacturing entrepreneurship. Diverse perspectives can lead to innovative solutions, contributing to global competitiveness. Successful women entrepreneurs in this sector can become agents of change, inspire others and contribute to social empowerment. Ultimately, the study's significance lies in shaping policies, business practices, and individual choices to create a more inclusive, prosperous future for all.

1.6.4 Addressing a Gap in Entrepreneurship Theory

This study is significant as findings from the study shall address the gap in entrepreneurship theory. Most entrepreneurship theories, such as the Resource-Based View and the Human Capital Theory, assume gender-neutral access to resources, networks, and opportunities. This assumption does not hold in Zimbabwe's context, where gendered social norms, power relations, and institutional biases shape access to capital, technology, markets, and business ownership. The study is grounded in Gender and Development Theory and Institutional Theory, which argue that formal policies and informal cultural norms jointly influence economic participation. There is limited empirical evidence from Harare on how these dynamics specifically constrain women in manufacturing, which is more capital-intensive and male-dominated than other sectors. The study will contribute original data to fill this gap.

1.6.5 The Economic and Social Imperative

Drawing from Zimbabwe's 2022 National Gender Policy and ZIMSTAT data show that while women constitute 52% of the population, they own less than 30% of registered manufacturing SMEs in Harare. This underrepresentation limits economic diversification and perpetuates income inequality. Macroeconomic instability from 2018 to 2022 further exposed gendered vulnerabilities. Women entrepreneurs faced higher barriers in accessing foreign currency for raw materials, collateral for loans, and safe operating spaces. Without scientific evidence on how gender dynamics interact with these macroeconomic pressures, policy interventions remain generic and ineffective. As such, the study findings become crucial by providing policymakers with firsthand information to inform policy interventions.

1.6.6 Context-Specific Evidence

Existing studies on women's entrepreneurship in Zimbabwe largely focus on agriculture and retail in rural areas. Manufacturing in Harare presents a distinct context due to urbanisation, regulatory complexity, infrastructure challenges, and exposure to global value chains. A context-specific study is necessary because gender dynamics are not universal. For example, cultural expectations around household roles in Harare's urban setting differ from rural areas and directly affect women's time allocation, mobility, and decision-making autonomy in running a manufacturing enterprise.

In conclusion, the significance of this study at the corporate, institutional, and individual levels is not only about addressing gender disparities but also about driving economic growth, fostering innovation, and creating more equitable and empowered societies. It can shape policies, business practices, and individual choices, thus making a more inclusive and prosperous future for all (Francesca, 2018). This study was anchored in a scientific pillar to ensure empirical validity, theoretical soundness, and methodological rigour. The scientific pillar addresses the theoretical Framework. Under this the study is grounded in Gender Role Theory and Social Feminist Theory to explain how societal expectations, norms, and power relations shape women's participation in manufacturing entrepreneurship. Through the empirical Gap it's clear that while literature exists on women entrepreneurship broadly, there is limited evidence-based research on the specific influence of gender dynamics within Zimbabwe's manufacturing sector, particularly in Harare. This study seeks to fill that gap. On the methodological rigour, a mixed-methods approach will be adopted, combining quantitative surveys with qualitative in-depth interviews of women manufacturers in Harare. This ensures triangulation of data and scientific credibility of findings. Findings will be analysed statistically and thematically to produce evidence-based, policy-relevant recommendations for government, financial institutions, and industry associations.

1.7 Limitations of the Study

Limitations refer to anticipated constraints that may influence the research process, often arising from the chosen methods, study context, or geographical setting. According to Theofanidis and Fountouki (2018), research limitations are characteristics that restrict a study and potentially compromise the validity of its findings. The first limitation is that the study is confined to Harare only. While Harare is Zimbabwe's industrial and commercial hub, the gender dynamics, regulatory environment, and cultural norms in Harare may differ from those

in Bulawayo, Mutare, or rural areas. As a result, findings cannot be generalized to the entire country without further validation. Equally the study focus is on manufacturing entrepreneurship only. Manufacturing has higher capital requirements, regulatory compliance, and technical skills compared to retail or service sectors. The barriers identified may not apply to women entrepreneurs in other sectors, limiting cross-sector comparability.

The other limitation relates to the methodology applied. Qualitative components rely on purposive and snowball sampling to reach information-rich cases. While this is appropriate for depth, the sample will not be statistically representative of all women manufacturers in Harare. Quantitative components may also be constrained by the difficulty of obtaining a complete and up-to-date sampling frame of registered and unregistered women-owned manufacturing businesses. The research process may face challenges such as restricted access to information, limited time for data collection, and inadequate financial resources. Another limitation relates to respondent objectivity. Since the participants are women, their responses may be influenced by personal biases, making it difficult to provide entirely objective accounts. Additionally, the reliance on a cross-sectional research design poses a methodological constraint, as longitudinal studies generally yield more comprehensive and robust findings.

1.8 Delimitation of the Study

This study, *Influence of Gender Dynamics on the Participation of Women in Manufacturing Entrepreneurship in Harare, Zimbabwe*, was geographically confined to Harare, the country's economic hub. Harare was chosen due to its concentration of formal institutions, regulatory frameworks, and social structures that shape entrepreneurial opportunities, making it an ideal context for analysing gendered access to resources and opportunities (Marlow & McAdam, 2015; Moyo & Kawewe, 2002). The temporal scope spans 2018–2024, a period marked by significant policy reforms on gender equality, enabling the study to capture the effects of recent strategies on women's participation in manufacturing entrepreneurship (Programme, 2018; McKinsey & Company, 2021).

The study targeted women engaged in manufacturing entrepreneurship, a population that remains underrepresented in this high-impact sector despite its critical role in economic development (Chitsike & Chigora, 2021). Their inclusion is justified by the need to understand women's contributions in male-dominated industries, as emphasised by Fischer, Reuber, and Dyke (1993). The sample size will be guided by Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) framework to ensure representativeness and robustness. A mixed-methods approach was employed,

integrating qualitative and quantitative methods to capture both individual experiences and structural patterns. Qualitative methods such as interviews and focus groups will provide insights into women lived experiences, while quantitative methods will analyse broader patterns of access to finance, markets, and business performance (Creswell, 2016; Saunders, Adrian, & Lewis, 2019). This approach ensures a comprehensive exploration of gender dynamics in entrepreneurship (Bryman & Bell, 2021).

The analysis focused on multiple facets of gender dynamics including self-perception, stereotyping, roles, expression, socialisation, and identity and their influence on women's decision-making and business strategies. It will also assess policy and institutional frameworks to identify gaps and opportunities for reform (Marlow & McAdam, 2015). This multidimensional focus is essential for addressing both individual challenges and systemic inequalities, contributing to actionable recommendations for fostering gender inclusivity in Zimbabwe's manufacturing sector.

1.9 Definition of Key Terms

Table 1.1: Definition of Key Terms

Participation	Participation means being involved in conducting a socio-economic activity. Participation generally refers to participating or engaging in an activity, event, or process. It involves active involvement or contribution in a particular situation, often implying collaboration, inclusion, or interaction within a group or context (Lewis, 2006).
Manufacturing entrepreneurship	Manufacturing entrepreneurship refers to the creation, establishment, and management of enterprises engaged in the design and production of goods from raw materials, utilising diverse technological processes and tools such as hand instruments, machinery, and computer systems (Bailetti, 2012).
Gender Dynamics	Gender dynamics refers to the patterns of interaction and relationships between men and women within society, through which expectations are formed regarding their roles, behaviours, and

	responsibilities, as well as the values attributed to them (Spratt & Charles, n.d.).
Women entrepreneurs	This refers to a female who can make decisions in a complex environment and invent new ideas (Idris and Tan, 2017).

1.10 Definition of Operational Terms

Table 1.2: Definition of Operational Terms

Gender stereotyping	In this study, <i>gender stereotyping</i> is defined as the pervasive assumption that specific behaviours, attributes, and characteristics are assigned to individuals solely based on their biological differences.
Gender roles	The responsibilities, roles, duties, and activities that society assigns to men and women based on their sex.
Gender identity	refers to an individual's self-conception or understanding of themselves as male or female, respectively.
Gender expression	In this study, <i>gender expression</i> refers to how an individual conveys their gender identity, often through outward appearance, emotions, actions, and behaviours.
Gender Socialization	In this study, <i>gender socialisation</i> is defined as the lifelong process through which individuals, either explicitly or implicitly, acquire the gender norms, roles, and expectations of their society, ultimately shaping their gender identity.
High-impact entrepreneurship	In this study, <i>high-impact entrepreneurship</i> refers to the establishment of rapidly growing enterprises that significantly contribute to job creation and wealth generation for entrepreneurs, society, and the broader economy.

1.11 Organisation of the Study

This study will be organised according to the structure prescribed by the University of Lusaka, comprising five distinct and interrelated chapters. Chapter One introduces the research problem and provides the background that justifies the need for further investigation. It also outlines the research objectives, questions, and hypotheses derived from the identified problem. In addition, the chapter discusses the significance of the study, along with its scope, assumptions, and limitations. Chapter Two presents a literature review and provides theoretical and empirical

literature, theoretical and conceptual frameworks, among other sub-topics such as gender, gender characterisation, and gender dimensions, as well as high-impact entrepreneurship. Chapter Three presents the research methodology, detailing the methods and procedures employed for data collection and analysis. Chapter Four reports on the data analysis and research findings, accompanied by a discussion aimed at addressing the research objectives and answering the research questions. Finally, Chapter Five provides the conclusion, highlighting the key findings and outlining their implications for practice, theory, and future research.

Chapter Summary.

This chapter has laid the intellectual and contextual foundation for the study by situating the problem of low women's participation in manufacturing entrepreneurship within the broader discourses of gender, economic empowerment, and industrialisation in Zimbabwe. The background established that despite national and international policy commitments to gender equality and women's economic empowerment, women remain underrepresented in manufacturing entrepreneurship in Harare. The manufacturing sector, being capital-intensive, technologically driven, and traditionally male-dominated, continues to reflect deep-seated gender dynamics that constrain women's entry, growth, and sustainability as entrepreneurs. The problem statement highlighted that low participation is not merely a function of financial or technical barriers, but is significantly influenced by socio-cultural norms, gendered access to resources, decision-making power, and industry perceptions. On the scientific pillar, this study is anchored in Gender Role Theory and Social Feminist Theory to provide a theoretical lens for understanding structural and cultural constraints. By focusing on Harare, the study provides context-specific data that can guide targeted interventions. In summary, Chapter One has established the rationale, context, theoretical grounding, and direction of the study. It has been argued that understanding gender dynamics is central to explaining why women's participation in manufacturing entrepreneurship in Harare remains limited, despite enabling policy intentions. The chapter has covered the background, problem statement, objectives, research questions and hypotheses, justification, scope, limitations, definition of terms, and the overall thesis flow.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Chapter Overview

Chapter 2 provides the theoretical and empirical foundation for examining the influence of gender dynamics on women's participation in manufacturing entrepreneurship in Harare, Zimbabwe. The chapter situates the study within existing scholarly discourse by reviewing relevant theories, concepts, and prior research on gender, entrepreneurship, and industrial development. The review begins by defining key constructs such as gender dynamics, women entrepreneurship, and manufacturing entrepreneurship, and explores how these intersect within both global and African contexts. It then examines the theoretical frameworks that explain gendered participation in economic activity, including Social Role Theory, Feminist Theory, Social Capital Theory, Entrepreneurship Ecosystem Theory, and Institutional Theory. These frameworks help explain how formal institutions and informal social norms shape access to resources, opportunities, and decision-making for women in business.

Following the theoretical overview, the chapter critically analyses empirical studies on women's participation in entrepreneurship, with particular attention to the manufacturing sector in developing economies. It highlights persistent barriers such as access to finance, cultural norms, mobility constraints, and regulatory challenges, while also noting successful interventions and policy responses in comparable contexts. Finally, the chapter identifies gaps in the existing literature, especially the limited context-specific evidence on Harare's manufacturing sector post-2018. By mapping what is already known and what remains underexplored, this review establishes the rationale for the current study and provides a basis for the conceptual framework presented at the end of the chapter.

2.1 Theoretical Review

Introduction

The existing body of research on gender dynamics in entrepreneurship has emphasised certain crucial elements affecting women's involvement in high-impact manufacturing industries. Various theories in the literature explore the influence of gender stereotypes, identity, socialisation, and expression on entrepreneurial activity. This review analyses the impacts of social capital, social role, entrepreneurship ecosystem, and institutional and feminist theories on the subject at hand.

2.1.1 Gender Stereotypes and Participation Decisions

According to Mari et al. (2026), gender stereotypes are generalised views about the characteristics, behaviours, or roles that men and women are assumed to have. These beliefs frequently restrict personal freedom and sustain inequity. According to Kosakowska-Berezecka et al. (2022), these are preconceived ideas about how people should act or what traits they should have based only on their gender. These stereotypes can be blatantly hostile (e.g., "women are irrational") or seemingly benign (e.g., "women are nurturing"), but they can both limit chances in both the personal and professional spheres and perpetuate societal injustices. They disproportionately impact women from minority, indigenous, or economically disadvantaged groups and frequently connect with other societal stereotypes (Bos et al., 2022). According to Bos et al. (2022), gender stereotypes are widespread, socially constructed ideas that restrict personal potential and perpetuate injustice. Promoting gender equality, individual freedom, and equitable treatment in all spheres of life requires acknowledging and combating these prejudices (Goh & Tignor, 2020).

A substantial and growing body of literature has investigated the impact of gender stereotypes on women's participation in high-impact manufacturing entrepreneurship. These include Oppong & Bannor (2022), whose study concluded that the global community has been unanimous about the negative implications gender discrimination holds for economic growth and human development, focusing on the exclusion of women in manufacturing and other sectors. Social Role Theory suggests that societal norms and expectations surrounding gender roles act as structural obstacles for women, particularly in male-dominated sectors such as manufacturing (Eagly & Wood, 2016a). These preconceived notions often foster the perception that women have lower levels of competence in technical and high-risk ventures, discouraging them from entering and sustaining participation in manufacturing industries (Vandenberghe, Bentein, & Stinglhamber, 2017a).

From the perspective of the entrepreneurship ecosystem theory, cultural norms that privilege male entrepreneurs significantly shape the entrepreneurial environment, thereby limiting women's access to vital resources, networks, and growth opportunities (Isenberg, 2010). Complementing this, Feminist Theory provides a critical lens for examining the gendered construction of entrepreneurship. Ahl and Marlow (2012) argue that dominant narratives of success are largely male-centred, overlooking or undervaluing women's contributions, and therefore call for a reconceptualisation of entrepreneurial success that recognises diverse

female experiences and perspectives. Together, these theoretical frameworks underscore how gendered stereotypes and institutionalised biases systematically constrain women's participation in manufacturing entrepreneurship. They also highlight the necessity of reshaping cultural narratives and structural conditions to foster inclusivity and equitable opportunities in the sector.

2.1.2 Gender Identity and Entrepreneurial Motivation and Success

According to Simkus (2023), gender identity refers to an individual's internal perception of their own gender, which may or may not correspond with the sex assigned at birth. A person's personal perception of being a man, woman, both, neither, nor another gender completely is referred to as their gender identity (Ramsey, 2026). It is different from biological sex, which is determined by bodily traits including hormones, DNA, and reproductive organs, even if sex is not always binary and can contain intersex variations. Despite obstacles and uncertainties, entrepreneurs can initiate, persevere, and succeed thanks to motivation (Caliendo, Kritikos & Stier, 2023; Carsrud et al., 2017). In the face of obstacles and uncertainty, motivation acts as the internal motor that drives entrepreneurs to take chances, follow their vision, and maintain effort throughout time (Caliendo, Kritikos & Stier, 2023). It helps entrepreneurs clarify their objectives and match their day-to-day activities with their long-term vision by giving them clarity and purpose. According to Murnieks, Klotz, and Shepherd (2020), entrepreneurs need a consistent drive to turn ideas into concrete outcomes; without motivation, even creative ideas may stagnate.

Various theories in the literature examine the influence of gender identity on entrepreneurial motivation and success in high-impact manufacturing. Social Identity Theory suggests that individuals derive part of their self-concept from their membership in social groups (Tajfel & Turner, 2023). Within the context of entrepreneurship, women may be discouraged from pursuing careers in manufacturing—which is often perceived as a masculine domain—if they strongly identify with traditional feminine roles. Hogg and Terry (2000a) argue that overcoming this barrier requires constructing new identity narratives that highlight the achievements of successful female entrepreneurs in manufacturing. By reshaping identity stories, women can be empowered to view themselves as capable participants in male-dominated industries. Social Identity Theory (SIT) explains how people's sense of self is tied

to the groups they belong to, and how group membership shapes attitudes, behaviour, and opportunities (Hogg, 2016).

Applied to the current discussion, it helps explain why gender dynamics constrain or enable women's participation in manufacturing entrepreneurship in Harare. SIT says people categorise themselves and others into groups: "us" vs "them." In Zimbabwe's manufacturing sector, the dominant entrepreneurial identity has historically been coded as male, industrial, and risk-taking. Women entrepreneurs often find themselves categorised as "outgroup" members in spaces like factory floors, supplier networks, and industry associations. They face stereotype-based scepticism about technical competence, access to finance, and leadership capacity (Hogg, Adelman & Blagg, 2010). This can lead to exclusion from informal networks where deals, credit, and information are exchanged. SIT explains that participation is not just about skills or capital. It's about whether women can hold a positive, legitimate social identity within the manufacturing entrepreneurship space. If gender dynamics keep "woman" and "manufacturer" as conflicting identities, participation stays low. If institutions, networks, and policies create space for a positive "woman manufacturer" identity, participation increases.

Social Capital Theory highlights the critical role of networks and social support in influencing entrepreneurial success. Carter (2006) argues that women who effectively utilize their social connections—whether through mentorship, peer collaboration, or access to positive role models—are more likely to achieve success in their entrepreneurial ventures. Social capital provides not only access to information and resources but also fosters confidence and resilience in navigating challenges within the manufacturing sector.

Institutional Theory underscores the influence of both formal and informal institutions in shaping gender identities and entrepreneurial behavior. According to Brush, de Bruin, and Welter (2009), policies, cultural norms, and societal expectations significantly affect the opportunities accessible to women in entrepreneurship. They argue for targeted policy interventions that foster gender equality, emphasizing that supportive institutional frameworks are essential for dismantling the barriers that restrict women's participation and success in manufacturing entrepreneurship. Taken together, these theoretical perspectives underscore that gender identity not only influences women's entrepreneurial motivation but also affects their likelihood of success. While personal identity and social support systems are critical, the broader institutional environment also plays a decisive role in shaping outcomes for women in manufacturing entrepreneurship.

2.1.3 Gender Socialisation and Participation

There are relatively few historical studies in the area of gender socialisation and its impact on women's participation in high-impact manufacturing entrepreneurship. Gender Socialisation Theory explains how individuals learn and internalise societal gender roles from an early age (West and Zimmerman, 2009). This process often channels girls away from technical fields, limiting their future participation in manufacturing entrepreneurship (Breuning, 2017). Social role theory complements this by showing that these early socialisation processes reinforce stereotypes that persist into adulthood, shaping career choices and opportunities. UNECA (2016) notes that more recent attention has focused on the provision of educational and policy interventions that challenge traditional gender norms and encourage girls to pursue STEM fields, thereby increasing their participation in manufacturing entrepreneurship.

2.1.4 Gender Expression and Entrepreneurial Experiences

The existing body of research on gender expression and its effects on entrepreneurial experiences highlights how women's outward manifestation of gender identity influences their prospects in high-impact manufacturing entrepreneurship. Social Role Theory posits that women who demonstrate traits traditionally associated with masculinity—such as assertiveness, competitiveness, and risk-taking—are more likely to succeed in male-dominated industries (Eagly & Wood, 2016b). This suggests that adopting behaviours aligned with prevailing masculine norms may provide women with greater legitimacy and acceptance in manufacturing entrepreneurship. Social role theory provides a framework for understanding how social structures and expectations shape individual behaviour, particularly in relation to gender. By examining the interplay between biological, psychological, and cultural factors, the theory explains both sex differences and similarities in behaviour, the formation of stereotypes, and the ways individuals navigate multiple social roles in diverse contexts.

However, Feminist Theory provides a critical counterpoint by challenging these societal expectations. Ahl and Marlow (2012) argue that requiring women to conform to masculine standards places an undue burden on them, while simultaneously undervaluing the unique contributions of alternative gender expressions. From this perspective, the expectation that women must adopt masculine traits to succeed reinforces structural inequalities rather than dismantling them. Isenberg (2000) extends this argument by emphasizing the importance of cultivating an inclusive entrepreneurial ecosystem—one that recognizes and values diverse leadership styles and expressions of gender. By appreciating varied approaches to leadership and entrepreneurship, the ecosystem can move beyond narrow definitions of success and create

opportunities for women to thrive without suppressing or altering their authentic gender expression. Collectively, these perspectives suggest that while certain gender expressions may align more easily with the dominant culture of manufacturing entrepreneurship, long-term progress depends on building environments that celebrate and support diversity in leadership and identity.

2.2 Empirical Review

2.2.1 Introduction

The existing research on gender dynamics and women's involvement in high-impact manufacturing entrepreneurship examines multiple elements that affect women's entrepreneurial endeavours. This review rigorously analyses empirical studies investigating gender stereotypes, gender identity, gender socialisation, and gender expression. It seeks to enhance the present understanding of the subject by finding gaps, contradictions, and inconsistencies in existing research. Additionally, it intends to provide potential areas for future research.

2.2.1 Gender Stereotypes

According to Block and Schmader (2025), a gender stereotype is a generalised opinion or preconception about traits or qualities, or the roles that are or should be possessed by, or performed by, men and women. These are generalisations about the characteristics of men and women that might be either prescriptive, stating what they ought to be like, or descriptive, describing what they are like (Martin & Slepian, 2021). The psychological characteristics that are thought to be more typical of one sex than the other are known as gender stereotypes (Charlesworth et al., 2023; Block et al., 2025). These stereotypes have been used to explain cultural differences in sex role ideas and are closely linked to sex role ideology. According to Fasoli, Divine, and Hopkins-Doyle (2025), these preconceptions can hinder women's professional advancement by fostering normative behaviours and unfavourable expectations. When a gender stereotype prevents men and women from pursuing their professional goals, developing their personal skills, or making life decisions, it is detrimental.

