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***THE EFFECT OF LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS
IN WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT – THE CASE OF THE
ASSOCIATION OF WOMEN IN BOLDNESS (AWiB)***

BY: MAKEDA MULUGETA

ADVISOR: DR. BAHRAN ASRAT

**A FINAL PROJECT WORK SUBMITTED TO ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY SCHOOL
OF COMMERCE IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE
DEGREE OF MASTER OF ART IN BUSINESS LEADERSHIP**

**ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY COLLEGE OF BUSINESS AND ECONOMICS
SCHOOL OF COMMERCE
MBL PROGRAM**

**MAY 2025
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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the project titled “*The Effect of Leadership Development Programs In Women’s Empowerment – The Case of the Association of Women in Boldness (AWiB)*” is my original work. All sources of materials used for this project have been properly cited and acknowledged. This research has not been submitted for any degree or certification elsewhere.

Name: Makeda Mulugeta

Signature: _____

Date: _____

CERTIFICATION

This is to certify that the A Final Project work titled "*The Effect of Leadership Development Programs In Women's Empowerment – The Case of the Association of Women in Boldness (AWiB)*" has been carried out by **Makeda Mulugeta (ID: GSE/3914/15)** under my supervision. The work is original, meets academic standards, and is suitable for submission in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of **Master of Arts in Business Leadership** at Addis Ababa University.

Advisor's

Name: Dr. Bahran Asrat, Assistant Professor

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Department: Business Leadership

College of Business and Economics

Addis Ababa University

APPROVAL SHEET

As members of the Board of Examining for the Final MBL Project Defense, we certify that we have read and assessed the study prepared by Makeda Mulugeta titled “The Effect of Leadership Development Programs In Women’s Empowerment – The Case of the Association of Women in Boldness (AWiB)” and we recommend that the project be accepted as satisfying the requirement for the Degree of Master of Art in Business Leadership.

Examining Committee:

Chairperson

Internal Examiner

External Examiner

Name: _____

Name: _____

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Signature: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Date: _____

Date: _____

Final Approval:

Program Coordinator (MBL)

Dean, College of Business and Economics

Name: _____

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Date: _____

Institution: Addis Ababa University

College: Business and Economics

School: Commerce

Date of Approval: _____

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ACRONYMS

AWiB – Association of Women in Boldness

MBL – Master of Business Leadership

WLDPs- Women-Only Leadership Development Programs

FDRE – Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia

ILO – International Labor Organization

LDPs – Leadership Development Programs

TVET – Technical and Vocational Education and Training

WELI – Women’s Empowerment and Leadership Initiative

ABSTRACT

Despite progress in gender policies, Ethiopian women confront deeply rooted barriers from internalized self-doubt to systemic workplace exclusion that limit their leadership trajectories. While leadership development programs (LDPs) are part of the solution, very few studies on their effectiveness within the Ethiopian context remains limited. This study addresses the gap by investigating how the Association of Women in Boldness (AWiB) LDPs help women overcome these barriers. This study employed a mixed-methods research design, integrating quantitative data from surveys (n=145) with qualitative data insights from key informant managerial interviews and open-ended participant feedback. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, correlation, and regression, while qualitative data were coded thematically. Results show that participants reported increased confidence in leadership abilities, better management of workplace obstacles, and stronger advocacy for women in leadership roles. Regression analysis revealed that networking, training, and mentoring all significantly contributed to empowerment, with networking emerging as the strongest predictor. Qualitative results demonstrated that AWiB's programs enhance leadership skills through training, provide career guidance via mentorship, and cultivate professional networks to reduce workplace isolation. The finding of this study suggests that leadership development programs, especially those prioritized networks can Play a meaningful role in helping Ethiopian women navigate personal, organizational, and sociocultural barriers to leadership. In a context like Ethiopia where cultural expectations limit women's leadership, such programs provide both practical tools and much-needed support. It recommends that AWiB and similar organizations prioritize culturally tailored programs, institutional reforms, and flexible work policies to strengthen women's leadership development.

Keywords: Leadership Development Programs, Women's Empowerment, Women's barriers

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

This chapter explores the challenges Ethiopian women face in leadership, the gaps in current research, and how Women's Leadership Development Programs (LDPs) aim to bridge those gaps. By outlining the study's background, key questions, objectives, and significance. This chapter lays the groundwork for a deeper exploration of how purposeful leadership development can empower women and in turn strengthen Ethiopia's future.

1.1. Background of Study

Women's empowerment, a process of empowering women to exercise agency, access, and meaningfully contribute to society, is a powerful driver of economic and social development (Batliwala, 1995). Empowered women can control their lives and propel their communities toward development (Petroia and Stegarescu, 2023).