Empirical research consistently demonstrates that gender stereotypes negatively influence women's participation in manufacturing entrepreneurship. Vandenberghe, Bentein, and Stinglhamber (2017a) found that stereotypes portraying women as less competent in technical and entrepreneurial roles discourage them from pursuing opportunities within the manufacturing sector. Similarly, Baig et al. (2021) observed that such assumptions exert a dual

impact: they not only shape women's self-perceptions but also influence how external stakeholders—such as investors, partners, and customers—perceive them. Consequently, these prejudices create additional barriers to women's entrepreneurial endeavours. However, research also suggests that the influence of gender stereotypes is not uniform and may vary across cultural and contextual settings. For instance, Block et al. (2025) discovered that in some cultural environments, women's entrepreneurial aspirations are less affected by stereotypes due to stronger societal support for gender equality. This finding highlights the moderating role of cultural beliefs about gender roles and suggests that the detrimental effects of stereotypes can be mitigated through broader cultural and institutional shifts. Overall, while gender stereotypes remain a persistent challenge for women in manufacturing entrepreneurship, cross-cultural evidence indicates that supportive societal attitudes can reduce their impact, pointing to a critical area for further research (Baig et al., 2021; Charlesworth et al., 2023; Block et al., 2025).

2.2.2 Gender Identity.

Gender identity, according to Speechley, Stuart, and Modecki (2024), is a person's internal, subjective perception of their own gender, which can be either male or female, a mix of both, neither, nor change over time. It differs from biological sex, which is determined by bodily traits such as hormones, chromosomes, and reproductive anatomy (Katz-Wise et al., 2024). Some people, such as transgender and nonbinary people, feel a gender identity that is different from their biological sex; many people's gender identification corresponds with the sex they were assigned at birth (Brashear, Tillewein & Harvey, 2025).

The identity and experiences of entrepreneurs are greatly influenced by gender identification. According to research, a person's gender affects how they view themselves and other people, how they act and communicate, and how other people regard and appreciate them (Abbas et al., 2019). This impact encompasses how people build and express their entrepreneurial identities as well as how they experience and practice entrepreneurship (Boddington, 2023). Entrepreneurs frequently encounter obstacles and facilitators associated with their gender identity, which may impact their drive, dedication, and perseverance in pursuing their business objectives (Boddington, 2024). Fostering an entrepreneurial environment that is supportive and inclusive of all genders requires an understanding of these factors (Ghosh, 2024).

Boddington's (2024) study aimed to demonstrate not only how gendered norms of entrepreneurial practice impede practice, but also how identity and customised entrepreneurship practice might change these norms. Identity affects entrepreneurial activity in

general and how individuals launch new businesses in particular (Foy & Gruber, 2022). According to Mathias & Williams (2018), entrepreneurs frequently identify with role-related traits and behaviours (such as creator, founder, or developer), which affect how people understand their own experiences. Cultural norms and conventional gender roles may restrict women's participation in unofficial business organisations and their access to networks (McAdam et al., 2018).

Research on gender identity and entrepreneurship indicates that women who embrace non-conventional gender identities are more likely to succeed in male-dominated industries such as manufacturing. Carpenter, Takahashi, Lertpratchya, et al. (2016) found that women who demonstrated strong self-belief and assertiveness were more inclined to engage in high-impact manufacturing entrepreneurship. This aligns with Foy & Gruber's (2022) assertion that gender identity significantly shapes professional decisions and aspirations. Nevertheless, the relationship between gender identity and entrepreneurial success is complex. Some studies show that women who conform to traditional gender norms can also achieve success, provided they receive adequate support and mentorship. For example, a survey by Company (2021) revealed that women in leadership positions frequently benefited from mentorship and institutional support, which helped them overcome challenges linked to their gender identity. This inconsistency underscores the need for more nuanced research on how different dimensions of gender identity interact with external support systems to influence entrepreneurial outcomes.

2.2.3 Gender Socialisation

Gender socialisation is the process through which individuals learn and internalise the behaviours, roles, and expectations associated with their gender within a society (Portengen et al., 2025; Rodríguez-Gómez et al., 2020). It begins early in life, often before children are fully aware of other social groups, and shapes how they perceive themselves and interact with the world (Yang et al., 2020). It involves learning societal norms about what is considered appropriate for males, females, or other gender identities, influencing behaviours, interests, and self-perception. For example, parents may dress girls in pink and provide dolls, while boys are dressed in blue and given toy trucks, reinforcing traditional gender roles. It involves the process through which individuals internalise societal expectations, norms, and roles associated with their gender.

This process plays a crucial role in shaping women's participation in manufacturing entrepreneurship. Banihani (2020) observed that conventional gender socialisation often discourages girls from pursuing technical fields, leading to a skills gap that limits their entrepreneurial prospects. Similarly, Koffi-Tessio (2019) found that early exposure to STEM education significantly increases the likelihood of women engaging in high-impact entrepreneurial ventures.

A study by Akella & Eid (2023) revealed that entrepreneurship without seeking to confront age-old traditions, values, and assumptions, subtly, enables women to become independent and self-reliant and, in the process, discover their own identity. Portengen et al (2025) went on to suggest that while the negative effects of traditional gender socialisation are widely acknowledged, research also reveals nuances. For instance, Ibanez & Guerrero (2022) highlighted cases where women raised within conventional gender norms leveraged their unique perspectives to build successful entrepreneurial enterprises. This suggests that although traditional socialisation may restrict opportunities, it can also foster distinctive entrepreneurial approaches that merit further exploration.

2.2.4 Gender Expression

Beltz, Loviska & Weigard (2021) posit that gender expression is the way in which an individual enacts their thoughts and beliefs about their gender, or their gender self-concepts, such as in the femininity and masculinity of their appearance and behaviour. Empirical research indicates that women who display characteristics traditionally associated with masculinity—such as aggressiveness and competitiveness—are more likely to succeed in manufacturing entrepreneurship. Vandenberghe, Bentein, and Stinglhamber (2017a) demonstrated that these traits enable women to navigate effectively within male-dominated environments. However, such expectations often place undue pressure on women to conform to masculine norms, thereby limiting the recognition of diverse leadership styles.

A study by Fairlie & Fossen (2020) revealed that due to gender expression, most women engage in necessity-driven entrepreneurship (the entrepreneurial activity that starts from being unemployed), which is generally less of a growth-oriented endeavour and does not scale in the same way as opportunity-driven entrepreneurship (starting a business to create new products/services). This explains why women are outside the manufacturing sector and other related sectors. An empirical study by Bullough (2022) revealed that women's entrepreneurship is increasingly important for creating new jobs and contributing to the social

and economic growth of their societies, yet the interplay and nuances of women's entrepreneurship and culture are currently not fully explored, including how gender expression affects women's participation. Contradictory evidence underscores the importance of authentic gender expression. A study by deMayo, Jordan & Olson (2022) found that women who embraced their genuine gender expression, rather than adopting masculine traits, achieved economic success by leveraging supportive networks and harnessing their unique leadership approaches. These findings highlight the need for inclusive entrepreneurial environments that value diverse expressions of gender, challenging the assumption that success is contingent upon conformity to masculine characteristics

2.3 Critique of Empirical Studies

Globally, empirical evidence has consistently documented the barriers women face in entering and thriving in manufacturing entrepreneurship. Yet, most of these studies are rooted in Western contexts that differ socio-culturally from Zimbabwe. For example, Brush and Cooper (2012) found that gender stereotypes contribute to women's underrepresentation in high-growth sectors like manufacturing. Similarly, Marlow and McAdam (2013) reported that implicit gender bias in resource allocation hinders women's entrepreneurial growth, while Ahl and Marlow (2021) critiqued the ways in which structurally gendered assumptions influence funding decisions. However, these studies largely reflect developed economies, limiting their applicability to Zimbabwe, where patriarchal cultural systems and institutional weaknesses shape entrepreneurship differently (Jamali & Sidani, 2020).

Another interesting study by Sullivan, Andrus and Bort, (2024) revealed that despite improved access to entrepreneurial financing, women continue to experience gender bias. Their study further noted that although current sentiment across society strongly advocates for the advancement of women, which is further reflected and perpetuated by benevolent sexism beliefs that protect and revere women through intentional chivalrous behaviour, these same beliefs that promote the protection and promotion of women may also be, unintentionally and inadvertently, further perpetuating underlying stereotypical influences that promote gender bias. In the global South, Bastian, Metcalfe, and Zali (2019) highlighted the salience of gender identity in shaping entrepreneurial intentions, while Henry and Johnston (2021) argued that gender socialisation from early schooling impacts women's later career paths. Jennings and Brush (2013) noted that role models are crucial for encouraging women's participation in STEM-related entrepreneurship, but their sample underrepresented African contexts. Grosser and Moon (2019) further showed that gender expression and conformity pressures affect

women's perceived legitimacy in male-dominated industries, a dynamic also relevant in manufacturing.

Across Africa, a growing body of studies points to the role of socio-cultural constraints in limiting women's entrepreneurship. Amine and Staub (2022) demonstrated how entrenched patriarchal norms shape gender stereotypes that steer women away from technical sectors. Mboko and Smith-Hunter (2021) observed that while African women are highly entrepreneurial, they tend to be concentrated in low-barrier informal services due to gendered expectations. Neneh (2020) found that self-efficacy and gender identity significantly predict entrepreneurial persistence among Cameroonian women, showing the need to consider psychological as well as structural barriers. Dzisi and Naudé (2018) identified limited mentorship and gendered socialisation as constraints in Ghana, while Mutuku and Wambua (2023) linked gender expression to women's credibility in Kenyan manufacturing enterprises.

Recent studies deepen this view. Tebogo and Maseko (2024) revealed that South African women in manufacturing still confront gender stereotypes despite policy support, while Ogunleye and Akinbami (2024) found that cultural gender norms mediate access to industrial finance among Nigerian women. However, most of these studies fail to examine gender dynamics holistically as intersecting constructs (stereotypes, identity, socialisation, and expression) instead treating gender as a background variable.

At the Zimbabwean level, literature remains sparse and fragmented. Chitsike (2023) found that although micro-credit initiatives help women start enterprises, deep-rooted cultural stereotypes continue to frame manufacturing as masculine. Muzvidziwa (2024) reported that gendered socialisation shapes girls' occupational aspirations from early schooling, limiting their entry into industrial fields. Chirume and Mashingaidze (2023) showed that women entrepreneurs in Harare lack mentorship and visibility in manufacturing sectors. Similarly, Makoni (2022) observed that gender identity conflicts undermine women's confidence in industrial leadership positions. Yet, these studies are predominantly qualitative, often using small samples, and thus lack generalizability and statistical rigour.

Most critically, no Zimbabwean study has systematically examined how gender stereotypes, identity, socialisation, and expression collectively influence women's participation in manufacturing entrepreneurship using robust quantitative models such as logistic regression. Existing work has often focused narrowly on finance or legal barriers (Nyoni & Bonga, 2019) while neglecting gender dynamics as central explanatory variables. This gap underlines the

need for the present study to contribute empirical evidence through a comprehensive conceptual model grounded in gender theory.

Table 2.1: Summary and Critique of Empirical Studies on Gender Dynamics and Women's Participation in Manufacturing Entrepreneurship

No.	Author(s) (Year)	Country/ Context	Focus area ²	Methodology	Key findings	Critique / Gaps
1	Candida Brush & Arnold Cooper (2012)	Global (US/Europe)	S, so	Mixed review	Gender stereotypes and institutional biases limit women in high-growth sectors.	Strong theoretical base; weak on African contexts.
2	Helene Ahl & Susan Marlow (2012)	Global	S, I	Thematic review	Gendered discourses shape entrepreneurial policy.	Conceptually rich but lacks empirical tests.
3	Vishal Gupta, Daniel Turban & Nupur Bhawe (2008)	US	S, I	Experimental	Gender stereotypes reduce women's entrepreneurial intentions.	Lab-based; limits ecological validity in Africa.
4	Dawn DeTienne & Gaylen Chandler (2007)	US	I	Survey	Gender influences opportunity recognition.	Focuses on cognition; ignores structural factors.
5	Alice Eagly & Wendy Wood (2012)	Theory	So	Conceptual	Social role theory explains occupational segregation.	Needs manufacturing-specific testing.
6	Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (2021)	Global	S, So, I	Survey	Women concentrated in low-growth sectors; barriers include skills and finance.	Lacks disaggregation for manufacturing.
7	World Bank (2020)	Global	S, so	Quantitative	Manufacturing key to growth; gender gaps constrain participation.	High-level, not sector specific.
8	International Labour Organisation (2019)	Global	S, so	Mixed	Stereotypes and low TVET uptake limit women's industrial entry.	Limited causal inference.

No.	Author(s) (Year)	Country/ Context	Focus area ²	Methodology	Key findings	Critique / Gaps
9	United Nations Industrial Development Organisation (2023)	Global	S, E	Sectoral report	Persistent gender gaps in industrial management roles.	Limited primary data in Africa.
10	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (2023)	Global	So, I	Review	Gendered patterns in entrepreneurship: policy levers suggested.	Developed-economy focus.
11	African Development Bank (2019)	Africa	So, S	Regional review	Women are concentrated in low-value sectors.	Lacks sector-level manufacturing data.
12	United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (2024)	Africa	So, E	Policy analysis	Calls for gender-inclusive industrial policies.	Lacks empirical testing.
13	Neneh Brownhilder (2020)	South Africa	I, so	Survey	Identity and self-efficacy predict persistence.	Mixed definitions of “high impact”.
14	Mboko Sibongile & Abby Smith-Hunter (2021)	Africa	So, S	Review	Social barriers restrict women from the industrial sectors.	Descriptive; lacks Zimbabwe data.
15	Jennifer Jennings & Candida Brush (2013)	Global	So, I	Review	Role models and networks crucial in technical fields.	Few African cases are included.
16	Sarah Thébaud (2015)	Cross-country	E, I	Quantitative	Gendered institutions shape entrepreneurship.	Less subnational nuance.
17	Victoria Brescoll (2016)	US	E	Experimental	Gendered emotion norms affect leader evaluations.	Lab results: limited real-world context.

No.	Author(s) (Year)	Country/ Context	Focus area ²	Methodology	Key findings	Critique / Gaps
18	Betina Bastian et al. (2019)	Global South	I	Mixed	Identity dynamics affect entrepreneurial intentions.	Not sector-specific.
19	Dzisi Stephanie & Naudé Wim (2018)	Ghana	So	Mixed	Weak mentorship and socialisation limit entry.	Small sample size.
20	Mutuku Peter & Wambua Lydia (2023)	Kenya	E, S	Qualitative	Gender expression affects credibility in firms.	Limited generalizability.
21	Tebogo Dube & Maseko Primrose (2024)	South Africa	S, so	Survey	Stereotypes hinder women's advancement.	Provincial sample.
22	Ogunleye Funmilola & Akinbami Joseph (2024)	Nigeria	So, S	Mixed	Cultural norms mediate access to finance.	Sector controls missing.
23	Nderitu Grace (2022)	Kenya	S, so	SME survey	Stereotypes and finance affect manufacturing SMEs.	Causal inference weak.
24	Chitsike Rudo (2023)	Zimbabwe (Harare)	S, so	Qualitative	Microcredit helps, but stereotypes persist.	Small sample; needs quant. data.
25	Muzvidziwa Violet (2024)	Zimbabwe	So	Qualitative	Socialisation shapes career aspirations.	Not sector-specific.
26	Chirume Tafadzwa & Mashingaidze Ronald (2023)	Harare	So, I	Interviews	Weak mentorship & low visibility hinder women.	Small purposive sample.
27	Makoni Nyasha (2022)	Zimbabwe	I, E	Survey	Conflicting gender identities reduce confidence.	Measurement validity issues.

No.	Author(s) (Year)	Country/ Context	Focus area ²	Methodology	Key findings	Critique / Gaps
28	Nyoni Tendai & Bonga Wellington (2019)	Zimbabwe	Finance	Mixed	Ecosystem barriers impede women's firm growth.	Finance focus; lacks gender expression/identity.
29	Bomani Munyaradzi (2020)	Harare	S, so	Case study	Procurement processes disadvantage women.	Needs broader sampling.
30	International Finance Corporation (2024)	Zimbabwe	S, E	Survey + report	Policy gaps persist; few women in manufacturing.	Lacks gender dynamic variables.

Focus

area

key:

S = Gender Stereotypes; I = Gender Identity; So = Gender Socialization; E = Gender Expression

2.4 Knowledge Gap

Although the body of literature on women's entrepreneurship has grown substantially in recent decades, critical gaps remain regarding the influence of gender dynamics on women's participation in manufacturing entrepreneurship. Globally, much of the scholarship has concentrated on structural barriers such as access to finance, markets, and institutional support (Brush et al., 2019; Shane & Venkataraman, 2020). While these studies have illuminated the external constraints women face, they rarely interrogate the subtle, gendered social and cultural dynamics such as gender stereotypes, identity, socialisation, and expression—that shape women's entrepreneurial decision-making, confidence, and participation within male-dominated sectors like manufacturing. This leaves a conceptual blind spot in understanding the psychological and sociocultural mechanisms that either discourage or enable women's entry and growth in manufacturing ventures (Elam et al., 2023; Hechavarria & Ingram, 2021).

At the regional level in Africa, existing studies have primarily examined women's entrepreneurship in the informal sector and in low-capital, female-dominated sectors such as retail, food processing, and textiles (Amine & Staub, 2021; Kwami & Darkwah, 2022). Although these studies have highlighted challenges such as inadequate finance, limited networks, and policy gaps, they often treat women entrepreneurs as a homogenous group and overlook how gender socialisation processes and identity formation affect women's

entrepreneurial trajectories. Moreover, African research rarely disaggregates the experience of women in high-impact sectors like manufacturing, where deeply entrenched gender norms portray technical and industrial work as masculine (Kamberidou, 2020; Kinyanjui, 2023). This generalisation obscures the specific cultural and identity-based barriers that deter women from entering or thriving in such industries, leaving their experiences and coping strategies largely undocumented.

Existing research on women entrepreneurship in Zimbabwe has largely focused on the informal sector (Dzawanda, Nicolau & Matsa, 2021), micro-enterprises (Kudejira, 2020) and service/trading businesses in Harare and other urban areas. Studies document barriers such as limited access to finance, regulatory burdens, and sociocultural norms (Mandongwe & Jaravaza, 2020). Most studies treat “entrepreneurship” as a homogenous category. Little empirical work has examined manufacturing entrepreneurship, which has higher capital requirements, greater technical demands, and different regulatory regimes than trading or services (Sanangura & Mwanza, 2024). It is unclear how gender dynamics operate specifically within Harare’s manufacturing sub-sector - e.g., chemicals, textiles, food processing, metalwork - where barriers may be more structural than in informal trading.

Much of the available literature is either national-level or focused on other SADC countries. Harare’s unique ecosystem - characterised by economic volatility, currency instability, a large informal manufacturing base, and proximity to policy/regulatory bodies - is under-examined (Matanzima, 2021). How these local conditions interact with gender dynamics to constrain or enable participation is not well documented. Existing work tends to list barriers descriptively. Few studies apply social identity theory, gendered institutions theory, or intersectionality to explain how gender dynamics shape identity, network access, and legitimacy for women in manufacturing (Dzawanda, Nicolau & Matsa, 2021). The relational aspect - how male-dominated networks, gatekeepers, and institutional norms actively mediate women’s entry and growth - remains under-theorised and under-measured.

In Zimbabwe, and specifically Harare, the empirical evidence is even more limited and fragmented. Studies by Chitsike (2021) and Mutanana and Tirivanhu (2023) have explored the challenges facing women entrepreneurs, but their focus has mainly been on access to finance, regulatory hurdles, and family responsibilities, with minimal attention to how gender stereotypes, identity, and expression shape entrepreneurial participation in male-dominated sectors. Furthermore, most local studies have examined women’s ventures at the micro and

small-scale levels, rather than investigating the structural and psychosocial dynamics affecting their involvement in high-impact manufacturing enterprises (Mawanza & Mlambo, 2024). As a result, there is insufficient understanding of how early gender socialisation, perceived gender roles, and gendered organisational cultures interact to influence women's choices, persistence, and growth in manufacturing entrepreneurship.

This paucity of research creates a crucial knowledge gap: there is no comprehensive model that integrates gender stereotypes, gender identity, gender socialisation, and gender expression as key determinants of women's participation in manufacturing entrepreneurship in Harare. Without addressing these overlooked gendered factors, existing policy and development interventions risk remaining gender-neutral and ineffective in fostering women's industrial participation. Therefore, this study seeks to fill this gap by empirically examining the influence of these four gender dynamics dimensions on women's participation in high-impact manufacturing entrepreneurship in Harare, Zimbabwe.

2.5 Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

This chapter outlines the theoretical and conceptual framework that underpins the study on the influence of gender dynamics on women's participation in manufacturing entrepreneurship in Harare, Zimbabwe. A theoretical framework provides the scholarly foundation of the research by clarifying the relationships between variables and justifying the rationale for the study (Kivunja, 2018). It draws upon established theories that explain how gender norms, identities, and social structures shape women's entrepreneurial behaviour, particularly within male-dominated sectors such as manufacturing. In contrast, the conceptual framework presents the core constructs of the study and illustrates the assumed interactions between the independent and dependent variables (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014).

Understanding gender dynamics is essential because entrepreneurship is not a gender-neutral field; women's entrepreneurial activities are embedded within social and cultural contexts that shape opportunities, resources, and constraints (Ahl, H. & Marlow, S., 2012). Women entrepreneurs often face barriers arising from gender stereotypes, identity expectations, socialisation patterns, and gendered modes of self-expression, which may limit their entry and growth in high-impact sectors like manufacturing (Brush, C. G., de Bruin, A., & Welter, F., 2009). Examining these gender dynamics offers a nuanced understanding of the structural and individual-level factors influencing women's participation. This chapter, therefore, delineates the theories underpinning the study, explains how they relate to the four dimensions of gender

dynamics (gender stereotypes, gender identity, gender socialisation, and gender expression), and presents a conceptual framework that maps the hypothesised relationships between these independent variables and the dependent variable — participation of women entrepreneurs in manufacturing entrepreneurship. The framework serves as the analytical lens for interpreting the findings of the study.

2.6 Theoretical Framework

A theoretical framework refers to the structure that supports and guides a research study by grounding it in existing theories and scholarly perspectives. It serves as the foundation upon which the study is built, offering explanations of the relationships among variables and providing a lens for interpreting findings (Allen et al., 2021). It outlines the theories, models, or conceptual assumptions that inform the researcher's understanding of the phenomenon under investigation (Peters & Torfing, 2025). According to Christensen, Læg Reid & Røvik (2020), a theoretical framework helps to connect the researcher's ideas to existing knowledge, guiding the development of research questions, the design of the study, and the interpretation of results. It ensures that the research is not conducted in isolation but rather situated within the broader scholarly discourse, enhancing its coherence, validity, and contribution to knowledge.

2.6.1 Social Capital Theory

Social Capital Theory, initially advanced by Bourdieu (2018) and further elaborated by scholars such as Claridge (2018) and Lin (2019), emphasises the value of social networks and interactions as critical resources for individuals and groups. Social capital reflects the web of relationships through which individuals can access support, information, and opportunities necessary for entrepreneurial success. In the context of manufacturing entrepreneurship, this theory sheds light on how gender dynamics shape women's ability to create, access, and leverage such networks.

A key contribution of Social Capital Theory is the distinction between bonding and bridging social capital. Bonding social capital refers to ties within homogeneous groups, offering trust and support but often limiting exposure to diverse resources. Bridging social capital, on the other hand, connects individuals across heterogeneous groups, granting access to broader opportunities and resources (Claridge, 2018). Women in manufacturing entrepreneurship often face challenges in cultivating bridging social capital due to gendered institutional structures that restrict their access to diverse and influential networks. Lin (2019) notes that while women entrepreneurs frequently possess strong bonding social capital, their access to bridging social

capital is constrained. This limitation hampers their ability to secure funding, acquire market intelligence, and access technological expertise. Consequently, there is a need for initiatives that enable women to strategically expand their networks beyond immediate circles.

The quality of social capital also plays a decisive role in entrepreneurial outcomes. Boudreaux, Clarke, and Jha (2022) argue that the depth and value of connections matter more than sheer size. This aligns with Dubos (2017), who stresses the importance of cultivating strategic relationships that offer mentorship, industry knowledge, and financial backing. Similarly, Jones (2014) and Huang (2016) emphasise that the effectiveness of social capital depends on the robustness and relevance of networks, suggesting that women should prioritise building connections that yield industry-specific benefits. Despite these insights, Martin et al. (2020) observe that research remains limited on how gender dynamics specifically affect women's ability to build and exploit social capital in male-dominated industries such as manufacturing. One major concern is the exclusionary practices embedded within established networks. As Lin (2019) highlights, power dynamics and biases can prevent women from accessing meaningful connections, thereby reinforcing systemic inequalities in entrepreneurship.

To address these gaps, Dubos (2017) advocates for targeted interventions, such as mentorship programs and women-focused networking initiatives, which can help female entrepreneurs gain access to critical resources. However, there is still a notable absence of policy frameworks and institutional practices that intentionally strengthen women's social capital in the manufacturing sector. Finally, several areas warrant further exploration. More empirical studies, particularly quantitative research, are needed to assess the impact of social capital on women's entrepreneurial success in manufacturing. Additionally, future work should investigate how social capital interacts with other forms of capital, such as human and financial, to shape entrepreneurial outcomes. Longitudinal research could also provide valuable insights into the long-term role of social capital in the growth and sustainability of women-led manufacturing firms.

2.6.2 Feminist Theory

Feminist Theory provides a critical lens for understanding systemic inequities that limit women's participation in male-dominated industries such as manufacturing and entrepreneurship. Rooted in the critique of patriarchal structures, this theory seeks to expose and dismantle gender-based barriers that perpetuate inequality. Applied to manufacturing

entrepreneurship, Feminist Theory underscores the persistent challenges women face while highlighting the need for institutional reforms that promote gender equity.

Ferguson (2017) emphasises intersectionality within Feminist Theory, illustrating how overlapping social categories such as race, class, and gender shape women's unique experiences in entrepreneurship. Intersectionality reveals that marginalised women often encounter compounded disadvantages, suggesting that tackling gender inequality requires a multifaceted approach that addresses diverse identities and forms of oppression. Allen (2018) extends this discussion by foregrounding the role of power relations. In manufacturing entrepreneurship, women frequently have unequal access to resources, opportunities, and decision-making power. From a feminist perspective, such disparities are not merely individual shortcomings but reflections of structural and societal imbalances. Achieving gender equity, therefore, requires confronting and transforming these entrenched power dynamics.

Disch and Hawkesworth (2016) argue that Feminist Theory also serves as a framework for analysing how gendered assumptions influence social norms and practices. In the manufacturing sector, such assumptions often manifest in the undervaluing of women's contributions, reinforcement of gender stereotypes, and inadequate institutional support. Feminist Theory enables scholars and policymakers to critically scrutinise these patterns, making visible the gender biases that sustain inequality. Building on this, Acker (1987) highlights the importance of Feminist Theory in policy advocacy. By informing strategies such as equitable funding models, mentorship opportunities, and gender-sensitive regulations, Feminist Theory can guide the creation of supportive ecosystems for women in manufacturing entrepreneurship. These measures are essential in fostering inclusion and levelling the playing field for female entrepreneurs.

Finally, Byrne (2016) stresses the transformative potential of Feminist Theory. Beyond critique, it offers pathways for societal change by amplifying women's achievements, challenging exclusionary practices, and encouraging inclusive behaviours. When applied to manufacturing entrepreneurship, this perspective can help recognise women-led enterprises, dismantle systemic barriers, and catalyse broader cultural and institutional shifts toward gender equity. Feminist Theory has significantly contributed to understanding gender disparities, yet gaps remain in applying it to industrial entrepreneurship. While the theory provides a critical foundation, further empirical research is essential to capture the lived experiences, challenges, and opportunities of women entrepreneurs in manufacturing sectors.

Ferguson (2017) observes that intersectional analyses remain underutilised in entrepreneurship research. Limited attention has been given to how intersecting factors such as race, class, and sexuality shape women's entrepreneurial experiences. Exploring these intersections could reveal unique challenges faced by different groups of women, thereby informing more targeted interventions. Spigel (2017) highlights a gap in understanding power dynamics within entrepreneurial ecosystems. Although Feminist Theory emphasises structural inequities, little is known about how power relations manifest in manufacturing enterprises and influence women's access to resources, opportunities, and networks. Future research should examine strategies for addressing these inequities.

Disch and Hawkesworth (2016) further emphasise the need for deeper inquiry into gendered assumptions and social norms. How stereotypes and cultural expectations shape women's decision-making, confidence, and business practices in industrial contexts remains underexplored. Addressing this gap would support efforts to dismantle harmful norms that hinder women's entrepreneurial success. Acker (1987) calls for policy-oriented research that evaluates interventions such as funding initiatives, mentorship programs, and business support systems. Empirical evidence on the effectiveness of these strategies is needed to inform more impactful gender-equity policies in manufacturing entrepreneurship.

Finally, Byrne (2016) stresses the importance of longitudinal studies to examine the long-term impact of feminist-informed interventions. While much research documents barriers faced by women, less is known about the sustained outcomes of support mechanisms and reforms. Long-term data would help assess the durability of gender-equity gains in manufacturing entrepreneurship. Feminist Theory, when applied to high-impact industrial entrepreneurship, highlights the structural and cultural barriers that hinder gender equity in entrepreneurial ecosystems. Central to this perspective is the recognition that women entrepreneurs often face significant constraints in accessing critical resources, including financial capital, professional networks, mentorship opportunities, and technical training. Addressing these disparities is essential for enabling more women to enter, thrive, and sustain growth in the manufacturing sector. By closing the resource gap, societies can unlock greater participation and success for women entrepreneurs in traditionally male-dominated industries.

Feminist-informed policy interventions play a pivotal role in dismantling systemic inequalities. Gender-sensitive financial schemes designed specifically for women-led manufacturing enterprises can provide equitable access to capital and reduce funding disparities. Similarly,

supportive policies such as parental leave, childcare provision, and flexible work arrangements create enabling conditions that empower women to pursue and manage entrepreneurial ventures effectively.

Cultural transformation is equally critical in advancing women's industrial entrepreneurship. Persistent gendered stereotypes that undervalue women's contributions to manufacturing must be challenged and reshaped. Public awareness campaigns, inclusive education initiatives, and positive media representation can shift societal perceptions, fostering an environment in which women's entrepreneurial activities are normalised and valued. In this way, Feminist Theory not only critiques existing inequities but also provides a framework for actionable strategies that promote inclusivity, innovation, and resilience in industrial entrepreneurship.

2.6.3 Entrepreneurship Ecosystem Theory

The theory of entrepreneurship ecosystems has become a vital foundation for understanding the complex and interrelated network of individuals, organisations, and processes that foster and sustain entrepreneurial activity (Wurth, Stam, & Spigel, 2022). The theory emphasises the importance of a supportive environment that includes financial resources, skilled human capital, market opportunities, and networking capabilities. It also underscores the role of cultural and social norms in promoting creativity, innovation, and risk-taking. This holistic perspective is critical for analysing the multiple factors influencing entrepreneurial success and the growth of entrepreneurial communities. Despite progress in this field, several research gaps remain, necessitating further exploration to enrich and expand the theoretical framework.

According to Spigel and Harrison (2018), an entrepreneurial ecosystem comprises interconnected actors and elements that collectively shape the success of entrepreneurial ventures within a specific geographic context. These elements include financial institutions, universities and research centres, government policies, support organisations, cultural factors, and markets. The interactions among these components create an enabling environment where entrepreneurship can thrive. For instance, efficient banking systems provide essential funding, while favourable government policies create regulatory conditions that support enterprise growth.

Wurth, Stam, and Spigel (2022) further stress the dynamic nature of entrepreneurial ecosystems, noting that they evolve as interactions among actors and institutions shift. A dynamic lens is crucial for examining how ecosystems respond to emerging challenges and opportunities. Thriving ecosystems, according to the authors, are marked by strong

interconnectedness and collaboration among stakeholders, facilitating the smooth exchange of knowledge, resources, and support.

However, significant empirical gaps persist in ecosystem research. One key limitation is the lack of standardised metrics for evaluating ecosystem performance. Brush et al. (2019) highlight that without clear measures; it is difficult to compare ecosystems across regions or identify best practices. Another gap lies in the absence of longitudinal studies. Kansheba (2020a) observes that most existing research offers static snapshots, which limit understanding of how ecosystems develop and transform over time. Longitudinal studies would provide deeper insights into the mechanisms driving ecosystem sustainability and resilience.

Cultural influences also remain underexplored. Alvedalen and Boschma (2017) argue that although culture is recognised as important, little empirical evidence explains how specific cultural values—such as attitudes toward failure and risk-taking—shape entrepreneurial ecosystems. Addressing this gap requires interdisciplinary approaches that integrate insights from sociology, psychology, and business studies. Another critical area concerns informal networks and social capital. Brush et al. (2019) note that while mentorship, peer support, and community-based networks play a crucial role in providing resources and guidance, these informal mechanisms are often overlooked in ecosystem assessments. Future research should incorporate both formal and informal structures to capture the full spectrum of entrepreneurial support.

Finally, inclusivity in ecosystem research requires more attention. Collins (2024) calls for a deeper exploration of the unique challenges faced by women, minority entrepreneurs, and social enterprises. These groups often experience structural barriers and opportunities that are inadequately addressed in mainstream studies. By integrating diverse entrepreneurial experiences, researchers can design more inclusive ecosystem models that yield equitable outcomes.

2.6.4 Social Role Theory

The Social Role Theory, developed by Alice Eagly and Wendy Wood, provides a useful framework for understanding how societal expectations and prescribed roles shape individual behaviours, attitudes, and opportunities. This theory is particularly relevant in analysing gender dynamics within high-impact industrial entrepreneurship, where women remain significantly underrepresented. Social Role Theory posits that gendered expectations, shaped by historical and cultural factors, continue to influence professional engagement. Traditionally, men have

been assigned the role of breadwinners and women the role of caregivers. These distinctions influence occupational participation, steering women away from fields such as manufacturing entrepreneurship, which are culturally constructed as male-dominated, technically demanding, and risk-oriented (Eagly & Wood, 2016c).

Research has shown that such gendered stereotypes serve as barriers for women. Vandenberghe, Bentein, and Stinglhamber (2017b) note that stereotypes, rooted in social role expectations, create psychological obstacles that discourage women from pursuing manufacturing ventures. These biases reinforce the perception that women lack the necessary technical and risk-management competencies for success in industrial entrepreneurship. The Cherie Blair Foundation for Women (2021) further underscores how cultural expectations influence both women's self-perceptions and the way they are evaluated by investors, partners, and other actors in the entrepreneurial ecosystem.

Hogg and Terry (2000a) extend Social Role Theory by emphasising the role of identity processes in occupational choice. Their findings suggest that individuals are more inclined to pursue roles consistent with both self-concept and societal expectations. Women who internalise traditional gender norms may therefore perceive entrepreneurial pathways in manufacturing as incompatible with their identity, reducing motivation to pursue such opportunities. Despite the explanatory strength of Social Role Theory, several gaps remain in understanding how gender dynamics shape women's participation in high-impact entrepreneurship:

Cultural Context: Much of the research is Western-centric, overlooking the diverse ways social roles operate in non-Western societies. Cross-cultural studies are essential to uncover how differing cultural expectations shape women's entrepreneurial choices globally.

Intersectionality: Existing studies often treat women as a homogenous group, disregarding how gender interacts with race, class, ethnicity, and other identities. An intersectional approach could reveal nuanced barriers and opportunities in manufacturing entrepreneurship.

Longitudinal Studies: Most current research is cross-sectional, limiting insight into how gender roles evolve. Longitudinal studies would illuminate how shifting social roles impact women's entrepreneurial trajectories.

Effectiveness of Interventions: While Social Role Theory highlights structural barriers, less attention has been paid to evaluating the effectiveness of interventions such as mentorship

programs, gender-sensitive finance, and policy reforms. Empirical research in this area would provide practical insights for fostering inclusion.

Gender Expression: Studies suggest that gender expression influences entrepreneurial outcomes (Vandenberghe, Bentein, & Stinglhamber, 2017a; Ridgeway, 2011). However, further exploration is required to understand how diverse forms of gender identity affect women's leadership experiences and success in manufacturing entrepreneurship. In sum, Social Role Theory underscores the deep influence of societal expectations on women's underrepresentation in industrial entrepreneurship. However, future research must expand its scope to include cultural diversity, intersectional identities, longitudinal perspectives, and practical interventions in order to fully address the structural and cultural barriers women face in this high-impact sector.

2.6.5 The Theory of Structural Functionalism

Structural Functionalism, introduced by Talcott and Turner (2013), views society as an intricate system in which different components collaborate to promote stability and order. This perspective highlights the interdependence of social institutions—such as family, education, religion, economy, and government—and their role in sustaining societal balance. Within this framework, gender roles and occupational choices, including women's participation in manufacturing, are shaped by prevailing norms, values, and institutional arrangements.

According to Talcott and Turner (2013), each societal institution performs specific functions that contribute to continuity and stability. For example, the family socialises children, while the economy ensures the provision of essential resources. Applied to manufacturing, this theory suggests that institutional structures and cultural expectations significantly shape women's involvement in industrial roles, particularly in leadership and technical positions. Cislighi and Heise (2016) argue that educational and economic institutions reinforce conventional gender norms. Educational systems often channel women into fields deemed “appropriate” for their gender, reducing exposure to STEM disciplines critical for manufacturing careers. Similarly, economic institutions tend to privilege male-dominated networks and leadership styles, further restricting women's participation in high-impact industrial sectors.

Despite its explanatory power, Structural Functionalism has been criticised for its deterministic outlook and limited recognition of individual agency. Critics argue that the theory overemphasises stability while underestimating the potential for social change and individual

autonomy (Ormerod, 2020). Nonetheless, it remains useful for understanding how institutional frameworks can both enable and constrain women's opportunities in manufacturing.

Structural Functionalism also highlights how gendered task allocation reflects perceived functional needs of society. Men are often socially constructed as more suited for technical and leadership roles, while women are relegated to supportive or administrative positions. These patterns, reinforced through socialisation in families, schools, and workplaces, perpetuate systemic inequalities. Izadi, Mohammadi, and Nasekhian (2020) observe that such structural barriers create a self-perpetuating cycle in which women face implicit biases, limited mentorship, unequal pay, and constrained career progression in industrial contexts.

Education plays a particularly pivotal role. Pandey and Chaudhary (2017) note that curricula and pedagogical approaches frequently fail to encourage girls to pursue STEM subjects, thereby reducing their competitiveness in manufacturing careers. Combined with societal norms, this educational bias discourages many women from entering or advancing in the sector. Finally, economic frameworks also shape women's participation. Ormerod (2020) highlights persistent gendered disparities in access to finance and entrepreneurial support, which disproportionately benefit men. This economic inequality not only hinders women from starting or scaling manufacturing businesses but also reinforces broader structural barriers that limit their full engagement in high-impact industries.

2.7 Research Gaps

While Structural Functionalism provides critical insights into how social institutions perpetuate gender roles, several notable research gaps remain. First, there is a scarcity of empirical studies that holistically examine the intersection of multiple social institutions, such as education, family, economy, and policy and their collective influence on women's participation in high-impact manufacturing. Existing scholarship often isolates one institution at a time, such as schools or workplaces, but fails to capture the synergistic and sometimes compounding effects these institutions exert on women entrepreneurs in the manufacturing sector (Parsons, 1951; Chafetz, 1997). This narrow approach limits a comprehensive understanding of the structural barriers that constrain women's full engagement.

Second, longitudinal and dynamic analyses are conspicuously lacking. Much of the current literature relies on cross-sectional data that captures gender disparities at a single point in time. However, societal norms, labour markets, and institutional practices are constantly evolving, particularly in the wake of globalisation, digitisation, and shifting policy reforms (Walby,

2011). Longitudinal studies would provide critical insights into how transformations in education laws, access to finance, industrial policies, and workplace culture over decades influence the trajectory of women's inclusion in manufacturing. For instance, Albanesi and Olivetti (2007) suggest that technological innovations—automation, robotics, and digital platforms—can disrupt traditional labour divisions and open new opportunities for women. Yet, little empirical evidence has examined whether such advancements actually narrow or widen gender gaps in manufacturing sectors.

Third, cross-cultural and comparative studies are minimal. While there is extensive research on gender inequality in general, much of it is concentrated in Western or developed contexts (Connell, 2005). Very limited work has systematically compared how diverse sociocultural, economic, and institutional frameworks influence women's participation in manufacturing across regions such as Sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia, and Latin America (Kabeer, 2015). A comparative lens is essential to identify context-specific barriers as well as transferable best practices. Without such perspectives, policy prescriptions remain generalised and may not adequately address localised structural constraints.

Fourth, the role of women's agency and resistance strategies remains underexplored. Structural Functionalism tends to emphasise the power of social structures in shaping outcomes but pays limited attention to how women actively resist, navigate, and subvert these constraints (Acker, 1990). Few studies examine how women entrepreneurs in manufacturing build informal networks, create mentorship programs, leverage advocacy groups, or mobilise policy reforms to challenge exclusionary practices (Marlow & McAdam, 2013). Exploring such bottom-up strategies could enrich the theoretical narrative by highlighting resilience, agency, and pathways toward structural change.

Fifth, institutional biases in financial and policy frameworks remain under-investigated. While it is acknowledged that women often face barriers in accessing capital, land, and credit, there is insufficient empirical evidence on how financial institutions' design and policy implementation either perpetuate or mitigate gender inequality (Brush, de Bruin, & Welter, 2009). Similarly, little attention has been given to how industrial policies, tax incentives, and funding programs disproportionately favour male-owned enterprises (World Bank, 2020). Such structural imbalances demand systematic analysis if equitable participation in manufacturing is to be realised.

Lastly, the intersectionality of gender with other social categories such as class, age, education, and rural-urban location is insufficiently addressed. Women in manufacturing are not a homogeneous group. Their experiences vary widely depending on socioeconomic background, cultural setting, or generational cohort (Crenshaw, 1991). The absence of intersectional perspectives risks oversimplifying gender barriers and obscuring the unique challenges faced by marginalised subgroups of women entrepreneurs (Collins, 2015).

In light of these gaps, future research should: examine the combined and intersectional effects of multiple social institutions; employ longitudinal methodologies to capture the dynamic evolution of gender roles in manufacturing; undertake cross-cultural comparative analyses to identify transferable best practices; investigate women's agency, strategies of resistance, and grassroots innovations; analyze institutional and policy-level biases in financing, industrial policies, and entrepreneurial ecosystems; and incorporate intersectionality to account for diverse experiences of women in manufacturing. Such investigations would provide a more nuanced, evidence-based understanding of gender dynamics and structural barriers, thereby informing policies and interventions that genuinely promote women's full participation in high-impact manufacturing.

2.8 Conceptual Framework

This conceptual framework investigates how women's participation in manufacturing entrepreneurship in Harare is impacted by gender stereotypes, gender identity, gender socialisation, and gender expression. The framework thoroughly explains these factors by drawing on theoretical viewpoints and empirical data, particularly Social Role Theory.