In an ideal situation, women who comprise half of the total population should also equally represent the other half in leadership roles anywhere. According to Statistics Times (2021), women make up approximately 50% of the entire global population. Currently, women hold only 28% of Chief Executive Suite (C-suite) roles (McKinsey, 2023) and 28% of managerial positions worldwide (Hanna et al., 2023). World Economic Forum (2023) states that it will take 131 years to close the global gender gap. International development policies implemented in previous years have had particularly negative consequences for women and girls who are already disadvantaged or excluded from positions of power and access to resources based on other dimensions of their identity (Jenkins, et al., 2019)

The situation in Africa is similar, women are only 28% of CEOs (ILO, 2013). According to McKinsey, Women make up over 50% of Africa's population but contributed only 33% of its GDP

in 2018, worsening inequality and harming economic growth. Progress on gender equality has stalled, and at the current rate even more concerning, Africa would need 140+ years to achieve parity (McKinsey 2019). Internal barriers such as discriminatory legislation, stereotyping, and unequal educational opportunities still constrain women (Ogujiuba et al., 2012).

Ethiopia has advanced gender equality through laws like “Labor Proclamation No. 1156/2019”, banning gender-based discrimination and ensuring maternity leave. It scored 77/100 on gender laws in 2022, surpassing the sub-Saharan average. Yet gaps remain women in Ethiopia account for 49% of the population (World Bank, 2024), but their participation in leadership and management positions is extremely low. In the World Bank Enterprise Surveys women occupy only 13.6% of top management positions (World Bank, 2012), latest report is 27.51% of managerial roles (Hanna et al., 2023). Even in technical and associate professional positions, women's representation remains low at 32.3% (Tadesse, 2017). Women earn 26% less than men in formal jobs, and cultural norms impose a double burden of unpaid care work (Ethiopia Labour Market Profile, 2024/2025). However, Future projections indicate no significant change to 33.4% by 2050 roles (Hanna et al., 2023).

This gap exists because Ethiopian women have multidimensional barriers to achieving leadership roles. At the personal level, they lack confidence and have limited access to education (Nigist, 2019). At the organizational level, discrimination at work and promotion systems based on prejudice prevent opportunities for advancement (EMAH Consulting, 2022). Sociocultural factors, especially the "double burden" of balancing work and domestic obligations, limit women's professional careers (Nigist, 2019; EMAH Consulting, 2022). All these multidimensional barriers create a complex environment that requires targeted interventions.

LDPs have come as a promising solution to overcoming these challenges. These interventions include training, mentorship, and networking that can be applied to empower women to overcome barriers (Arivumani, 2024; Avolio and Hannah, 2012). However, although LDPs are effective across diverse contexts, their effectiveness in overcoming Ethiopia's unique sociocultural and institutional barriers is a field that remains understudied. This study addresses this gap by analyzing how AWiB's LDPs through networking, training, and mentoring empower Ethiopian women to overcome these barriers.

Despite Ethiopia's constitution, which guarantees women equality Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (Constitution of the FDRE, 1994), progress has been slow. This study will provide evidence-based recommendations to accelerate change. The findings inform policymakers, organizations like AWiB, and businesses seeking to promote gender equity in women's leadership.

Although AWiB's LDPs are a great intervention, their specific mechanisms in breaking down obstacles to women's progress in the Ethiopian context need to be examined. This research seeks to bridge this knowledge gap through an investigation of the role that AWiB's LDPs play in preparing Ethiopian women for leadership. As an Ethiopian woman who has witnessed these challenges firsthand, I believe this research can drive meaningful progress toward empowering more women to reach their leadership potential.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

Despite of growing national and global concern for gender equity significant gaps remain in our understanding of how to effectively promote women's leadership in Ethiopia. While women represent nearly half of the country's population (World Bank, 2024), they remain underrepresented in decision-making roles, holding just 27.5% of managerial positions, with

projections indicating only 5 % increase by 2050 (Hanna et al., 2023). Much of the existing research addresses gender disparities in broad terms without analyzing how specific empowerment strategies such as LDPs influence women’s advancement in the Ethiopian context.

There is a lack of research that clearly shows how LDPs empower Ethiopian women to overcome personal, organizational, and cultural barriers to leadership. While some studies have touched on leadership and empowerment, they do not fully explain how specific parts of these programs like mentoring, training, and networking support women in becoming leaders. For example, Girma (2020) studied leadership training in the Commercial Bank of Ethiopia and found that coaching and mentoring helped improve leadership skills. However, his study did not focus on women or on the unique challenges they face. Selachie (2019) reviewed various women’s empowerment programs in Ethiopia and recognized that many programs exist but he pointed out that few studies measure how effective these programs are Ademaso (2023) looked at women in academic leadership and found that leadership is still male-dominated and women face many challenges. However, the study did not explore how leadership programs could help solve these problems.