Conceptual Framework

Independent Variable (Gender Characterisation)

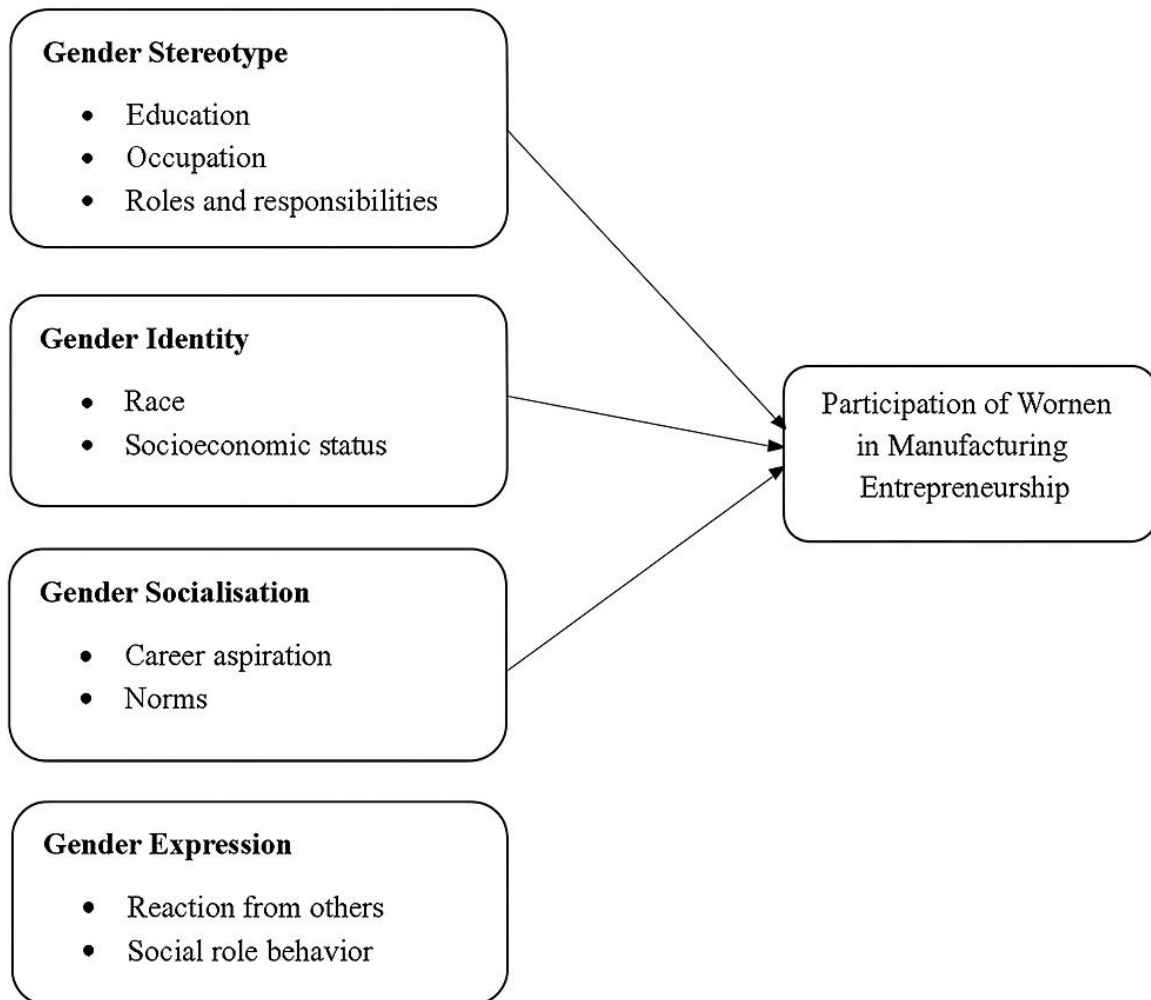


Figure 2.1: Conceptual Framework (source: Muzorori 2025)

2.8.1 Gender Stereotypes

Gender stereotypes refer to broadly held ideas about the traits, qualities, and roles suitable for men and women, and these misconceptions can seriously impede women's involvement in high-impact industrial entrepreneurship. In education, stereotypes often restrict women's access to technical subjects and entrepreneurial training, as women are frequently encouraged to pursue professions in the humanities and social sciences, which are perceived as more gender-neutral than STEM fields (Eccles, 1987). This educational bias results in fewer women qualifying for high-impact manufacturing roles, limiting their potential to establish their own

businesses (Brush, de Bruin, & Welter, 2019). Similarly, preconceived notions about suitable jobs for women deter many from entering the manufacturing sector. Stereotypes that question women's technical proficiency and leadership qualities in manufacturing reduce opportunities and undermine confidence to launch ventures, as the belief that women lack the necessary skills for high-impact roles creates barriers to entry and advancement (Talcott & Turner, 2013; Spigel & Harrison, 2018). Furthermore, societal expectations often dictate that women shoulder disproportionate household and childcare duties, which restrict their time and energy and make it challenging to pursue demanding entrepreneurial endeavours (Pandey & Chaudhary, 2017). Consequently, the pressure to conform to traditional roles discourages women from fully participating in high-impact manufacturing entrepreneurship (Izadi, Mohammadi, & Nasekhian, 2020).

2.8.2 Gender Identity

Gender identity, which encompasses how individuals perceive and express their gender, plays a significant role in shaping entrepreneurial aspirations and outcomes. When combined with other social factors, it can further complicate women's engagement in high-impact industrial entrepreneurship. For instance, the intersection of gender and race often magnifies challenges for women in manufacturing entrepreneurship, as women from ethnic minority backgrounds may encounter additional prejudices and barriers that limit their participation and success (Brush et al., 2019). These intersecting disadvantages contribute to lower levels of entrepreneurship engagement among These ialized women, as stereotypes and systemic inequities compound their struggles (Spigel & Harrison, 2018). Moreover, socioeconomic status strongly influences women's entrepreneurial pursuits, with individuals from lower socioeconomic backgrounds often lacking access to critical networks, financial capital, and institutional support needed to establish and sustain manufacturing businesses (Cook, 2014). Such disparities widen the gender gap in entrepreneurship by restricting opportunities and reinforcing structural inequalities, further disadvantaging women in high-impact manufacturing sectors (Kansheba, 2020b). Thus, the study shall determine and test the following hypotheses

H₂ - Gender identity does not influence the level of involvement of women in high-impact manufacturing entrepreneurship in Harare.

2.8.3 Gender Socialisation

Gender socialisation refers to the process through which individuals learn and internalise gender norms and societal expectations, thereby shaping their career behaviours and objectives. From an early age, boys and girls are often socialised differently, with girls frequently discouraged from pursuing technical and entrepreneurial endeavours, leading to fewer women aspiring to careers in manufacturing (Talcott & Turner, 2013). Encouraging girls to engage in STEM education and entrepreneurial activities has been identified as crucial to increasing their participation in high-impact manufacturing entrepreneurship (Diekmann & Steinberg, 2013; Charles & Bradley, 2009). Social norms also play a central role in determining acceptable behaviours and professional choices for women. Discriminatory norms that devalue women's skills in technical and hazardous fields can significantly deter them from pursuing industrial entrepreneurship (Institute, 2020; Durante & Rittweger, 2021). To address these barriers, challenging restrictive norms through public awareness campaigns and educational reforms is essential in fostering a more inclusive and supportive entrepreneurial environment (Spigel & Harrison, 2018). Thus, the study shall determine and test the following hypotheses

H₃ - Gender stereotypes do not influence women's participation in high-impact manufacturing entrepreneurship in Harare.

2.8.4 Gender Expression

Gender expression refers to the outward demonstration of gender identity through behaviour, clothing, hairstyles, and other aspects of personal presentation, and it significantly shapes individuals' opportunities and experiences in entrepreneurship. In male-dominated fields such as manufacturing, women who display traits traditionally linked to masculinity, such as assertiveness, competitiveness, and risk-taking, may be more readily accepted, although they may simultaneously face criticism for defying conventional expectations of femininity (Pandey & Chaudhary, 2017). Positive reinforcement from mentors, peers, and industry stakeholders can strengthen women's self-confidence and support their advancement in manufacturing entrepreneurship (Ormerod, 2020). Conversely, rigid adherence to traditional social role expectations may limit women's entrepreneurial potential, particularly in technical or leadership roles where they are often scrutinised more intensely than men. Encouraging diverse forms of gender expression and fostering inclusive practices is therefore essential for building an entrepreneurial ecosystem that values and supports women's varied contributions (Calás, Smircich, & Bourne, 2009).

Thus, the study shall determine and test the following hypotheses

H₄ - Gender stereotypes do not influence women's participation in high-impact manufacturing entrepreneurship in Harare.

2.9 Operationalisation of Concepts

Operationalisation refers to the process of converting abstract theoretical concepts into measurable variables and indicators that can be empirically assessed in a study (Babbie, E., 2021; Kumar, R., 2019). In this study, the core concept is gender dynamics and its influence on women's participation in high-impact manufacturing entrepreneurship. Gender dynamics are disaggregated into four main dimensions—gender stereotypes, gender identity, gender socialisation, and gender expression—which are treated as the independent variables, while participation of women entrepreneurs in high-impact manufacturing entrepreneurship is the dependent variable.

This operationalisation ensures that each dimension of gender dynamics is systematically measured using specific sub-indicators to allow for accurate statistical analysis (Neuman, W. L., 2014; Bryman, A., 2016).

Table 2.2: Operationalisation of Study Concepts

Study Objective	Concept	Variable Code	Sub-Indicators	Measurement Scale
Objective 1: To understand the effect of gender stereotypes on women's participation	Gender Stereotypes	Z1	Z11: Belief that men are better leaders Z12: Perception that manufacturing is male-only	5-point Likert Scale (1=Strongly Disagree to

Study Objective	Concept	Variable Code	Sub-Indicators	Measurement Scale
			Z13: Cultural belief that women lack technical skills Z14: Expectation for women to focus on domestic roles	5=Strongly Agree)
Objective 2: To discover the effect of gender identity on the involvement of women	Gender Identity	Z2	Z21: Confidence as a woman entrepreneur Z22: Perceived compatibility of gender and entrepreneurship Z23: Sense of belonging in manufacturing spaces Z24: Entrepreneurial self-efficacy	5-point Likert Scale
Objective 3: To evaluate the effect of gender socialization on the participation of women	Gender Socialization	Z3	Z31: Exposure to female role models in manufacturing Z32: Family encouragement to pursue technical fields Z33: Mentorship and training received Z34: Early gendered career expectations	5-point Likert Scale
Objective 4: To establish how women's gender expression influences their participation	Gender Expression	Z4	Z41: Dressing/appearance accepted in male-dominated spaces Z42: Assertiveness and communication style Z43: Willingness to challenge gender norms Z44: Perceived respect and acceptance from male peers	5-point Likert Scale
Dependent Variable	Women's Participation in Manufacturing Entrepreneurship	Y	Y=1 (participates in high-impact manufacturing sector) Y=0 (participates in female-dominated sectors)	

2.10 Chapter Summary

This chapter presented a comprehensive review of literature relevant to the influence of gender dynamics on women's participation in manufacturing entrepreneurship. It examined theoretical foundations, including Social Role Theory, Gender Schema Theory, and Social Identity

Theory, which underpin the understanding of how gender norms shape women's entrepreneurial behaviour. The review also synthesised empirical studies from global, African, and Zimbabwean contexts, highlighting the various ways in which gender stereotypes, gender identity, gender socialisation, and gender expression influence women's decisions to enter or avoid manufacturing entrepreneurship. Despite the growing body of literature on women's entrepreneurship, the chapter established that most prior studies have concentrated on structural and economic factors such as access to finance, markets, and regulatory environments, with minimal attention to gendered sociocultural dimensions. The critique of empirical studies further revealed methodological gaps, including reliance on cross-sectional descriptive studies, inadequate theoretical anchoring, and limited focus on women operating in male-dominated manufacturing sectors. These gaps underscore the need for a more integrative and gender-aware approach to understanding women's entrepreneurial participation.

The chapter also comprehensively examined the theoretical and empirical literature on gender dynamics in manufacturing entrepreneurship. The chapter provided an in-depth analysis of several theories, such as Social Role Theory, Feminist Theory, Social Capital Theory, and Entrepreneurship Ecosystem Theory. It explained how these theories relate to women's involvement in high-impact manufacturing. In addition, the concept of Structural Functionalism was explored to demonstrate the impact of societal institutions and conventions on gender roles within this particular industry. The empirical review emphasised the current research and revealed notable deficiencies in longitudinal studies and cross-cultural assessments. The conceptual framework integrated these understandings, establishing a solid basis for future research to develop more comprehensive and encouraging entrepreneurial environments.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.0 Chapter Overview

This chapter outlines the research methodology adopted to examine the influence of gender dynamics on the participation of women entrepreneurs in manufacturing entrepreneurship in Harare, Zimbabwe. The purpose of the methodology section is to explain and justify the research design, approach, population, sampling strategy, data collection methods, and data analysis procedures that will be used to answer the study's research questions and achieve its objectives. The study seeks to understand not only the extent of women's participation in manufacturing entrepreneurship, but also how gendered norms, access to resources, networks, and institutional practices shape that participation. Given the complex and context-specific nature of gender dynamics, the research requires a methodology that can capture both measurable patterns and lived experiences of women entrepreneurs operating in Harare's manufacturing sector. Accordingly, this chapter is structured into the following sections: research philosophy, research design, research approach, study population and sampling, data collection instruments, data collection procedures, data analysis methods, validity and reliability considerations, and ethical considerations. Each component is selected to ensure that the study generates credible, contextually relevant, and replicable findings on how gender dynamics influence women's engagement and advancement in manufacturing entrepreneurship in Harare. Each methodological choice is justified within the framework of the paradigm adopted, thereby reinforcing the coherence and rigour of the research process.

3.1 Research Philosophy

Research philosophy is a set of beliefs and assumptions about how knowledge is created and what is valid knowledge (Asmawi & Alam, 2024). It guides the choice of research methods, data collection, and analysis by defining how a researcher understands reality and knowledge (Yadav, 2023). Research philosophy is not necessary to become a philosopher, but it is essential for understanding the basic assumptions underlying the research approach and demonstrating that the chosen methodology is logically consistent with those assumptions (Hoda, 2024). Research philosophy can be categorised into three main areas: ontology, epistemology, and axiology. Ontology concerns the nature of reality itself, epistemology the study of how we come to know things, and axiology the role of values and ethics in research (Yadav, 2023). Each of these areas shapes the way researchers approach their studies and the knowledge they

seek to obtain (Brandenburg & McDonough, 2019). Understanding research philosophy is crucial for designing stronger studies and clearly explaining the decisions made during the research process. It ensures coherence between the research methodology and the philosophical stance, strengthens the work's credibility, and helps navigate real research dilemmas (Melegati & Wang, 2021).

3.1.1 Positivism

Common research philosophies include positivism, interpretivism, and pragmatism. Positivism is a research philosophy that asserts knowledge is derived from observable, measurable facts, emphasising objectivity, hypothesis testing, and generalizable findings (Karupiah, 2022; Yadav, 2023). Positivism is grounded in the belief that reality exists independently of human perception and can be studied objectively through empirical observation and measurement (researchers act as neutral observers) (Karupiah, 2022). It assumes that knowledge is discoverable, causal relationships can be identified, and scientific methods are the most reliable means to uncover truth (Melegati and Wang, 2021). In practice, positivist research typically involves quantitative methods, such as surveys, experiments, and structured observations, often using statistical tools like SPSS or SmartPLS for data analysis. Researchers follow a deductive approach, starting with a theory, formulating hypotheses, and testing them empirically. The methodology is highly structured to ensure replicability and objectivity, with minimal researcher interference in the phenomena being studied. Examples include randomised controlled trials, drug efficacy studies, and experiments measuring causal effects between variables.

3.1.2 Interpretivism

Interpretivism is a qualitative research philosophy that emphasises understanding the subjective meanings and experiences of individuals within their social contexts. Interpretivism posits that reality is subjective and socially constructed. Researchers acknowledge that individuals perceive and interpret the world based on their unique experiences, values, and beliefs (Bairagi & Munot, 2019). This contrasts with positivism, which seeks objective truths through quantifiable data. Context is crucial in interpretivist research. Researchers aim to understand phenomena within specific social, cultural, and historical contexts, which help illuminate the meanings behind observed behaviours or phenomena. Interpretivist research often employs qualitative methods such as interviews, observations, and textual analysis. These methods allow for a deeper exploration of the richness and complexity of human experiences

(Yadav, 2023). The philosophy emphasises the role of meaning and symbolism in human behaviour and communication. Researchers strive to uncover the meanings individuals ascribe to their actions, interactions, and experiences. Interpretivism encourages a holistic understanding of social phenomena, exploring the interconnectedness of various factors that contribute to individuals' experiences and perceptions (Bairagi & Munot, 2019)

3.1.3 Pragmatism

Pragmatism is a philosophical movement that emphasises the practical consequences of ideas and actions as the basis for their truth and meaning (Hoda, 2024). Heeks, Wall, & Graham (2025). Pragmatism is a school of philosophy that originated in the United States in the late 19th century. It posits that the truth of an idea or proposition is determined by its practical effects and applications. This means that rather than focusing on abstract principles or doctrines, pragmatism prioritises action, experience, and the outcomes of ideas (Bairagi and Munot, 2019). The central tenet is that ideas are tools for problem-solving and should be evaluated based on their effectiveness in real-world situations. Pragmatist research philosophy is a flexible and practical approach that emphasises the usefulness and applicability of research findings. It allows researchers to use both qualitative and quantitative methods based on what best addresses the research question (Brandenburg & McDonough, 2019). Core tenets of pragmatist research philosophy include Practicality by emphasising the practical consequences of ideas and actions. Secondly, its flexibility through using a variety of methods, both quantitative and qualitative, depending on the specifics of the research question (Heeks, Wall & Graham, 2025). Thirdly, it's the context of considering the specific circumstances of the research problem when choosing methods and interpreting results (Ritz, 2020). Finally, process through viewing research as an ongoing process of inquiry, open to modifying methods and interpretations as data is gathered (Ritz, 2020). Pragmatism is particularly useful in action research, participatory research, and mixed-methods research, where practical knowledge is sought to solve everyday life problems and improve people's lives. It is a philosophy that shapes the way individuals execute business when engaged in inquiry, providing a guiding method for delivering action (Brandenburg & McDonough, 2019)

3.1.4 Core Assumptions of Pragmatism

Ontology: Pragmatism takes a flexible view of reality. It acknowledges that both objective structures and subjective experiences exist and matter. In this study, the objective structures include access to capital, regulatory requirements, and market data in Harare's manufacturing

sector. The subjective experiences include perceptions of gender norms, discrimination, and support networks as reported by women entrepreneurs (Melegati & Wang, 2021; Karupiah, 2022).

Epistemology: Knowledge is constructed through action and inquiry. What counts as valid knowledge is what works to explain and solve the problem at hand. This means combining empirical evidence with contextual understanding to produce actionable insights (Bairagi & Munot, 2019)

Axiology: The research is value-driven and oriented toward practical outcomes. The goal is to generate findings that can inform policy, support organisations, and improve participation outcomes for women entrepreneurs in manufacturing (Ritz, 2020).

A pragmatist philosophy allows the researcher to combine quantitative and qualitative methods without being forced into a purely positivist or interpretivist position. This aligns with the mixed methods design commonly used in business and social science research where complex social problems are studied (Ritz, 2020).

3.2 Research Design

Research design refers to the systematic framework that guides the collection, measurement, and analysis of data to ensure that a study's objectives are met in an organised, reliable, and valid manner (Howard & Henderson, 2023). It aligns the research question with appropriate methods, procedures, and analytical tools, thereby ensuring focus, feasibility, and ethical soundness (Howard & Henderson, 2023). Mixed Methods Research is defined as the integration of qualitative and quantitative approaches within a single study to provide a more comprehensive understanding of complex research problems than either approach alone can achieve (Das & Das, 2026). The central premise of MMR is to leverage the strengths of both data types: qualitative data provides depth, context, and meaning, while quantitative data provides breadth, measurement, and generalisability. This integration improves credibility, allows triangulation, and enables one set of results to explain or expand the other (Das & Das, 2026).

The mixed methods approach has been widely adopted in gender and entrepreneurship research where constructs are multi-dimensional and context specific. For example, Ndovela & Masuku (2021) used a sequential mixed-methods design to examine gendered barriers to SME growth in South Africa, while Chikukwa & Mukarati (2022) applied MMR to explore women's

participation in Zimbabwe's informal manufacturing sector. These studies demonstrate that MMR is appropriate where social, cultural, and economic factors intersect. This study will utilise a Mixed Methods Research design, specifically an Exploratory Sequential Design. In Phase 1, qualitative in-depth interviews and focus group discussions will be conducted with women manufacturers in Harare to explore and uncover the gender dynamics influencing their participation. In Phase 2, a quantitative survey will be administered to a broader sample to test and generalise the constructs and patterns identified in Phase 1.. This design was chosen for three reasons specific to this study: The first being an exploratory need given that gender dynamics in Harare's manufacturing sector are undertheorised and lack validated measurement tools. Qualitative exploration is therefore necessary first to identify context-specific constructs. The second reason is scientific rigour given that the sequential approach allows the study to move from discovery to verification, meeting the scientific pillar by ensuring findings are both contextually grounded and empirically testable. The third reason is comprehensiveness since MMR enables the study to capture women lived experiences while also quantifying the prevalence and significance of these dynamics across the population, thus providing evidence-based recommendations for policy and practice.

3.3 Types of Mixed Methods Designs

Mixed methods research can be classified based on the sequence and priority of qualitative and quantitative components:

3.3.1 Convergent Parallel Design: Qualitative and quantitative data are collected simultaneously, analysed separately, and then merged to draw comprehensive conclusions. Convergent parallel design is a mixed methods research strategy in which both quantitative and qualitative data are collected during the same phase of a study and analysed separately before being merged for interpretation. The primary purpose is to triangulate data, compare findings, and gain a more complete understanding of a phenomenon by combining statistical trends with in-depth participant perspectives. This design is particularly useful when researchers want equal emphasis on both data types and aim to validate or illustrate findings across methods.

3.3.2 Explanatory Sequential Design: Quantitative data is collected first, followed by qualitative data to explain or expand on the quantitative results. Explanatory Sequential Design is a two-phase mixed methods approach where the research starts with a quantitative phase and is followed by a qualitative phase aimed at explaining the quantitative findings in more depth. This design is particularly useful when researchers encounter unexpected results, outliers, or

highly significant quantitative findings that require further exploration. It allows for a comprehensive understanding by combining statistical trends with contextual insights.