This study seeks to address these gaps by examining the effect of AWiB’s Leadership Development Programs on Ethiopian women’s empowerment across personal, organizational, and sociocultural dimensions. By identifying key enabling and limiting factors, the research aims to inform the design of more effective and contextually grounded strategies to promote women’s empowerment in Ethiopia.

1.3. Research Questions

To address these gaps, this study asks the following research questions.

Basic Research Questions

1. What is the effect of networking programs on women's empowerment in **the case of AWiB?**
2. What is the effect of training programs on women's empowerment in the case of AWiB?
3. What is the effect of mentoring programs on women's empowerment in the case of AWiB?
4. What are the key personal, organizational, and sociocultural barriers that hinder women's empowerment?

1.4. Research Objectives

General Objective

To examine the effect of leadership development programs (networking, training, and mentoring) on women's empowerment in the context of AWiB.

Specific Objectives

1. To assess the effect of networking programs on women's empowerment in the case of AWiB.
2. To evaluate the effect of training programs on women's empowerment in the case of AWiB.
3. To investigate the effect of mentoring programs on women's empowerment in the case of AWiB.
4. To identify the key personal, organizational, and sociocultural barriers that hinder women's empowerment.

1.5. Significance of the Study

This study offers practical insight into how a whip leadership program is working on the ground. By looking closely at networking, mentoring, and training, it gives a clear picture of what participants find useful and where improvements can be made. Quantitative data reveals networking as the strongest predictor of empowerment, while qualitative findings demonstrate how training builds practical leadership skills and mentoring provides career navigation support. These results fill a critical gap in empirical research about LDP effectiveness in Ethiopia, offering concrete metrics that organizations can use to evaluate and improve their women's leadership initiatives.

Beyond these practical implications, the study makes important theoretical contributions and builds on Empowerment Theory and Social Role Theory, this research makes novel contributions by demonstrating how Ethiopia's collectivist culture transforms traditional LDP models. The findings show that networking helps both career advancement and protects against workplace isolation, as reported by most respondents. At the same time, training serves as both a skill builder and a cultural barrier breaker.

This research used mixed methods to set a new standard for LDP evaluation in developing nations. Combining the survey questionnaire and open-ended narrative interview, it captures both the effectiveness and reasoning behind LDPs experiences. This approach provides insights and strategies for advancing women's leadership in patriarchal societies. The study combines statistical analysis with participant's experiences, offering practical tools for meaningful change and demonstrating that investing in women's leadership benefits individuals, workplaces, and communities.

AWiB's leadership programs empower Ethiopian women through networking (the most effective component), skills training, and career mentoring. The findings demonstrate that culturally adapted programs can effectively develop women's leadership while respecting local values, offering organizations a proven model for implementation. For policymakers, the research highlights the need to expand such initiatives nationwide and support them with workplace reforms like flexible policies.

1.6. Scope of the Study

This study examines how AWiB's leadership development programs (networking, training, and mentoring) empower Ethiopian professional women by addressing psychological, organizational, and sociocultural barriers to leadership. It focuses on how these components collectively build women's confidence, skills, and professional networks while challenging systemic constraints. The conceptual framework specifically analyzes the interplay between program elements and women's leadership development within AWiB's unique Ethiopian context.

This study is geographically limited to professional women in Addis Ababa who have participated in at least one AWiB program (monthly networking events, weekend workshops, the Meri mentorship program, and others). The research specifically targets active AWiB members within the city, excluding women who have not participated in any AWiB programs.

This study employs a mixed-methods approach for data collection and analysis. Quantitative data was gathered through an online survey using Likert scale questions adapted from the Spreitzer (1995) Psychological Empowerment Scale and Kirkpatrick Model (Kurt, 2016), including four open-ended questions. This was supplemented by a semi-structured interview with one member's

relation manager. The quantitative data was analyzed using SPSS for descriptive statistics, correlation, and regression analysis, while qualitative responses were thematically coded.

1.7. Potential Limitations of the Study

While this study provides valuable insights into the effectiveness of AWiB's LDPs, some limitations occurred. First, the sample of the study focuses solely on participants in Addis Ababa. This group may not fully represent the diversity of Ethiopian women across different regions women in rural areas face different cultural and socioeconomic barriers.