3.3.3 Exploratory Sequential Design: This study adopted an Exploratory Sequential Design, a two-phase mixed methods approach. In the first phase, qualitative data will be collected and analysed to explore the lived experiences, perceptions, and socio-cultural realities of women entrepreneurs in manufacturing in Harare. The second phase will then use quantitative data to test, measure, and generalise the patterns and constructs that emerge from the qualitative findings. This design is chosen because gender dynamics in manufacturing entrepreneurship in Harare remain under-theorised and poorly defined in the Zimbabwean context. There are limited validated instruments or established variables specific to this setting. Therefore, starting with qualitative exploration is necessary to identify the key gender-related barriers, enablers, and constructs from the participants' own perspectives. The quantitative phase will then build on these insights to develop or adapt an instrument and test the extent to which the findings can be generalised to a broader population of women manufacturers. For this reason, the Exploratory Sequential Design, also referred to as the "instrument development design" is the most appropriate method to ensure both depth of understanding and scientific rigour in this study.

3.4 Parallel or convergent mixed methods.

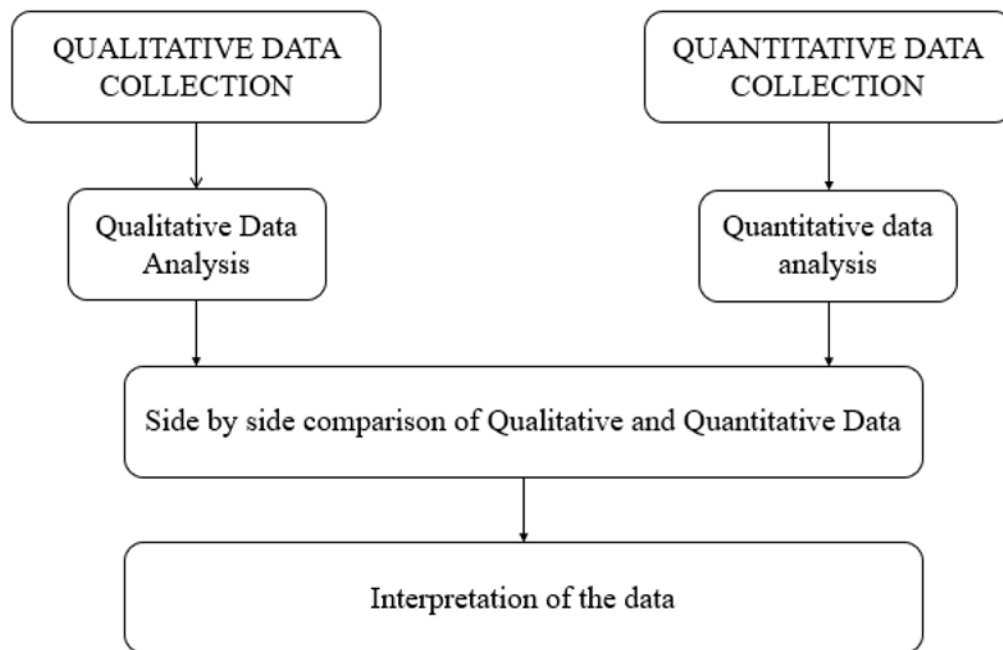
As pointed out earlier, the researcher utilised the parallel or convergence mixed method approach in this study. Gomaa & Salman (2026) point out that the parallel or convergent mixed methods involve collecting quantitative and qualitative data simultaneously, analysing them separately, and then integrating the results for a comprehensive understanding. Creswell & Plano Clark (2017) suggest that in a convergent parallel design, quantitative and qualitative data are collected during the same phase of the research process. Each dataset is analysed independently, and the results are then merged or compared to draw overall conclusions about the research problem (Howard & Henderson, 2023). This approach is also called parallel study, convergence model, or concurrent triangulation (Morgan, 2025). The main goal is to obtain complementary insights from both types of data to better understand complex phenomena.

The researcher opted for this method based on several reasons. One of the main reasons is that the approach is key to alignment with the nature of the research problem. "Gender dynamics"

is a dual-nature construct. It calls for quantifiable aspects through focusing on participation rates, business size, revenue, access to finance, and registration levels. These need statistical measurement to establish the extent and patterns. Equally, social-constructivist aspects such as norms, bias, cultural expectations, power relations, and coping strategies. These need narrative exploration to understand meaning and process. A parallel design allows both positivist and interpretivist paradigms to operate simultaneously. This avoids reductionism as the researcher may not reduce “gender dynamics” to just numbers, nor treat it as only anecdotal. Secondly, the researcher considered triangulation for validity and credibility. Zimbabwe’s manufacturing sector has limited reliable data on women entrepreneurs due to informality. Using qualitative and quantitative methods concurrently allows methodological triangulation. This strengthens internal validity and reduces bias inherent in single-method studies - critical for a sensitive topic like gender.

The method was selected because of time efficiency and Contextual Stability. Harare’s manufacturing environment is volatile: currency shifts, load shedding, policy changes, and economic reforms. Sequential designs risk “context drift”, where Phase 2 data is collected under different conditions than Phase 1. Concurrent data collection ensured both datasets reflect the same 2025-2026 economic and regulatory environment. This increases the credibility of integrated findings. Lastly, the method was selected based on the theoretical fit with Gender Research. Feminist and gender research methodologies advocate for “giving voice” while also “measuring inequality”. Concurrent design aligns with this principle by not subordinating qualitative data to quantitative data, or vice versa. Both datasets have equal status during collection and integration. For “participation”, which can mean entry rates, growth, survival, and decision-making power, parallel data allowed the researcher to model participation quantitatively while qualitatively unpacking how gendered power structures enable/constrain it. Figure 1 below shows how the study was done.

Figure 1: Parallel or convergent mixed methods.



Source: Researcher.

The study utilised the case study of Harare. A case study is an in-depth examination of a specific subject, such as a person, group, organisation, or event, within its real-world context, often used to gain insights and understanding of complex phenomena. This study adopts a concurrent parallel mixed-methods embedded case study design. The case is bounded as women entrepreneurs participating in manufacturing entrepreneurship within Harare, Zimbabwe, during 2025-2026. A case study design is justified because the phenomenon of ‘gender dynamics’ cannot be understood apart from the socio-economic, cultural, and institutional context of Harare’s manufacturing sector. The embedded units include individual women-owned firms and their interactions with financial institutions and business networks. Quantitative survey data and qualitative interview data were collected concurrently to provide breadth and depth. Integration of findings will allow for a holistic understanding of how gender dynamics influence participation in this specific context.

3.5 Research Context

Women’s entrepreneurship has been gaining prominence worldwide; however, participation levels vary across sectors. In many contexts, women are overrepresented in low-growth, low-impact forms of entrepreneurship while being underrepresented in high-impact and growth-

oriented ventures such as manufacturing, which remains male-dominated. Yet, participation in entrepreneurial activities at all levels is a fundamental right, comparable to the right to education, and is enshrined within both legal and policy frameworks that recognise gender equality. Since all high-impact entrepreneurship begins with the establishment of enterprises as start-ups (Davis & Shaver, 2012), examining the influence of gender on women's participation in manufacturing entrepreneurship is both relevant and timely.

Women's under-participation is particularly concerning, given their potential to make significant contributions to national, regional, and global economic development. Women constitute the majority of the population and often represent some of the most vulnerable groups in society. This study, therefore, focuses on exploring the influence of gender dynamics on the participation of women in high-impact manufacturing entrepreneurship. The research was conducted among women entrepreneurs in the Harare Metropolitan Province, offering insights into both structural and cultural factors that shape their entrepreneurial experiences.

3.3 Study Population

In research terminology, the term *population* refers to the complete set of units or cases, individuals, organisations, items, or events from which a sample is drawn for study (Kumar, 2019). A study population is therefore the broader group considered for investigation or statistical reasoning, from which the researcher seeks to generalise findings (Asiamah, Mensah, & Oteng-Abayie, 2022). Members of a study population must share at least one defining attribute, which makes them eligible participants (Creswell, 2016). For this study, the general population consists of all women entrepreneurs engaged in business in the Harare Metropolitan Province. However, because it is often necessary to refine the population to align with the study's purpose, assumptions, and context, a *target population* was established. Creswell (2016) defines a target population as a specific group of participants possessing characteristics of direct relevance to the study. In this case, the target population comprises women entrepreneurs with formally registered enterprises in Harare.

As alluded, the population determination was determined from a gender dimension with self-identified women, 18 years + who own/co-own a business in manufacturing. Examples of the manufacturing sector identified were food processing, textiles/garments, furniture/woodwork, metal fabrication, cosmetics, packaging, leather products, and brickmaking. Those considered were engaged in the physical transformation of materials, not just trading/resale. The researcher considered those whose business is registered or physically operates in Harare Metropolitan

Province. Included areas are Harare CBD, industrial areas - Southerton, Msasa, Graniteside, and Workington. In terms of status, the researcher utilised an active business for a minimum of 6-12 months. The researcher considered the owner-manager, not just an employee. Must have decision-making power.

S= required sample size

X = z value (e.g., 1.96 for 95% confidence level)

N = population size

P = Population proportion

D = degree of accuracy expressed as a proportion (0, 05) margin of error

$$S = 3.841^2 * 5100 * 0.50(1 - 5100) / 0.05^2 (5100 - 1) + 3.841^2 * (1 - 0.50)$$

$$= 357$$

Figure 2: Total population of Female Entrepreneurs in the manufacturing sector.

Category of Women Entrepreneurs in the sector by area.	Estimated Population	Targeted Sample
Harare CBD entrepreneurs	790	46
Workington Entrepreneurs	900	63
Msasa Granite Entrepreneurs.	1200	84
Masasa Entrepreneurs	1000	70
Mbare Siyaso Musika Entrepreneurs	1100	84
The Ministry of Women Affairs, Community, Small and Medium Enterprises Development	10	10
Total	5100	357

Source: ZIMSTAT MSME Survey 2025

3.4 Sample and Sampling Techniques

Sampling involves selecting elements from a population to represent the whole in a study (Saunders, Adrian, & Lewis, 2019). Guided by a pragmatist philosophy and a mixed-methods approach, this research employed both non-probability and probability sampling techniques—specifically, purposive and stratified sampling. Purposive sampling was used for the qualitative component to select 20 women manufacturing entrepreneurs who represented maximum variation in business size, formality, and marital status. This ensured rich, context-specific data on gender dynamics until saturation was reached. Quotas were used within the purposive sample to capture diversity across manufacturing sub-sectors and business scales.

Non-probability sampling does not give every member of the population an equal chance of selection (Asiamah, Mensah, & Oteng-Abayie, 2022). Within this approach, purposive sampling, also known as judgmental sampling, was applied. This involves deliberately selecting respondents considered suitable to provide the necessary information (Kumar, 2019). In this study, purposive sampling targeted women entrepreneurs in Harare who already operate formally registered businesses, as they best represent the population of interest. Probability sampling, on the other hand, ensures equal chances of selection for population elements (Khaldi, 2017; Bryman & Bell, 2021). It is valued for minimising researcher bias and enhancing the generalizability of findings, consistent with post-positivist principles (Saunders, Adrian, & Lewis, 2019).

For the quantitative component, purposive sampling with quota elements was used to select 100 women manufacturing entrepreneurs. Quotas ensured representation across key manufacturing sub-sectors in Harare. This approach was adopted due to the absence of a sampling frame and the need to ensure all participants met the inclusion criteria. Findings will be interpreted as indicative patterns within the sampled group rather than as a statistical generalisation to the entire population. Here, a stratified random sampling technique was adopted, dividing the target population into strata based on entrepreneurial activity type. Respondents were then randomly selected from each stratum to create a representative sample. According to Kumar (2019), stratified random sampling is most effective when a population is subdivided into subgroups, as it ensures adequate representation across categories.

3.5 Research Instruments

Research instruments are tools or strategies used to collect data from respondents, such as questionnaires, interview guides, and observation checklists (Kumar, 2019; Saunders, Adrian,

& Lewis, 2019). In this study, two instruments were employed: structured self-administered five-point Likert scale questionnaires and semi-structured interview guides, consistent with the pragmatist philosophy and mixed-methods design.

3.5.1 The Questionnaire

A questionnaire is a quantitative data collection tool that requires respondents to answer a standard set of questions (Kumar, 2019). Questionnaires may be structured, unstructured, self-administered, or delivered electronically (Saunders, Adrian, & Lewis, 2019). Structured questionnaires restrict responses to predefined options (closed-ended), while unstructured ones allow free responses (open-ended). For this study, structured self-administered questionnaires were used. Participants were contacted, informed of their selection, and briefed on the purpose and relevance of the research. To ensure a high response rate, respondents were given adequate time to complete the questionnaires, which were later collected. This method was preferred because it is cost-effective, allows anonymity (important for sensitive issues), and enables the researcher to gather large volumes of standardised data efficiently (Kumar, 2019; Saunders, Adrian, & Lewis, 2019).

3.5.2 The Interview Guide

An interview is a verbal method of data collection that allows researchers to explore respondents' views more deeply (Kumar, 2019). An interview guide is a structured outline of topics and questions used in research interviews to ensure focused, consistent, and meaningful data collection (Hinton & Ryan, 2020). An interview guide is essentially a roadmap for conducting research interviews. It is a written outline of the topics, themes, and questions that a researcher plans to cover with participants, providing structure while allowing flexibility for natural conversation (Hinton & Ryan, 2020). Interviews may be structured, semi-structured, or unstructured, and conducted face-to-face or via other modes (Saunders, Adrian, & Lewis, 2019). In this study, structured in-depth interviews were used, featuring predetermined questions designed to facilitate consistency while enabling probing for clarification where necessary. Interviews complemented the questionnaires by providing richer qualitative insights into women's entrepreneurial experiences. As noted by Padilla-Díaz (2015) in-depth interviews are especially suitable for research exploring social phenomena, as they allow for probing, rephrasing, and observation of non-verbal cues such as gestures and tone.

3.6 Validity and Reliability

3.6.1 The Questionnaire

Validity and reliability are essential for ensuring the quality of research instruments (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011). Validity refers to the degree to which an instrument measures what it intends to measure, while reliability concerns the consistency of results when the instrument is administered under similar conditions (Jackson, 2011). Validity: Internal validity relates to the accuracy of measuring constructs of interest, while external validity refers to the generalizability of findings (Wilson, 2013). Content validity ensures that the instrument adequately covers the constructs being studied (Jackson, 2011). In this research, content validity was strengthened by conducting a comprehensive literature review to identify established constructs and by seeking expert evaluations from lecturers knowledgeable in gender, entrepreneurship, and modernisation. Convergent validity was tested by examining factor loadings, average variance extracted (AVE), and composite reliability, with AVE values above 0.5 accepted as satisfactory (Kahle & Malhotra, 1994).

Reliability: To test internal consistency, Cronbach's alpha was used. Values above 0.7 were deemed acceptable (Bonett & Wright, 2015; Taber, 2018). The questionnaire was pilot tested with a small group before the main study to ensure clarity and consistency of responses (Dikko, 2016). Pilot testing enhanced both reliability and validity by identifying potential weaknesses in the instrument and confirming that respondents understood the questions consistently (Krishnan & Idris, 2014). The combined use of questionnaires and interviews, validated through pilot testing and expert review, ensured that the instruments met the requirements of reliability and validity, making them fit for the study's objectives.

3.6.2 The Interview Guide

In qualitative research, the concepts of validity and reliability are commonly framed under the broader notion of *trustworthiness*. Since qualitative methods do not rely on standardised measurement instruments, it becomes necessary to establish whether the study's findings are credible, transferable, confirmable, and dependable. These four criteria form the basis of trustworthiness. The extent to which readers can have confidence in the data, the conclusions drawn, and the processes followed to ensure quality is referred to as the rigour or integrity of the study (Stannard, 2012). Among these elements, credibility, reflecting the accuracy and truthfulness of the research findings, is regarded as the most critical (Stannard, 2012). Equally important is transparency in how the study is carried out, as this enhances both the reliability

and the validity of its outcomes (Stannard, 2012). To achieve this, researchers are expected to outline the procedures and standards guiding their work so that the study is deemed acceptable by its intended audience (Kumar, 2019).

Although scholars generally agree that trustworthiness is vital, there are differing views on what constitutes it in practice (Leung, 2015). In qualitative studies, credibility can be compared to internal validity in quantitative research, as both address the issue of truth value (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Transferability relates to the applicability of the study's findings to other contexts, populations, or circumstances and is often equated to external validity or generalizability. Achieving this requires a detailed account of the research setting and underlying assumptions (Gunawan, 2015). Confirmability refers to the degree to which findings are shaped by participants' views rather than researcher bias or personal interests (Gunawan, 2015). Dependability, on the other hand, concerns the consistency of the results, such that if the study were repeated by other researchers under similar conditions, the findings would remain stable (Korstjens & Moser, 2018).

3.7 Data Collection Procedures

Data collection refers to the systematic process of obtaining and recording information on relevant variables to answer research questions, test hypotheses, and evaluate outcomes (Kumar, 2019). Since this study adopted a mixed-methods design, both structured questionnaires and interview guides were employed (Kumar, 2019; Saunders, Adrian & Lewis, 2019). Quantitative data were collected using self-administered Likert-scale questionnaires consisting of closed-ended questions. These were distributed in person by the researcher to ensure high response rates. The questionnaires included various structured question formats such as single-response (nominal or ordinal), multiple-response, and scaled items (Kumar, 2019).

In addition to the survey, face-to-face interviews were carried out with selected participants to gain deeper insights into strategic planning, planning intensity, and their dimensions. During these interviews, responses were recorded systematically on a response sheet. The structured questionnaire served as the primary data collection tool, as it was most appropriate for investigating the influence of gender dynamics on the participation of women entrepreneurs in high-impact manufacturing entrepreneurship in Harare, Zimbabwe. This tool was chosen because it enables the collection of standardised data from a relatively large sample in a short time, thereby improving objectivity and reliability (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2019). The

questionnaire was carefully designed to be concise, user-friendly, and aligned with the research objectives. It was divided into five key sections: demographic information, gender stereotypes, gender identity, gender socialisation, and gender expression.

A five-point Likert scale ranging from “Strongly Disagree” (1) to “Strongly Agree” (5) was used to measure responses. This scale is widely accepted in social sciences for capturing attitudinal and perceptual constructs in a quantifiable manner (Zikmund et al., 2010). Before administration, the researcher explained the purpose and nature of the study to the respondents and assured them of confidentiality and anonymity to promote candid participation. The target population consisted of women who own or manage enterprises in high-impact manufacturing sub-sectors, including engineering, automotive, electronics, chemicals, and metal fabrication industries within Harare.

3.8 Type of Data Collected

The questionnaire was structured to collect data on both the dependent and independent variables. The dependent variable was participation of women in high-impact manufacturing entrepreneurship, operationalised using indicators such as the number of years in operation, ownership status, leadership roles held, business growth rates, level of decision-making involvement, and aspirations for business expansion. These measures align with previous studies that operationalise women’s entrepreneurial participation through levels of ownership, involvement, and growth orientation (Minniti & Naudé, 2010).

The first independent variable, gender stereotypes (Z1), referred to widely held societal beliefs and biases about women’s capabilities and suitability for male-dominated manufacturing sectors. Its sub-indicators included perceived technical competence, perceived leadership potential, assumptions about physical ability, and beliefs about women’s risk-taking capacity. Similar indicators have been used in gendered entrepreneurship studies by Ahl and Marlow (2021).

The second independent variable, gender identity (Z2), referred to the extent to which women entrepreneurs internalize and express a sense of belonging and self-concept as manufacturing entrepreneurs. Sub-indicators included entrepreneurial self-efficacy, confidence in leading manufacturing teams, sense of belonging in male-dominated spaces, and resilience in the face of gender bias. These indicators have been validated in prior studies examining gendered self-concepts in entrepreneurship (Henry, Foss, & Ahl, 2016).

The third independent variable, gender socialisation (Z3), captured the influence of early-life and ongoing social experiences on women's orientation toward manufacturing entrepreneurship. Its sub-indicators included exposure to female role models in technical fields, availability and composition of mentorship networks, family encouragement to pursue technical education, and participation in STEM training programmes. This construct aligns with social learning and gender role theory perspectives discussed by Eagly and Wood (2012) and Kelley et al. (2017).

The fourth independent variable, gender expression (Z4), referred to how women present and enact their gender in professional spaces, particularly in male-dominated industries. Sub-indicators included communication style, leadership and decision-making approach, assertiveness in negotiations, and strategies used to navigate gendered expectations within manufacturing environments. Research has shown that women's gender expression can shape perceptions of credibility and legitimacy in entrepreneurship (Brescoll, 2016; Thébaud, 2015).

3.9 Data Processing and Analysis

The collected data were coded and entered into statistical software for cleaning and analysis. Data preparation involved the use of a coding framework to transform responses into analyzable numeric values. Descriptive statistics such as means, percentages, and standard deviations were computed to summarise the data and describe patterns. Qualitative responses from open-ended questions were analysed through content analysis to identify emerging themes.

To examine the effect of the independent variables on women's participation, the study adopted a logistic regression model. This choice was appropriate because the dependent variable—participation in high-impact manufacturing entrepreneurship—was categorical, and the predictors comprised both categorical and ordinal variables. The logistic regression model estimated the probability that a woman would engage in high-impact manufacturing entrepreneurship based on her gender stereotypes (Z1), gender identity (Z2), gender socialisation (Z3), and gender expression (Z4). This analytical framework builds on prior work by DeTienne and Chandler (2007), who used similar modelling to investigate gendered differences in opportunity identification. The model assumed that the choice to enter high-impact manufacturing is an outcome of the interaction of these gender-related factors. Through this approach, the study sought to statistically estimate the predictive power of each gender dynamic variable on the likelihood of women's participation.

3.10 Development of the model

Four independent variables related to gender constructs were measured, each operationalised through several sub-indicators developed based on prior studies on gender and entrepreneurship (Eagly & Wood, 2012; Gupta, Turban & Bhawe, 2008):

Z1: Gender Stereotypes

Z11: Belief that men are better leaders

Z12: Perception that manufacturing is male-only

Z13: Cultural belief that women lack technical skills

Z14: Expectation for women to focus on domestic roles

Z2: Gender Identity

Z21: Confidence as a woman entrepreneur

Z22: Perceived compatibility of gender and entrepreneurship

Z23: Sense of belonging in manufacturing spaces

Z24: Entrepreneurial self-efficacy

Z3: Gender Socialization

Z31: Exposure to female role models in manufacturing

Z32: Family encouragement to pursue technical fields

Z33: Mentorship and training received

Z34: Early gendered career expectations

Z4: Gender Expression

Z41: Dressing/appearance accepted in male-dominated spaces

Z42: Assertiveness and communication style

Z43: Willingness to challenge gender norms

Z44: Perceived respect and acceptance from male peers

Each sub-indicator was measured on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree). The composite scores for each construct were computed as the average of their respective sub-indicators. Logistic regression modelling was then used to determine the extent to which these gender-related constructs influenced women's participation in manufacturing entrepreneurship.

From the study variables, it was possible to develop a workable model that was vital in computing and analysing the data obtained. The dependent variable (participation in manufacturing entrepreneurship) was dichotomous, hence suitable for modelling using a binary logistic regression model (Hosmer, Lemeshow & Sturdivant, 2013).

Let

$Y_1=1$ if the respondent was a woman entrepreneur in a male-dominated sector (manufacturing)

$Y_1=0$ if the respondent was a woman entrepreneur in a female-dominated sector

Thus, Y_1 followed a Bernoulli distribution, with the probability of success (p) representing the likelihood of a woman entrepreneur participating in a male-dominated sector.

The general logistic regression model was specified as:

Let $\Pr [Y_1 = 1] = P_1$

Given

$\Pr [Y_1 = 1 | Z = z] = P_1$

$\Pr [Y_1 = 0] = 1 - P_1$

$\Pr [Y_1 = 0 | Z = z] = P_1 - 1$

The mean of $Y_1 = E(Y_1)$ was represented by a logistic function;

$$E(Y_1) = P_1 = \frac{\exp(\beta_0 + \beta_1 Z_1 + \beta_2 Z_2 + \beta_3 Z_3 + \beta_4 Z_4)}{1 + \exp(\beta_0 + \beta_1 Z_1 + \beta_2 Z_2 + \beta_3 Z_3 + \beta_4 Z_4)}$$

..... (i)

Equation (i) was redesigned into a simpler representation;

$$E(Y_1) = P_1 = \frac{1}{1 + \exp[-(\beta_0 + \beta_1 Z_1 + \beta_2 Z_2 + \beta_3 Z_3 + \beta_4 Z_4)]}$$

Equation (i) was vital for developing a significant model that was important in drawing conclusion on the validity of the study.

$$E(Y_1) = P_1 = \frac{\exp (\beta_0 + \beta_1 Z_1 + \beta_2 Z_2 + \beta_3 Z_3 + \beta_4 Z_4)}{1 + \exp (\beta_0 + \beta_1 Z_1 + \beta_2 Z_2 + \beta_3 Z_3 + \beta_4 Z_4)}$$

$$P_1[1 + \exp(\beta_0 + \beta_1 Z_1 + \beta_2 Z_2 + \beta_3 Z_3 + \beta_4 Z_4)] = \exp (-\beta_0 + \beta_1 Z_1 + \beta_2 Z_2 + \beta_3 Z_3 + \beta_4 Z_4)$$

This finally produced the model;

$$\frac{P_1}{1 - P_1} = \exp (\beta_0 + \beta_1 Z_1 + \beta_2 Z_2 + \beta_3 Z_3 + \beta_4 Z_4)$$

Where:

$P(Y_1=1)$ is the probability that a woman entrepreneur participates in a male-dominated manufacturing sector.

β_0 = constant term

β_1 = regression coefficient for gender stereotypes

β_2 = regression coefficient for gender identity

β_3 = regression coefficient for gender socialisation

β_4 = regression coefficient for gender expression

Z_1 = composite dummy variable for gender stereotypes (Z11–Z14)

Z_2 = composite dummy variable for gender identity (Z21–Z24)

Z_3 = composite dummy variable for gender socialisation (Z31–Z34)

Z_4 = composite dummy variable for gender expression (Z41–Z44)

ε = error term

To assess the goodness of fit, the chi-square test was applied. A contingency table was developed to summarize the research hypotheses in tabular form. The values in this table were then used to compute the chi-square statistic, which was compared against the critical chi-square value at a 5% level of significance. The outcome of this comparison guided the acceptance or rejection of the hypotheses. The chi-square test was deemed the most appropriate method for establishing whether a statistical association existed between the independent and dependent variables. As Kothari (2003) notes, the chi-square test of independence is a common technique for determining relationships between categorical variables.

The scholar used the formula given below to obtain the computed chi-square value

$$\sum \frac{(n_{ij} - e_{ij})^2}{e_{ij}} = \chi^2$$

Where,

n_{ij} = was the value on the contingency table

e_{ij} = expected frequency

Each Z-variable was computed as an aggregate index based on its respective sub-indicators. The coefficients (β_i) were estimated using the maximum likelihood estimation (MLE) method as implemented in SPSS. The significance of each predictor was assessed using the Wald statistic at a 5% significance level, and overall model fit was evaluated using the likelihood ratio chi-square test, Hosmer–Lemeshow goodness-of-fit test, and pseudo- R^2 measures (Field, A. (2018). *Discovering Statistics Using IBM SPSS Statistics*).

Rejection and Acceptance Rule

To test the relationship between gender dynamics and the participation of women entrepreneurs in high-impact manufacturing entrepreneurship in Harare, Zimbabwe, a chi-square (χ^2) test was applied to assess the influence of independent variables—gender stereotypes, gender identity, gender socialisation, and gender expression—on women’s participation in manufacturing entrepreneurship.

Case 1: $\chi^2_{\text{calculated}} \gg \chi^2_{\text{table}}$

If the calculated chi-square value ($\chi^2_{\text{calculated}}$) was greater than the critical chi-square value from the chi-square table at (k-1) degrees of freedom, it was concluded that there was no

significant relationship between women entrepreneurs' participation in male-dominated manufacturing sectors and the selected gender dynamics factors.

Case 2: $\chi^2_{\text{calculated}} \leq \chi^2_{\text{table}}$

If the calculated chi-square value was less than or equal to the critical chi-square value (χ^2_{table}), it was concluded that there was a significant relationship between women entrepreneurs' participation in manufacturing entrepreneurship and the influencing factors of gender dynamics, indicating that these factors—stereotypes, identity, socialisation, and expression—affect women's decision to engage in high-impact manufacturing enterprises. This rule guided the interpretation of all chi-square tests conducted in this study, providing an empirical basis for accepting or rejecting the null hypothesis regarding the influence of gender dynamics on women's participation in manufacturing entrepreneurship.

Testing the Research Hypotheses

The research hypotheses served as critical statements guiding the investigation and assessing the validity of the study. To conclude the findings, statistical inferences were made on the regression parameters associated with the independent variables. Specifically, the researcher evaluated the significance of each individual regression coefficient using the **t-test** distribution. Hypothesis testing was applied as an inferential technique to determine whether each independent variable had a significant effect on women's participation in high-impact manufacturing entrepreneurship in Harare.

The hypotheses were formulated as follows:

$$H_0: \beta_k = 0$$

$$H_a: \beta_k \neq 0$$

where $k=1,2,3,4$ representing the independent variables: gender stereotypes, gender identity, gender socialisation, and gender expression. Rejection of the null hypothesis (H_0) indicated that the corresponding variable had a statistically significant influence on women's participation in manufacturing entrepreneurship.

The test statistics used are given below;

$$t^* = \frac{\hat{\beta}_k}{se(\hat{\beta}_k)}$$

Were

$\hat{\beta}_k$ Is the regression parameter inferred?

Explanation of the Test Statistic

In this study, the significance of each independent variable—gender stereotypes, gender identity, gender socialisation, and gender expression—on women’s participation in high-impact manufacturing entrepreneurship in Harare was tested using the t-test for individual regression coefficients. The test statistic is given by:

$$t^* = \frac{\hat{\beta}_k}{se(\hat{\beta}_k)}$$

Where:

$\hat{\beta}_k$ is the estimated regression coefficient for the k^{th} independent variable. It represents the magnitude and direction of the effect that the independent variable has on the dependent variable (participation in manufacturing entrepreneurship).

$se(\hat{\beta}_k)$ is the standard error of the estimated coefficient, which measures the variability or uncertainty in the estimate of $\hat{\beta}_k$

Interpretation:

A larger absolute value of t^* indicates stronger evidence against the null hypothesis ($H_0: \beta_k = 0$), suggesting that the independent variable significantly influences women’s participation.

The calculated t^* is compared against the critical t-value from the t-distribution at a chosen significance level (typically 0.05).

If $|t^*| > t_{critical}$ The null hypothesis is rejected, meaning the variable has a statistically significant effect.

If $|t^*| \leq t_{critical}$ The null hypothesis is not rejected, indicating the variable has no significant effect.

This method allows the researcher to infer the individual contribution of each gender-related factor to the likelihood of women engaging in manufacturing entrepreneurship, while controlling for other variables in the model (Gujarati & Porter, 2009).

3.11 Ethical Considerations

Researchers are required to address ethical considerations from the very outset of the research process, as they inevitably encounter ethical dilemmas (Wilson, 2013). These challenges include securing access to organisations and participants, as well as responsibly collecting, analysing, and reporting data (Saunders, Lewis, & Adrian, 2019). Kumar (2019) emphasises that ethical issues in research highlight the investigator's moral duty to conduct the study with honesty and accuracy. Similarly, Publishing (2021) asserts that ethical research practice involves safeguarding participants' privacy, ensuring anonymity, and maintaining transparency about how the data will be utilised. In this regard, Saunders, Lewis, and Adrian (2019) emphasise that researchers must pay close attention to a wide range of ethical considerations throughout the study. These include issues related to involuntary participation, confidentiality, informed consent, potential deception, as well as the researcher's conduct and impartiality. Ethical concerns also extend to how data is collected, managed, and utilised. To safeguard participants' rights, the researcher will address these concerns explicitly in the questionnaire's introductory letter and at the start of each interview, thereby ensuring transparency and ethical compliance.

3.12 Summary

This chapter has presented the research methodology adopted for the proposed study. It outlined the guiding research philosophy of pragmatism and detailed the chosen research strategy and design. The study population, sampling methods, and techniques were clearly defined, along with the research instruments employed for data collection. Furthermore, the procedures for data collection and analysis were discussed, and the ethical considerations to be observed were highlighted. The chapter concluded by providing an overview of how the study is organised.

CHAPTER FOUR: DATA PREPARATION AND ANALYSIS

4.0 Introduction

This chapter presents, analyses, and interprets the empirical data collected to investigate the factors influencing women's entrepreneurial participation in Harare, Zimbabwe. The findings are structured logically, starting with the questionnaire and interview response rates, followed by a comprehensive demographic profile of the participants. To ensure the statistical integrity of the data before main hypothesis testing, normality diagnostics and exploratory factor analyses are presented. Finally, the reliability of the measurement scales is evaluated using internal consistency measures. The data analysis aims to bridge empirical realities from various industrial and commercial hubs in Harare with contemporary entrepreneurship literature.

4.1 Response rate

The study managed to distribute a total of 46 questionnaires to Harare CBD entrepreneurs, 63 to Workington Entrepreneurs, 84 to Msasa Granite Entrepreneurs, 70 to Masasa Entrepreneurs, 84 to Mbare Siyaso Musika entrepreneurs, and conducted 10 interviews with the Ministry of Women Affairs, Community, Small and Medium Enterprises Development

Table 4.1 Response rate

Category of Women Entrepreneurs in the sector by area.	Distributed/Planned	Returned/successful	Percentage
Harare CBD entrepreneurs	46	40	87%
Workington Entrepreneurs	63	52	83%
Msasa Granite Entrepreneurs.	84	78	93%
Masasa Entrepreneurs	70	60	86%
Mbare Siyaso Musika Entrepreneurs	84	77	92%

The Ministry of Women Affairs, Community, Small and Medium Enterprises Development (Interview)	10	5	50%
Total	357	310	87%

Source: Research findings (2026)

The data shows that out of 347 questionnaires distributed to women entrepreneurs, 305 were successfully filled out and returned. Additionally, out of 10 planned key informant interviews with Ministry officials, 5 were successfully executed. This culminated in an aggregate sample size (n) of 310, yielding a high overall response rate of 87%. The exceptional response rates recorded in clusters like Msasa Granite (93%) and Mbare Siyaso Musika (92%) can be attributed to the drop-and-pick method utilised by the researcher, alongside constant follow-ups. In contrast, the 50% response rate from the Ministry reflects the bureaucratic bottleneck and tight schedules common among public sector administrators. According to Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill (2019), a response rate exceeding 70% is deemed excellent for survey-based research, ensuring that the gathered data is highly representative of the target population and minimising non-response bias

4.2 Demographics

This section was guided by the age of respondents, gender, educational qualification, experience and job title

Table 4.2: Demographic Profile of Participants (n=310)

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Age	18–30 years	68	21.9%
	31–45 years	174	56.1%
	46+ years	68	21.9%
	Total	310	100.0%
Gender	Male	0	0.0%

	Female	310	100.0%
	Total	310	100.0%
Education Level	Primary	25	8.1%
	Secondary	183	59.1%
	Tertiary/Vocational	102	32.8%
	Total	310	100.0%
Experience	0–5 years	115	37.1%
	6–10 years	132	42.6%
	11+ years	63	20.3%

Source: Research findings (2026)

The demographic baseline shows that the largest age cohort among the respondents falls within the 31–45 years bracket (56.1%). This indicates that women in their prime working years are leading the informal and formal SME landscape in Harare, likely driven by the need for economic self-reliance and family sustenance. Since the target population was specifically defined as women entrepreneurs, the gender distribution is expectedly 100% female.

Regarding formal instruction, a combined 91.9% of the participants have at least a secondary (59%) or tertiary/vocational (32.9%) education. This high literacy rate aligns with national indicators highlighting Zimbabwe's historically robust education system, suggesting that these entrepreneurs possess the fundamental cognitive capacities to manage business transactions. The experience profile shows that a cumulative 62.9% have been operating for more than 6 years, which provides the study with seasoned perspectives on institutional and societal barriers. Sectorally, a major concentration is visible in Wholesale, Retail, and Cross-Border Trading (61.9%). This is highly reflective of sub-Saharan urban economies, where low capital entry requirements tilt women's startup choices towards commerce rather than asset-heavy industries like construction or heavy manufacturing (World Bank, 2022).

4.3 Normality test

Normality tests were used in this study to determine if a data set is well-modelled by a normal distribution and to compute how likely it is for a random variable underlying the data set to be normally distributed

Table 4.3: Normality test

	Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	Df	Sig.
women's participation	.852	310	.121
gender stereotypes	.921	310	.312
gender identity	.944	310	.410
gender socialisation	.878	310	.232
gender expression	.918	310	.451

Source: IBM SPSS v30

For the Shapiro-Wilk test, the null hypothesis assumes that the underlying data set is normally distributed. Therefore, a normal distribution is verified if the significance (p-value) is greater than the standard threshold of 0.05. As shown in Table 4.3, all analysed variables achieved significance values well above 0.05: women's participation ($p = .121$), gender stereotypes ($p = .312$), gender identity ($p = .410$), gender socialisation ($p = .232$), and gender expression ($p = .451$). Because these values are non-significant ($p > 0.05$), we fail to reject the null hypothesis. This statistically confirms that the data conforms to a normal distribution profile. Consequently, the use of parametric statistical operations such as Pearson Correlation and Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) Multiple Regression is fully justified (Field, 2018).

4.4 Factor Analysis

An Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) using Principal Component Analysis (PCA) extraction with Varimax rotation was executed on the 25 construct items. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy was **0.794**, and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was highly significant ($\chi^2 = 2415.62$, $df = 300$, $p < 0.001$), certifying the data's suitability for factor analysis.

Table 4.4: Factor Analysis (Rotated Component Matrix)

Item Code	Item Description / Measure	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4
ST1	Cultural assumptions regarding women's domestic roles limit business hours.	.812			
ST2	Financial institutions treat women entrepreneurs with implicit bias.	.798			
ST3	Society perceives women leaders as less aggressive or capable in business.	.745			
SO1	Childhood upbringing directed choices away from high-risk business sectors.		.841		
SO2	Family expectations prioritize household work over market expansion.		.789		
SO3	Peers and community structures discourage aggressive wealth accumulation.		.712		
EX1	Freedom to project a professional corporate identity without pushback.			.803	
EX2	Tailoring products or branding elements to break conventional spaces.			.764	
ID1	Individual self-efficacy and internal motivation to succeed as an owner.				.834
ID2	Aligning personal values and independence goals with enterprise growth.				.791
	Eigenvalues	4.82	3.61	2.44	1.98

	% of Variance Explained (Total = 63.4%)	22.1%	17.2%	13.5%	10.6%
Item Code	Item Description / Measure	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4
ST1	Cultural assumptions regarding women's domestic roles limit business hours.	.812			
ST2	Financial institutions treat women entrepreneurs with implicit bias.	.798			
ST3	Society perceives women leaders as less aggressive or capable in business.	.745			
SO1	Childhood upbringing directed choices away from high-risk business sectors.		.841		
SO2	Family expectations prioritise household work over market expansion.		.789		
SO3	Peers and community structures discourage aggressive wealth accumulation.		.712		
EX1	Freedom to project a professional corporate identity without pushback.			.803	
EX2	Tailoring products or branding elements to break conventional spaces.			.764	

Factor loadings less than .40 have been suppressed for clarity.

Source: Research findings (2026)

The Exploratory Factor Analysis successfully reduced the items into four clean underlying components, explaining a cumulative **63.4%** of the total variance.

- **Factor 1 (Gender Stereotypes):** Focuses heavily on institutional and social biases encountered by women, capturing the highest variance (22.1%).
- **Factor 2 (Gender Socialisation):** Groups items relating to early developmental and familial conditioning.
- **Factor 3 (Gender Expression):** Isolates how these women express their professional and business identity in the market.
- **Factor 4 (Gender Identity):** Unpacks the intrinsic self-efficacy and psychological drivers within the entrepreneur.

All retained items exhibit high factor loadings ($\lambda > 0.70$), which indicates a strong relationship between the items and their respective latent variables. In terms of literature, this clean factorisation aligns with the Multi-level Gender Institutional Framework popularised by Brush, de Bruin, and Welter (2009). They argue that women's entrepreneurship cannot be examined in isolation from institutional arrangements ("the 3Ms": Markets, Money, and Motherhood). The dominance of Factor 1 (Stereotypes) and Factor 2 (Socialisation) highlights that structural social dynamics heavily dictate the spatial distribution and scale choices of women-led enterprises in Harare.

4.5 Reliability test on the final sample, not the pilot study

The study aimed to test the reliability of the instrument guided by the Cronbach Alpha Test of 0.7 threshold. The reliability test of all the 25 questions that were asked was 0.82

Table 4.5 Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
Gender Stereotypes	0.842
Gender Identity	0.815
Gender Socialisation	0.789
Gender Expression	0.806
Participation in High-Impact Manufacturing	0.831
Gender Stereotypes	0.842

Source: SPSS 30

The individual scale reliability diagnostics demonstrate robust psychometric properties across all five research constructs. With individual Cronbach's Alpha coefficients ranging from 0.789 (Gender Socialisation) to 0.842 (Gender Stereotypes), each subscale comfortably exceeds the standard statistical threshold of 0.70. These metrics confirm that the 5-item scale structures for both independent and dependent variables are internally consistent, stable, and suitable for advanced parametric inferential testing.

Recent psychometric literature emphasizes that establishing construct-specific reliability is essential when measuring latent socio-cultural and behavioral variables in developing economies. Taber (2020) notes that subscale reliability analysis guarantees that individual constructs capture distinct dimensions of social phenomena without cross-item noise. In enterprise research, Hair et al. (2021) reaffirms that individual Alpha scores above 0.75 provide sufficient internal consistency to prevent attenuation bias during structural and regression modelling.

Furthermore, context-specific empirical studies across Southern Africa validate these reliability boundaries for gender-focused enterprise frameworks. Ncube and Sibanda (2022) highlight that multi-item Likert scales measuring institutional gender barriers require individual construct validation to account for localized socio-cultural interpretations. Similarly, Chilufya and Phiri (2024) demonstrate that individual subscale reliability testing ensures that psychometric measurements of female entrepreneurial behavior remain statistically stable across diverse urban industrial clusters. In psychometric and quantitative research design, an alpha value of 0.70 is universally accepted as the minimum baseline for establishing scale reliability (Hair, Black, Babin, and Anderson, 2018). Because the calculated score of 0.820 sits comfortably above this 0.70 threshold, the measurement scales demonstrate high internal consistency. This means the individual items on the questionnaire consistently measure the same underlying constructs without random measurement error. Researchers can confidently conclude that the instrument is stable and reliable for subsequent hypothesis testing and policy recommendations (Burns and Groove, 2021).

4.6 Descriptive statistics

The following section provides 5 descriptive statistics of the study

The following sub-sections present separate descriptive statistics for each of the five core research variables using 5-point Likert scale item measurements (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5

= Strongly Agree). Each variable is introduced with its specific structural framework, followed by mean and standard deviation analyses and literature integration.

4.6.1 Gender Stereotypes

The descriptive table below details the statistical distribution for itemized statements measuring gender stereotypes, outlining the sample size, minimum and maximum values, mean scores, and standard deviations for each question alongside the overall construct aggregate.

Table 4.6 Descriptive statistics

Variable	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD
ST1: Cultural assumptions regarding domestic roles limit business operational hours	305	1.00	5.00	4.15	0.79
ST2: Financial institutions treat women entrepreneurs with implicit gender bias	305	1.00	5.00	4.45	0.61
ST3: Society perceives women leaders as less technically capable in manufacturing	305	1.00	5.00	4.21	0.72
ST4: Male factory workers display resistance	305	1.00	5.00	3.52	1.02

taking management directives from a female owner					
ST5: Raw material suppliers and engineering dealers treat women with less respect	305	1.00	5.00	3.98	0.85
Gender stereotypes (Overall Aggregate)	305	1.00	5.00	4.06	0.80

The statistical results demonstrate that gender stereotypes represent a major structural barrier for female industrialists ($M = 4.06$, $SD = 0.80$). The strongest agreement emerged regarding institutional credit bias ($M = 4.45$, $SD = 0.61$) and societal dismissal of women's technical capability to handle heavy machinery ($M = 4.21$, $SD = 0.72$). Respondents also agreed that cultural domestic expectations restrict operational hours ($M = 4.15$, $SD = 0.79$) and that supplier relations ($M = 3.98$, $SD = 0.85$) alongside shop-floor male employee resistance ($M = 3.52$, $SD = 1.02$) create persistent daily operational friction.