Methodologically, the cross-sectional design captures only a snapshot in time, limiting our ability to assess the long-term impacts of the LDPs. A longitudinal study would provide better results by allowing for tracking changes over time and providing a more direct answer.

1.8. Organization of the Study

This research is organized into five chapters to critically analyze AWiB's LDPs contribution to women's empowerment in Ethiopia.

- ✓ Chapter 1 Introduction presents the background, problem statement, research questions, objectives, significance, scope, limitations, and ethical considerations of the study.
- ✓ Chapter 2 Literature Review presents existing studies and theories relating to LDPs and women's empowerment.
- ✓ Chapter 3 Research Methodology provides research design, sampling method, data collection methods, and analysis process.
- ✓ Chapter 4 Results and Discussion displays and discusses the study findings.
- ✓ Chapter 5 Conclusions and Recommendations summarizes the conclusions reached from the study findings and recommendations.

1.9. Definition of Key Terms

This study defines

- LDPs as structured interventions supporting women's leadership growth through three key components training builds skills like strategic thinking and communication, mentoring provides personal and professional guidance from experienced leaders, and networking creates relationship-building spaces and professional opportunities.
- Women's empowerment as women gaining control over resources, leadership roles, and decision-making. Empowerment is examined across three levels: individual (personal growth, confidence), organizational (access to leadership, policy influence), and socio-cultural (challenging gender norms).
- Women's leadership barriers as challenges hindering their advancement, categorized into personal (low confidence, limited identity), organizational (discrimination, lack of mentorship), and socio-cultural (gender norms, family roles).

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter explains key ideas about empowerment and LDPs. It begins with the meaning of women's empowerment and LDPs, followed by a discussion of theories that support them. The chapter also includes research findings from both global and local perspectives and highlights the gaps in implementation and outcomes.

2.1. Meaning and Nature of Women's Empowerment and LDPs

Women's empowerment is the process of gaining control over resources, making decisions, and being able to act independently. Batliwala (1995) defines it as gaining power over physical, human, and financial resources. Kabeer (2005) explains empowerment through three parts: access to resources, agency to make choices, and achievements that show real change.

Leadership development is a process that happens within relationships. Day (2000) explains that it focuses on building trust, collaboration, and shared values between people in the workplace. It includes social skills like empathy, teamwork, and developing others. These are supported by mentoring, feedback, and connections across the organization. LDPs are organized efforts that help women build leadership skills through training, mentoring, and networking (Martínez et al., 2021). Studies show that women who complete LDPs often move into better leadership roles or advance in their careers (Sutton et al., 2024).

Some LDPs are designed only for women. These women-only programs offer a space where participants can work on identity, feel supported, and connect with others (Clarke, 2011). Clarke found that safe environments helped women improve their self-confidence and develop leadership awareness. In Spain, a study by Martínez et al. (2021) reported that 51% of women in the Promociona Project were promoted after the program. Even with positive results, some

programs do not fully consider women who face multiple forms of discrimination. Sayers Brown et al. (2024) reviewed thirteen programs and found that only one focused on women from ethnic minority backgrounds. This shows that many programs still need to improve their intersectional identities.

Studies support the idea that Women-Only Leadership Development Programs (WLDPs) have clear benefits. Debebe et al. (2016) found that such programs create safe and open spaces for women to discuss leadership without fear. Kassotakis (2023) highlights that these programs promote identity work and build strong peer networks. Clarke (2011) observed improved confidence and leadership awareness among women participants. Peterson (2019) also linked WLDPs to increased leadership representation. Kipchirchir (2024) adds that these programs help women gain access to roles of authority.

2.2. Theoretical Foundations of LDPs for Women’s Empowerment

For this study, a multi-theoretical approach is essential because women’s empowerment through leadership development is shaped by multiple dimensions personal, organizational, and sociocultural. No single theory can fully capture the complexities of a woman’s leadership journey. Therefore, this research integrates four well-established theories: Empowerment Theory, Social Role Theory, Glass Ceiling Theory, and Adult Development Theory. These theories collectively provide a framework for understanding how AWiB’s LDPs empower Ethiopian women and address the barriers they encounter.

2.2.1. Empowerment Theory

This study used empowerment theory to understand how women build confidence, access opportunities, and make real changes in their careers. In the case of AWiB, the programs provide

tools like networking, training and mentoring which help participants take control of their professional journey. This theory helps assess whether the program merely imparts skills or genuinely fosters women's leadership empowerment.

2.2.2. Social Role Theory

Social Role Theory, formulated by Eagly et al. (2012), examines how societal expectations assign distinct roles to men and women. In many cultures, including Ethiopia, leadership is traditionally viewed as a masculine domain, while women are expected to adopt nurturing, supportive roles. This creates a "double bind," where women face criticism whether they conform to or defy these stereotypes.