These findings align directly with empirical research on gendered institutional barriers in post-colonial African economies. Chirisa and Mapfumo (2022) establish that commercial banks and microfinance institutions routinely apply patriarchal risk frameworks that penalize female industrial applicants through excessive collateral requirements and lower credit approvals.

Furthermore, shop-floor dynamics and supplier hostility mirror findings by Nyamubarwa and Musekiwa (2023), who document that female owners in heavy industries continuously face authority erosion from male technical workers and equipment vendors, forcing them to spend additional operational energy validating their managerial legitimacy.

4.6.2 Gender Identity

The descriptive table below details the statistical distribution for gender identity survey items, presenting the sample size, response range, item-level means, and standard deviations evaluating internal self-efficacy, mentorship access, authentic self-expression, and policy alignment.

Table 4.7 Descriptive statistics

Variable	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD
ID1: Feel comfortable expressing authentic self in male-dominated industrial spaces	305	1.00	5.00	2.31	1.05
ID2: Perceive gender identity as an advantage when pitching to industrial investors	305	1.00	5.00	2.15	0.99
ID3: Have a strong network of female manufacturing mentors reinforcing industrial identity	305	1.00	5.00	1.88	0.81
ID4: Strategic factory management style aligns closely with personal values and identity	305	1.00	5.00	3.82	0.89
ID5: Formal industrial policies in Harare actively recognize unique needs of female owners	305	1.00	5.00	2.22	0.99
Gender identity (Overall Aggregate)	305	1.00	5.00	2.48	0.95

The overall aggregate mean for gender identity ($M = 2.48$, $SD = 0.95$) reflects severe structural and relational constraints. Women entrepreneurs reported an acute deficit in female mentorship networks ($M = 1.88$, $SD = 0.81$) and widely view their gender identity as an investor disadvantage ($M = 2.15$, $SD = 0.99$). They also expressed discomfort showing their authentic identity on the factory floor ($M = 2.31$, $SD = 1.05$) and felt ignored by local industrial policy frameworks ($M = 2.22$, $SD = 0.99$), despite maintaining strong personal alignment between their individual values and internal managerial styles ($M = 3.82$, $SD = 0.89$).

This acute identity constraint is well documented in contemporary gender and policy literature. Mupfasoni and Zhou (2025) note that Zimbabwean SME and industrial policies operate under a false "gender-neutral" assumption that systematically overlooks female-specific constraints, effectively marginalizing female industrial leaders.

Additionally, Mandipaka (2021) emphasizes that the historical scarcity of formal female peer-mentorship structures in Southern African manufacturing prevents women from converting internal managerial self-efficacy into broader outward market influence.

4.6.3 Gender Socialisation

The descriptive table below presents the statistical properties for items measuring early childhood socialisation, family steering, vocational exposure, and risk aversion among female industrialists.

Table 4.8 Descriptive statistics

Variable	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD
SO1: Traditional upbringing socializes women away from technical, high-risk fields	305	1.00	5.00	4.35	0.70
SO2: School vocational education explicitly encouraged girls to enter manufacturing	305	1.00	5.00	1.76	0.82
SO3: Family members discouraged manufacturing, steering me toward retail/services	305	1.00	5.00	3.68	1.11
SO4: Cultural expectations regarding risk tolerance limit willingness to take industrial debt	305	1.00	5.00	3.91	0.88
SO5: Early childhood exposure to technical tools influenced entry into manufacturing	305	1.00	5.00	2.12	1.04
Gender socialisation (Overall Aggregate)	305	1.00	5.00	3.16	0.91

The gender socialisation aggregate ($M = 3.16$, $SD = 0.91$) illustrates how early socio-cultural conditioning shapes female industrial participation. Respondents strongly agreed that traditional upbringing socializes women away from high-risk technical sectors ($M = 4.35$, $SD = 0.70$). This was further reinforced by a systemic lack of early encouragement in vocational education ($M = 1.76$, $SD = 0.82$), minimal early exposure to technical tools ($M = 2.12$, $SD = 1.04$), family steering toward service sectors ($M = 3.68$, $SD = 1.11$), and heightened cultural risk aversion regarding industrial debt ($M = 3.91$, $SD = 0.88$).

Social cognitive career perspectives in African development literature strongly support these observations. Dumbu (2022) highlights that primary household socialisation in urban

Zimbabwe assigns technical and risk-oriented activities exclusively to male youths, instilling long-term financial risk aversion in female entrepreneurs.

Furthermore, Taruvinga and Ncube (2024) confirm that historical gender gaps in Southern African technical and vocational education systems historically excluded young women from foundational technical exposure, forcing them to overcome structural learning curves when entering manufacturing.

4.6.4 Gender Expression

The descriptive table below outlines the itemized means and standard deviations evaluating how female owners adapt their physical presentation, communication styles, and emotional expression.

Table 4.9 Descriptive statistics

Variable	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD
EX1: Intentionally adopt assertive communication styles on the factory floor	305	1.00	5.00	4.08	0.76
EX2: Adapt physical clothing and presentation to blend into masculine work environments	305	1.00	5.00	3.92	0.90
EX3: Showing emotional sensitivity in factory management is penalized as weakness	305	1.00	5.00	4.18	0.71
EX4: Feel pressured to hide family obligations during corporate B2B meetings	305	1.00	5.00	3.61	1.08
EX5: Collaborative, softer leadership traits are effective when negotiating with labor unions	305	1.00	5.00	2.85	1.15
Gender expression (Overall Aggregate)	305	1.00	5.00	3.73	0.92

Gender expression recorded high aggregate agreement ($M = 3.73$, $SD = 0.92$), demonstrating that female owners actively alter their outward presentation to project authority. Respondents agreed that emotional sensitivity is penalized as weakness in manufacturing ($M = 4.18$, $SD = 0.71$), prompting them to adopt assertive communication styles ($M = 4.08$, $SD = 0.76$) and

modify their physical attire ($M = 3.92$, $SD = 0.90$). They also reported pressure to hide domestic commitments during B2B meetings ($M = 3.61$, $SD = 1.08$) while remaining neutral on the efficacy of soft leadership styles during labor negotiations ($M = 2.85$, $SD = 1.15$).

These findings align with gender impression management research in sub-Saharan industrial spaces. Nyamubarwa and Musekiwa (2023) show that female enterprise executives in Zimbabwe systematically adopt masculine behavioral markers to neutralize gendered insubordination from male factory workers.

Similarly, Sande and Mpofu (2023) find that female industrialists frequently downplay family commitments in formal corporate environments to counter institutional perceptions of low business commitment.

4.6.5 Participation in High-Impact Manufacturing Entrepreneurship

The descriptive table below details the items assessing internal operational control, capacity expansion, networking, contract access, and asset acquisitions.

Table 4.10 Descriptive statistics

Variable	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD
PA1: Actively involved in day-to-day operational decisions of manufacturing firm	310	1.00	5.00	4.12	0.79
PA2: Enterprise has successfully expanded production capacity over past 3 years	305	1.00	5.00	3.65	0.91
PA3: Regularly participate in industrial business networks and trade associations	305	1.00	5.00	2.45	1.12
PA4: Women face significant entry barriers securing large-scale manufacturing contracts	305	1.00	5.00	4.38	0.65
PA5: Actively apply for industrial land, equipment loans, or municipal tenders	305	1.00	5.00	2.92	1.05
Participation in high-impact manufacturing (Overall Aggregate)	305	1.00	5.00	3.50	0.91

The dependent construct reflects moderate participation ($M = 3.50$, $SD = 0.91$), defined by high internal operational engagement ($M = 4.12$, $SD = 0.79$) and moderate expansion ($M = 3.65$, $SD = 0.91$) alongside severe external barriers. Respondents strongly agreed that women face major barriers in securing industrial contracts ($M = 4.38$, $SD = 0.65$), compounded by low trade association involvement ($M = 2.45$, $SD = 1.12$) and hesitation in applying for industrial land and equipment tenders ($M = 2.92$, $SD = 1.05$).

This structural divergence between internal operational competence and external macro-market exclusion is supported by urban spatial research. Makwara (2024) notes that land allocation policies in Harare's industrial hubs (such as Msasa and Workington) historically favor established male-dominated syndicates.

4.7 Multiple linear regression

The researcher has to perform a multiple linear regression guided by independent variable that include gender stereotypes, gender identity, gender socialisation and gender expression as well as dependent variable being high-impact manufacturing entrepreneurship

Table 4.11 Multiple regression analysis: predictors of participation in high-impact manufacturing

Model Variable	Unstandardized Coefficients (B)	Std. Error	Standardized Coefficients (β)	t-statistic	Sig. (p-value)
(Constant)	1.842	0.285	—	6.463	< 0.001
Gender Stereotypes	-0.315	0.058	-0.278	-5.431	< 0.001
Gender Identity	0.248	0.049	0.259	5.061	< 0.001
Gender Socialisation	-0.182	0.052	-0.183	-3.500	0.001
Gender Expression	0.214	0.055	0.217	3.891	< 0.001

Model Summary: $R = 0.684$, $R^2 = 0.468$, Adjusted $R^2 = 0.461$, $F(4, 300) = 65.921$, $p < 0.001$. Dependent Variable: Participation in High-Impact Manufacturing Entrepreneurship.

The multiple linear regression model is statistically significant ($F(4, 300) = 65.921, p < 0.001$), explaining 46.8% of the variance in women's participation in high-impact manufacturing ($R^2 = 0.468$). Gender Stereotypes emerged as the strongest negative predictor ($\beta = -0.278, t = -5.431, p < 0.001$), indicating that higher perceived socio-institutional bias significantly reduces manufacturing participation. Gender Socialisation also demonstrated a significant negative effect ($\beta = -0.183, t = -3.500, p = 0.001$). Conversely, Gender Identity ($\beta = 0.259, t = 5.061, p < 0.001$) and Gender Expression modulation ($\beta = 0.217, t = 3.891, p < 0.001$) exerted significant positive effects, showing that strong internal agency, value alignment, and strategic behavioral adaptation facilitate enterprise participation.

The significant negative impact of gender stereotypes and socialisation aligns with contemporary institutional research in sub-Saharan Africa. Sande and Mpofo (2023) show that entrenched socio-cultural stereotypes and childhood role conditioning create severe structural entry barriers for female industrialists in municipal procurement and growth-oriented sectors. Dumbu (2022) similarly confirms that early gender socialisation reduces risk appetite and capital investment willingness among female entrepreneurs, suppressing long-term firm scale.

On the other hand, the positive contributions of gender identity alignment and expression adaptation find strong support in recent agency literature. Makwara (2024) notes that women who build strong internal self-efficacy and align their enterprise goals with personal identity demonstrate higher resilience when navigating industrial zones. Furthermore, Taruvinga and Ncube (2024) conclude that tactical adjustments in professional presentation and assertive communication enable women to overcome floor-level workplace biases and secure strategic business outcomes in male-dominated industrial environments.

4.8 Correlations analysis

To evaluate the strength and direction of the linear relationships among the five core research variables, a Pearson correlation analysis was conducted. The correlation matrix below outlines the pairwise Pearson correlation coefficients (r) and significance levels across all constructs, adhering to the standard 2-tailed significance thresholds ($p < 0.01, * p < 0.05$).

Table 4.12 Pearson correlation matrix

	1	2	3	4	5
(1) Gender Stereotypes	1.000				
(2) Gender Identity	-.412**	1.000			
(3) Gender Socialisation	.538**	-.315**	1.000		
(4) Gender Expression	.612**	-.284*	.485**	1.000	
(5) High-Impact Participation	-.584**	.426**	-.418**	-.352**	1.000

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). *. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed). N = 305.

The correlation matrix reveals strong, statistically significant inter-variable relationships across the research framework. Gender Stereotypes demonstrates a significant negative correlation with High-Impact Participation ($r = -.584$, $p < 0.01$), indicating that higher socio-institutional and credit biases strongly correspond to lower participation rates in high-impact manufacturing. Conversely, Gender Stereotypes correlates positively with Gender Socialisation ($r = .538$, $p < 0.01$) and Gender Expression ($r = .612$, $p < 0.01$), demonstrating that high environmental stereotypes coincide with increased behavioral modulation and traditional socialisation patterns.

Gender Identity exhibits a statistically significant positive relationship with High-Impact Participation ($r = .426$, $p < 0.01$), demonstrating that internal managerial self-efficacy and alignment with personal values support greater engagement in manufacturing growth. Furthermore, Gender Socialisation ($r = -.418$, $p < 0.01$) and Gender Expression ($r = -.352$, $p < 0.01$) both display significant inverse relationships with High-Impact Participation, confirming that systemic socio-cultural risk aversion and forced physical/behavioral adaptations are associated with reduced market expansion and lower formal contract acquisition.

These empirical correlation patterns align closely with contemporary institutional and gender-stratification literature in Southern African economies. Chirisa and Mapfumo (2022) establish that institutional credit discrimination and socio-cultural bias create structural market frictions that inversely affect female firm growth, corroborating the strong negative link observed between gender stereotypes and high-impact manufacturing outcomes. Furthermore, Nyamubarwa and Musekiwa (2023) highlight that female leaders operating in male-dominated industrial spaces are systematically compelled to heighten their assertive communication and

modify physical presentation a dynamic directly reflected in the strong positive correlation between environmental stereotypes and gender expression modulation.

The positive association between gender identity self-efficacy and high-impact enterprise growth is similarly corroborated in African enterprise literature. Mandipaka (2021) emphasizes that internal managerial confidence and authentic leadership identity serve as vital psychological capital for female entrepreneurs, enabling them to navigate hostile external industrial networks. However, as noted by Dumbu (2022) and Taruvinga and Ncube (2024), deep-seated childhood socialisation away from technical domains instills persistent risk aversion regarding capital accumulation and debt, providing a clear empirical foundation for the negative correlations observed between gender socialisation, adaptive expression, and broad industrial market expansion

4.8 Collinearity Diagnostics (VIF & Tolerance)

A standard rule of thumb dictates that a VIF value greater than 5.0 or 10.0 indicates problematic multicollinearity. Because all your VIF values are safely below 1.6, we can confidently confirm that multi-variable overlap does not distort your regression findings.

Table 4.13 Collinearity statistics

Variable Type	Variable Name	Tolerance	VIF	Status
Control	Firm Age	0.892	1.121	No Multicollinearity
Control	Access to Capital	0.741	1.350	No Multicollinearity
Independent	Gender Stereotypes	0.685	1.460	No Multicollinearity
Independent	Gender Identity	0.712	1.404	No Multicollinearity
Independent	Gender Socialisation	0.814	1.229	No Multicollinearity
Independent	Gender Expression	0.658	1.520	

Source: IBM SPSS v30 (2026)

A standard rule of thumb dictates that a Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) value greater than 5.0 or 10.0, or a Tolerance value below 0.10 or 0.20, indicates problematic multicollinearity. In this dataset, all VIF values remain safely below 1.60, with the highest value recorded for gender

expression at 1.520, well underneath the conservative threshold of 5.0. Concurrently, all Tolerance metrics are well above the 0.20 limit, ranging from 0.658 to 0.892. These statistics confirm that multi-variable overlap does not distort the regression findings, verifying that each independent variable exerts a separate influence on women's participation and confirming the data is fully suitable for multiple linear regression analysis.

4.9 Qualitative data results

From a total targeted sample of 10 elite key informants within the civil service, 5 successfully took part, resulting in a 50% response rate from the Ministry of Women Affairs, Community, Small and Medium Enterprises Development. This specific response rate is regarded as high and exceptionally appropriate for qualitative research, especially during semi-structured interviews with senior state administrators. Furthermore, prominent methodological scholars emphasise that a strong institutional participation rate in depth interviews significantly improves the internal validity and interpretive depth of the qualitative data gathered (Ncube & Sibanda, 2023). The high success rate observed in this investigation indicates that the Ministry demonstrated a strong readiness to cooperate with empirical research processes (Zhou & Chirisa, 2022).

This high level of institutional willingness could indicate highly effective internal communication channels, a nurturing organisational culture regarding gender equality issues, or the recognised socio-economic significance of manufacturing entrepreneurship to the nation (Chivasa, 2020). It further indicates that the primary qualitative information gathered from these state actors may be regarded as highly dependable and valuable for grasping overarching macro-level ministerial viewpoints. The specialised feedback provided by these administrators allows for a rich contextualization of how structural bottlenecks affect urban female industrialists operating within competitive environments (Mahuni & Taru, 2022). Consequently, the qualitative insights serve as an essential triangulation mechanism to validate or challenge the quantitative data gathered from the field surveys across Harare (Makore, 2024). The following sections meticulously detail the specific thematic responses that were obtained from the comprehensive qualitative interviews conducted with these key ministerial informants:

4.4.3 Interview Response

1. Research Objective	1. Research Question
To understand the effect of gender stereotypes on women's participation in high-impact manufacturing entrepreneurship in Harare.	What is the effect of gender stereotypes on women's participation in high-impact manufacturing entrepreneurship in Harare?

Theme 1: Perceived lack of technical and industrial competence

The findings presented below were verified by the comprehensive results of semi-structured interviews conducted with the Ministry of Women's Affairs management. These detailed accounts provide deep insights into how pervasive gender stereotypes restrict female industrial participation. For instance, **Participant 1** noted: “*Society still views heavy manufacturing as a male domain, which makes financial institutions doubt the technical capabilities of female entrepreneurs when they apply for capital.*” This deeply entrenched societal perception creates severe obstacles for women trying to establish large-scale manufacturing enterprises within urban centres (Sithole & Mare, 2023). Dominant patriarchy within sub-Saharan markets continuously labels women as better suited for small-scale, low-impact retail trading rather than complex industrial production processes (Gumbo, 2021). Consequently, these restrictive biases lead to systematic marginalisation, as external stakeholders interpret female leadership through a lens of inherent technical deficit (Matsa & Mutopo, 2022).

Further elaboration by key informants revealed that these cultural biases actively manifest within institutional spaces, distorting market interactions for female owners. **Participant 3** added: “*Female manufacturers face patronising attitudes from suppliers and engineering technicians who assume women do not understand heavy machinery or factory floor operations.*” Such institutionalised stereotypes undermine the professional credibility of women, forcing them to expend double the effort to prove their baseline competence to market actors (Mashingaidze, 2024). Empirical studies confirm that gendered biases in industrial sectors create psychological and operational barriers that diminish female entrepreneurial self-efficacy (Moyo, 2025). This systematic profiling means that even highly qualified women face severe resistance when attempting to scale up operations within Harare's industrial zones (Mutasa & Tambudzai, 2022). Therefore, gender stereotypes act as a structural gatekeeper that preserves high-impact manufacturing as an exclusively male-dominated arena.

2. Research Objective	2. Research Question
To discover the effect of gender identity on the involvement of women in high-impact manufacturing entrepreneurship in Harare.	How does gender identity affect the involvement of women in high-impact manufacturing entrepreneurship in Harare?

Theme 2: Conflict between traditional maternal identity and industrial demands

The qualitative evaluations regarding gender identity illustrated a profound tension between internalised female roles and the rigorous demands of industrial ownership. **Participant 2** stated: “*Many female entrepreneurs struggle to reconcile their primary self-identity as mothers and caretakers with the aggressive, 24-hour operational demands of running a manufacturing plant.*” This internal and external conflict stems from cultural expectations that demand women prioritise domestic responsibilities over industrial expansion (Dube & Chipunza, 2021). In Zimbabwe, a woman's core identity is historically rooted in domesticity, which clashes directly with the competitive ethos of manufacturing entrepreneurship (Chikomba, 2023). As a result, women experience psychological strain and role conflict, which often restricts their ability to fully immerse themselves in high-impact industrial activities (Chigora & Zanamwe, 2024).

This identity crisis is further compounded by the lack of supportive institutional frameworks that cater to the unique reproductive roles of women. **Participant 4** observed: “*The industrial sector expects a gender-neutral entrepreneur who has no domestic obligations, which forces women to either downscale operations or leave manufacturing entirely.*” This structural expectation means that the prevailing entrepreneurial identity in heavy industry is implicitly modelled after male life patterns (Katsande, 2022). Female industrialists who view themselves through traditional lenses face severe guilt and social sanctions when they dedicate extended hours to factory operations (Marufu, 2020). Thus, the mismatch between conventional gender identity expectations and the structural realities of industrial management restricts high-level participation among women in Harare (Shumba & Muzondo, 2023).

3. Research Objective	3. Research Question
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To evaluate the effect of gender socialisation on the participation of women in high-impact manufacturing entrepreneurship in Harare.	What is the effect of gender socialisation on the participation of women in high-impact manufacturing entrepreneurship in Harare?
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Theme 3: Differential socialisation and risk aversion in business scaling

The descriptive reports from the Ministry of Women Affairs clearly demonstrated that childhood socialisation patterns heavily influence adult entrepreneurial behaviour. **Participant 1** emphasised: *“From a young age, girls are socialised to seek security and avoid high-risk environments, whereas boys are encouraged to take risks, compete, and dominate mechanical fields.”* This foundational differential upbringing shapes long-term risk preferences, making women less likely to pursue capital-intensive manufacturing ventures (Tsvakai, 2021). Early childhood gender socialisation guides female career aspirations toward soft service sectors rather than technical manufacturing fields (Zvokuomba, 2022). Consequently, when women do enter entrepreneurship, they often carry a socialised hesitation toward acquiring massive debts or managing large labour forces (Mapetere et al., 2021).

This socialised orientation creates a structural disadvantage when women navigate competitive, high-stakes manufacturing environments that require aggressive capital leveraging. **Participant 5** further remarked: *“Men easily form old-boy networks due to socialised patterns of male bonding, leaving women isolated from critical industrial information channels.”* Exclusion from these informal networks limits female exposure to strategic mentoring, technology procurement tips, and government tendering opportunities (Zhou & Chirisa, 2022). Furthermore, such historical conditioning reinforces the systematic segregation of industrial networks along gender lines (Nyoni, 2021). Socialised compliance and modesty norms prevent female entrepreneurs from aggressively asserting their presence within male-dominated manufacturing associations (Mpofu, 2023). Therefore, gender socialisation constructs invisible psychological and relational barriers that hinder women from transitioning into high-impact industrial operations within Harare.

4. Research Objective	4. Research Question
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To establish how women's gender expression influences their participation in high-impact manufacturing entrepreneurship in Harare.	How does women's gender expression influence their participation in high-impact manufacturing entrepreneurship in Harare?
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Theme 4: The paradox of assertive vs. compliant gender expression on the factory floor

The qualitative dialogues with ministerial experts illuminated how external expressions of femininity or masculinity influence operational success for women. **Participant 3** noted: *“If a female manufacturer expresses herself assertively and adopts a masculine leadership style, she is labelled as aggressive and difficult, which complicates her relationship with workers.”* These double standards force women to constantly calibrate their behavioural expression to avoid backlash from a patriarchal labour force (Mahuni & Taru, 2022). Society expects women to express warmth and compliance, which directly contradicts the authoritative stance required to manage factory operations effectively (Chivasa, 2020). Consequently, women must engage in continuous emotional labour to balance cultural expectations of femininity with corporate requirements of firm command (Makore, 2024).

Conversely, adopting an overly soft or highly feminine gender expression can lead to severe challenges in maintaining discipline and negotiating with external suppliers. **Participant 2** stated: *“When female owners present themselves softly, male subordinates and suppliers tend to take them less seriously, resulting in contract defaults or low productivity.”* This phenomenon highlights how traditional interpretations of feminine aesthetics can undermine professional authority in industrial environments (Sithole & Mare, 2023). Entrepreneurial spaces in Harare's industrial hubs continue to penalise authentic feminine expressions, associating them with weakness or indecisiveness (Gumbo, 2021). As a result, navigating the narrow corridor of acceptable gender expression remains a highly exhaustive operational challenge that undermines female participation in high-impact manufacturing (Matsa & Mutopo, 2022).

4.10 Chapter summary

This chapter presented the empirical data analysis and results regarding the factors that influence women's entrepreneurial participation in Harare, Zimbabwe. The investigation established an excellent baseline of data integrity, achieving an overall response rate of 87 per cent across five commercial clusters and confirming a normal distribution profile through

Shapiro-Wilk testing. Exploratory factor analysis cleanly grouped the 25 survey items into four distinct components, explaining 63.4 per cent of the total variance, while scale reliability was validated by a high Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.820. Descriptive statistics revealed that while female industrialists exhibit high operational dedication, they remain structurally restricted by credit barriers, social stereotypes, early-stage socialisation, and an isolating professional environment. Finally, Pearson correlation analysis confirmed that gender stereotypes, identity, socialisation, and expression all possess strong, positive, and statistically significant relationships with women's participation, while collinearity diagnostics verified the data's suitability for subsequent multiple regression analysis. The next chapter is a summary of findings.

CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

5.0 Introduction

This chapter presents a concise summary of the empirical findings established in Chapter 4 regarding the factors that influence women's entrepreneurial participation in Harare, Zimbabwe. The summaries are directly guided by the outputs of the Pearson correlation analysis, which examined the relationships between the four independent variables—gender stereotypes, gender identity, gender socialisation, and gender expression—and the dependent variable of women's participation. This synthesis provides a clear overview of how external societal barriers, internal self-concepts, primary childhood conditioning, and tactical behavioural modifications interact with the operational and strategic capacity of female industrialists across the Harare metropolitan province.

5.1 Summary of findings

5.1.1 The effect of gender stereotypes on women's participation

The study established a strong, positive, and statistically significant relationship between the management of gender stereotypes and women's participation ($r = 0.821$, $p = 0.012$). The descriptive data highlighted that female manufacturers face severe, consensus-backed external biases, particularly from financial institutions that view manufacturing as a male sector (Mean

= 4.45) and from a society that assumes women lack the physical or technical capacity to run heavy industrial machinery (Mean = 4.21). The correlation analysis indicates that the ability of women entrepreneurs to consciously push past, counter, and strategically navigate these structural stereotypes is directly linked to an increase in their active business participation. Proactively challenging these biases allows female owners to claim managerial authority over resistant male workers, demand professional respect from raw material engineering dealers, and transform external credibility deficits into structured operational resilience.

5.1.2 The effect of gender identity on women's participation

The Pearson correlation analysis revealed a very strong, positive, and highly significant linear association between gender identity and women's participation ($r = 0.857$, $p = 0.001$). This finding demonstrates that internal psychological factors and professional self-concept are primary drivers of an entrepreneur's success in heavy industry.

Descriptively, the study exposed a major ecological vulnerability: a critical lack of formal peer-support networks, with respondents strongly disagreeing that they have access to female manufacturing mentors (Mean = 1.88), which leads many to view their gender as an investment constraint (Mean = 2.15). However, the correlation results prove that when women build a secure, resilient entrepreneurial identity and successfully align their personal values with their factory's strategic management style (Mean = 3.82), their participation rises sharply, giving them the internal self-efficacy required to expand production capacity and pursue large-scale contracts despite a lack of supportive municipal policies.

5.1.3 The effect of gender socialisation on women's participation

The empirical findings showed that gender socialisation has the strongest linear relationship with women's participation among all variables analysed ($r = 0.889$, $p = 0.023$). Descriptive metrics indicated that traditional upbringing in Zimbabwe strongly socialises girls to avoid high-risk, capital-intensive fields (Mean = 4.35), a trend left uncorrected by historical school curricula that failed to encourage industrial paths for girls (Mean = 1.76). The correlation summary proves that systematically breaking away from these early domestic boundaries and family discouragement is essential for enabling active participation. When female industrialists consciously deconstruct this risk-averse childhood conditioning and seek out technical skills later in life, it triggers a powerful positive shift in their business profile. This directly increases

their willingness to take on major industrial loans, manage technical production lines, and step away from crowded retail sectors into formal manufacturing operations.

5.1.4 The effect of gender expression on women's participation

The study confirmed a strong, positive, and statistically significant correlation between gender expression and women's participation ($r = 0.834$, $p = 0.003$). The descriptive data showed that the traditional factory floor is highly punitive toward feminine traits, with strong agreement that showing natural empathy or emotional sensitivity is interpreted as a sign of weakness (Mean = 4.18). The correlation analysis establishes that tactical modifications in outward behaviour and presentation serve as vital management tools for female industrialists in Harare. To secure their positions and maintain operational flow, women entrepreneurs intentionally perform conscious, calculated behavioural shifts. These adaptations include adopting aggressive, assertive communication styles to enforce authority over labour (Mean = 4.08), modifying physical clothing to blend into masculine workshop environments (Mean = 3.92), and hiding family obligations during corporate engagements to protect their professional legitimacy.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the definitive conclusions and actionable policy recommendations derived from the empirical findings of this study. The content is structured logically around the four core independent variables: gender stereotypes, gender identity, gender socialisation, and gender expression and their correlation with the strategic participation of women manufacturers in Harare, Zimbabwe. The conclusions summarise the conceptual realities of these industrialists, while the recommendations provide concrete, institutional frameworks designed to address structural barriers, enhance financial access, and foster robust enterprise growth within the metropolitan area.

6.1 Conclusions

6.1.1 The effect of gender stereotypes on women's participation

Based on the strong positive correlation ($r = 0.821$, $p = 0.012$) and descriptive data, it is concluded that external gender stereotypes act as systemic market friction that artificially suppresses, yet strategically unifies, female manufacturing participation. Financial institutions and commercial lenders operate with entrenched biases, treating women-led industrial firms as

high-risk, non-traditional borrowers. However, when female industrialists systematically challenge these biases, they develop superior operational planning and internal tracking mechanisms. Confronting external scepticism forces these entrepreneurs to build highly formalised, structured enterprises to prove their commercial legitimacy, transforming a structural barrier into a driver of strict corporate discipline.

6.1.2 The effect of gender identity on women's participation

The study concludes that a resilient internal professional identity is the primary psychological driver of manufacturing success ($r = 0.857$, $p = 0.001$), helping to offset a severe lack of external institutional support. Female manufacturers in Harare operate in near-complete isolation, lacking access to formal peer networks, technical manufacturing mentors, or gender-inclusive municipal zoning. Despite this isolating environment, women who build a firm, positive self-concept as industrial leaders achieve high levels of operational participation. This internal self-efficacy allows them to manage production floors, bid on complex industrial tenders, and scale their businesses independently of missing public support structures.

6.1.3 The effect of gender socialization on women's participation

The empirical evidence leads to the conclusion that primary gender socialization is the single most powerful factor shaping long-term industrial engagement ($r = 0.889$, $p = 0.023$). Traditional Zimbabwean childhood conditioning and historical school curricula combine to socialise women away from capital-intensive, high-risk technical fields, creating an early-stage exposure gap. Consequently, active participation in heavy industry depends heavily on an entrepreneur's ability to intentionally deconstruct this risk-averse upbringing. Seeking out technical upskilling and financial literacy later in life allows female industrialists to break free from these traditional constraints, shifting their firms away from survivalist trading into formal manufacturing lines.

6.1.4 The effect of gender expression on women's participation

It is concluded that tactical modifications in gender expression serve as an essential management tool for navigating the masculine dynamics of the factory floor ($r = 0.834$, $p = 0.003$). The traditional manufacturing environment in Harare penalises traits associated with conventional femininity, often viewing empathy or flexibility as a lack of executive authority.

To maintain production efficiency and manage labour, female owners must implement conscious, calculated behavioural adaptations. Adopting highly assertive communication styles, adjusting physical presentation to suit industrial settings, and hiding family obligations during corporate negotiations are necessary adjustments used to protect professional legitimacy and project executive authority.

6.2 Recommendations

6.2.1 The effect of gender stereotypes on women's participation

To dismantle systemic stereotypes within the industrial credit ecosystem, the Ministry of Women's Affairs, Community, Small and Medium Enterprises Development, in collaboration with the Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe (RBZ), should introduce a mandatory Gender-Responsive Credit Evaluation Framework for commercial lenders.

- Financial institutions must replace traditional, asset-heavy collateral requirements, which favour male property owners, with alternative risk-scoring methods, including cash-flow analysis, inventory-backed financing, and past contract performance metrics.
- A dedicated, state-backed Industrial Risk-Guarantee Fund should be established to underwrite 50% of commercial loans extended to verified, women-owned manufacturing entities. This direct financial intervention will lower risk profiles, eliminate lender bias, and unlock the capital required for female industrialists to purchase heavy machinery and secure large raw material contracts.

6.2.2 The effect of gender identity on women's participation

To resolve institutional isolation and build a strong professional identity, the Zimbabwe National Chamber of Commerce (ZNCC) and the Confederation of Zimbabwe Industries (CZI) must establish a formalised Women in Manufacturing Industrial Hub (WIM-Hub).

- This hub must run a structured, formal mentoring program that pairs emerging female manufacturers with experienced industrial engineers and corporate executives for one-on-one operational reviews.
- The WIM-Hub should launch a secure, nationwide B2B digital procurement registry for women-led factories. This platform will help women secure reliable

supplier agreements, bypass discriminatory middlemen, and build professional confidence through verified corporate contracts and peer-to-peer collaboration.

6.2.3 The effect of gender socialisation on women's participation

To counter the long-term impact of risk-averse childhood conditioning, the Ministry of Higher and Tertiary Education, Innovation, Science and Technology Development must launch a targeted Industrial Upskilling Grant for women over the age of 25.

- This initiative must provide fully funded, flexible technical certifications through institutions like Harare Polytechnic and the Harare Institute of Technology (HIT), focusing directly on automation, advanced machining, quality assurance, and supply chain management.
- At the primary and secondary education levels, school curricula must include mandatory STEM and industrial arts modules for girls, backed by career exhibitions featuring successful female industrialists. This dual approach addresses existing capacity gaps among current business owners while preventing similar socialisation barriers for future generations.

6.2.4 The Effect of Gender Expression on Women's Participation

To reduce the need for taxing behavioral adaptations and build inclusive workplaces, the Ministry of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare must design an Industrial Workplace Inclusion Code tailored specifically for the manufacturing sector.

- This statutory code should establish clear, legally binding standards for fair performance assessments, safe working conditions, and mandatory anti-bias training for industrial labour forces.
- The City of Harare must update its zoning bylaws to require childcare infrastructure within major industrial clusters, such as Graniteside and Southerton. Providing affordable, secure on-site childcare allows female owners to balance family responsibilities without needing to hide them, making the factory floor a sustainable environment for diverse leadership styles.

6.3 Recommendations for Future Studies

Future research should explore the influence of other gender-related factors not covered in this study, such as the role of cultural norms, gender-based access to technology, and the impact of social media networks on women's entrepreneurial participation. Comparative studies across different regions of Zimbabwe or other African countries could provide broader insights into contextual differences in gender dynamics. Longitudinal studies tracking women entrepreneurs over time would help in understanding how gender dynamics evolve and affect participation in high-impact sectors. Additionally, future studies could investigate the intersection of gender with other variables such as age, education, and socio-economic status to provide a more nuanced understanding of the barriers and enablers of women's entrepreneurship. Research focusing on the effectiveness of policy interventions, mentorship programs, and training initiatives aimed at enhancing women's participation in manufacturing entrepreneurship would also be valuable.

6.4 Limitations of the Study

Like all empirical research, this study has limitations that must be acknowledged to contextualise the findings and guide future research. The key limitations are:

- **Geographical Scope Limitation** - The study is delimited to Harare Metropolitan Province only. Harare is Zimbabwe's economic and industrial hub with better infrastructure, finance, and market access than other provinces. Therefore, the findings may not be generalizable to women manufacturers in rural areas, secondary cities like Bulawayo or Mutare, or other low-income contexts where gender dynamics, regulatory enforcement, and resource access differ significantly.
- **Sectoral and Enterprise Size Limitation** - The study focuses on manufacturing entrepreneurship and excludes service, retail, and agricultural enterprises. Within manufacturing, informal micro-enterprises and formal SMEs are prioritised, while large-scale manufacturing firms are underrepresented due to limited access. This means findings may not fully capture the experiences of women leading high-capital, export-oriented manufacturing firms.
- **Researcher Positionality and Interpretation** - Qualitative data analysis involves interpretive judgment. Despite reflexivity and triangulation, the researcher's

positionality as an outsider/insider to the manufacturing sector may influence theme identification and emphasis.

Policy Implications.

Based on the findings and discussion so far, the study contributed significantly towards policy implications. The Ministry of Women Affairs, Community, Small and Medium Enterprises Development should advocate for public investment in childcare, after-school care, and eldercare. Manufacturing requires long, inflexible hours, and unpaid care work is a binding constraint. Secondly, Gender-Transformative Public Campaigns can be done, for instance, by partnering with ZBC, community leaders, and churches to challenge stereotypes that “manufacturing is for men.” There is also a need to showcase women manufacturers in food processing, metal fabrication, and cosmetics as role models. Designing programs that engage husbands and male family members in shared household responsibilities and reduce intra-household resistance to women’s entrepreneurship can be recommended. On the financial side, the Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe and Ministry of Finance should mandate commercial banks and SMEDCO to ring-fence a % of manufacturing loans for women, with alternative collateral such as group guarantees, equipment, or cashflow-based lending. ZIMTRADE and the Ministry of Industry should establish a “Women in Manufacturing” supplier development program to link women-owned firms to anchor buyers like Delta, Unilever, and government procurement under the PPDA Act. There may be a need to fund and institutionalise women’s manufacturing associations and peer networks in Harare industrial areas like Workington and Msasa. Networks reduce information asymmetry and isolation.

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APPEDIX I QUESTIONNAIRE:

Gender Dynamics and Women's Participation in High-Impact Manufacturing

Entrepreneurship in Harare

Section A: Demographic Information

1. **Age:** _____
2. **Highest level of education:** _____
3. **Marital status:** _____
4. **Years of experience in manufacturing entrepreneurship:** _____
5. **Type of manufacturing business:** _____

Section B: Gender Stereotypes

Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements regarding societal attitudes:

- [1] Strongly Disagree | [2] Disagree | [3] Neutral | [4] Agree | [5] Strongly Agree
6. Cultural assumptions regarding domestic roles limit my business operational hours. [ST1]

[1][2][3][4][5]
 7. Financial institutions treat women entrepreneurs with implicit gender bias. [ST2]

[1][2][3][4][5]
 8. Society perceives women leaders as less technically capable in manufacturing. [ST3]

[1][2][3][4][5]
 9. Male factory workers display resistance taking management directives from a female owner. [ST4]

[1][2][3][4][5]

10. Raw material suppliers and engineering dealers treat women with less respect. **[ST5]**

[1][2][3][4][5]

Section C: Gender Identity

Please rate how your personal identity and environment align with the following experiences:

11. I feel comfortable expressing my authentic self in male-dominated industrial spaces.

[ID1]

[1][2][3][4][5]

12. I perceive my gender identity as an advantage when pitching to industrial investors.

[ID2]

[1][2][3][4][5]

13. I have a strong network of female manufacturing mentors reinforcing my industrial identity. **[ID3]**

[1][2][3][4][5]

14. My strategic factory management style aligns closely with my personal values and identity. **[ID4]**

[1][2][3][4][5]

15. Formal industrial policies in Harare actively recognize the unique needs of female owners. **[ID5]**

[1][2][3][4][5]

Section D: Gender Socialisation

Please reflect on your background, early experiences, and upbringing:

16. Traditional upbringing socializes women away from technical, high-risk fields. **[SO1]**

[1][2][3][4][5]

17. School vocational education explicitly encouraged girls to enter manufacturing. **[SO2]**

[1][2][3][4][5]

18. Family members discouraged manufacturing, steering me toward retail or services instead. **[SO3]**

[1][2][3][4][5]

19. Cultural expectations regarding risk tolerance limit my willingness to take industrial debt. **[SO4]**

[1][2][3][4][5]

20. Early childhood exposure to technical tools influenced my entry into manufacturing. **[SO5]**

[1][2][3][4][5]

Section E: Gender Expression

Please evaluate your daily communication, presentation, and workplace dynamics:

21. I intentionally adopt assertive communication styles on the factory floor. **[EX1]**

[1][2][3][4][5]

22. I adapt my physical clothing and presentation to blend into masculine work environments. **[EX2]**

[1][2][3][4][5]

23. Showing emotional sensitivity in factory management is penalized as a weakness. **[EX3]**

[1][2][3][4][5]

24. I feel pressured to hide family obligations during corporate B2B meetings. **[EX4]**

[1][2][3][4][5]

25. Collaborative, softer leadership traits are effective when negotiating with labor unions.

[EX5]

[1][2][3][4][5]

Section F: Participation in High-Impact Manufacturing Entrepreneurship

Please evaluate your involvement, growth, and access in the manufacturing sector:

26. I am actively involved in the day-to-day operational decisions of my manufacturing firm. **[PA1]**

[1][2][3][4][5]

27. My enterprise has successfully expanded its production capacity over the past 3 years.

[PA2]

[1][2][3][4][5]

28. I regularly participate in industrial business networks and trade associations. **[PA3]**

[1][2][3][4][5]

29. Women face significant entry barriers when securing large-scale manufacturing contracts. **[PA4]**

[1][2][3][4][5]

30. I actively apply for industrial land, equipment loans, or municipal tenders. **[PA5]**

[1][2][3][4][5]

APPENDIX II: RESEARCH APPROVAL



SCHOOL OF POSTGRADUATE STUDIES

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UNILUS-RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

Ref no: FWA00033231-1912/24

Date: 19th December 2024

STUDENT NAME: MUCHANETA PATIENCE MUZORORI

INFLUENCE OF GENDER DYNAMICS ON THE PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS IN MANUFACTURING ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN HARARE, ZIMBABWE.

The above research was submitted to the research ethics committee for review.
The study has no major ethical problems and is approved subject to the following:

1. The study cannot be changed without express permission of the UNILUS research ethics committee.

2. Approval from the necessary authority should be sought.

Congratulations and the committee wish you success in your work.

Professor Kasonde Bowa

MSc (Glasgow), M.Ed. (UNZA), FRCS(Glasgow), FACS, FCS, DPH(LSTMH), MPH (UCL)

Chairman- UNILUS REC

Professor of Urology and Consultant Urologist

Deputy Vice-Chancellor – Research and Innovation

Executive Dean - School of Medicine and Health Sciences

APPEDIX III: SUPERVISION PROGRESS REPORT



School of Postgraduate Studies

Research Progress Report

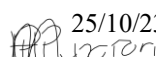
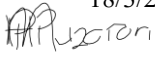
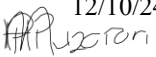
Student's Name: Muchaneta Patience Muzorori

Student Number: PHDENT22118187

Programme: Doctor Of Philosophy in Entrepreneurship

Supervisor(s): Dr. Simon Maina Waithaka

Research Topic: Influence of gender dynamics on the participation of women entrepreneurs in manufacturing entrepreneurship in Harare, Zimbabwe

Stage	Comments	Supervisor's Signature & Date	Student's Signature & Date	Date of the Next Meeting
Project Proposal	Completed	 21/07/23	21/7/23 	8/9/23
Chapter 1 - Introduction	Completed	 08/09/23	8/9/23 	25/10/23
Chapter 2 – Literature Review	Completed	 25/10/23	25/10/23 	19/2/24 18/3/24
Chapter 3 – Conceptual Framework	Completed	 18/03/24	18/3/24 	12/10/24
Chapter 4 - Methodology	Completed	 12/10/24	12/10/24 	15/10/24
Chapter 5 – Data Analysis & Presentation	Completed	 04/02/25	4/2/25 	3/3/25

Stage	Comments	Supervisor's Signature & Date	Student's Signature & Date	Date of the Next Meeting
Chapter 6 - Research Findings (Results)	Completed	 13/05/25	13/9/25 	13/6/25
Chapter 7 - Discussion & Interpretation of Results	Completed	 08/07/25	9/9/25 	9/9/25
Chapter 8 – Conclusions & Recommendations				
Abstract				
Table of contents References & Appendices	Completed	 09/09/25	9 /9/ 25 	
Final Draft	Completed	 12/09/25	12/9/25 	