AWiB's programs challenge these entrenched norms by encouraging women to develop leadership styles that align with their identities rather than societal expectations. Through networking and coaching, participants gain the confidence to lead authentically. This theory elucidates how LDPs not only equip women with skills but also contribute to shifting cultural perceptions of female leadership.

2.2.3. Glass Ceiling Theory

Formalized by David Cotter et al. (2001), Glass Ceiling Theory describes the invisible yet systemic barriers that prevent qualified women from ascending to top leadership positions. These obstacles include biased promotion practices, lack of mentorship, and exclusion from professional networks.

In Ethiopia, women frequently encounter these barriers in male-dominated sectors. AWiB's LDPs address these challenges by providing mentorship, visibility, and networking opportunities,

effectively "cracking" the glass ceiling. This theory underscores the structural inequities that persist even as women gain skills and qualifications.

2.2.4. Adult Development Theory

Proposed by Daniel Levinson (1978), Adult Development Theory identifies key transitional phases in adulthood, particularly the "age-30 transition" (late 20s to early 40s), when individuals solidify their career paths and leadership identities (Jeff,2011).

Since many AWiB participants fall within this critical developmental stage, the program's timing maximizes effect by intervening when women are most receptive to leadership growth. This theory highlights why AWiB's initiatives are strategically effective they engage women at a pivotal moment in their professional and personal evolution.

2.3. Review of Empirical Studies

2.3.1. Leadership Development Programs (LDPs)

Kassotakis (2023) examined over 50 global programs, including Harvard's "Women Leaders: Advancing Together," noting that negotiation and bias mitigation are less emphasized compared to mixed-gender programs. Parker et al. (2018) studied an Australian program aimed at senior women in universities, involving 47 women aged 57 to 67, highlighting the importance of institutional support and intentional leadership programs in addressing gender inequality in academic leadership.

Debebe et al. (2016) found five key themes in women's leadership programs: safe environments, intersectionality, Mezirow's transformational learning theory, reliance on satisfaction ratings for evaluation, and the need for organizational integration. O'Brien and Allin (2022) explored the impact of the UK's first Women's Outdoor Leadership Course, involving 845

women aged 23 to 33, and linked transformational changes in confidence and authenticity to the supportive women-only setting.

Nash and Moore (2018) studied an Australian academic leadership program with 25 women educators, which combined virtual learning with a three-week leadership voyage to Antarctica, focusing on resilience and overcoming gendered barriers. Ford et al. (2021) evaluated a U.S. healthcare educators' leadership program quantitatively, measuring changes before and after the intervention with 197 senior participants.

Hochghan et al. (2024) used interviews with 18 Iranian participants from various industries to show LDPs' transformative potential on personal growth and workplace performance, supported by longitudinal evidence of increased career ambition. Ilie et al. (2014) argued that traditional leadership training often fails to prepare leaders for complex business challenges and proposed experience-based learning models for more effective LDPs. Minani and Sikubwabo (2022) studied how Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) in Rwanda empowers women, highlighting skill-building, confidence, and entrepreneurship as key benefits.

Ethiopian study Girma (2018), "The Effect of Learning and Development Program on Employees' Competency Development in Key Leadership Positions: The Case of Commercial Bank of Ethiopia," examines the effect of structured LDPs (training, coaching, and mentoring) in developing leadership competencies among mid-level managers. Focusing on Ethiopia's Commercial Bank, the research highlights two key findings.

2.3.1.1. Networking

Clarke (2011) found women-only programs improved confidence but did not fully address network exclusion among 17 mid-level female public sector employees in South Africa.

Kassotakis (2023) and Day (2000) both emphasize networking's role in building social capital. Peterson (2019) interviewed 15 Swedish female rectors involved in the IDAS program, which helped increase female leadership representation but was criticized for a “fix the women” approach.

2.3.1.2. Training

Training in WLDPs may focus on areas such as negotiations and bias mitigation (Kassotakis, 2023). Training areas are conflict management skills (Hochghan et al. 2024). This supports women in gaining skills. Martínez et al. (2021) analyzed a Spanish program with 32 female executives where 51% were promoted post-program after abandoning low-status role stereotypes. Girma (2018) found a moderate positive correlation between training and leadership competency ($r=0.557$, $p<0.01$). Leadership programs help women gain confidence and challenge gender stereotypes (Khalid et al., 2021).

2.3.1.3. Mentorship

Mentorship provides guidance (Kipchirchir, 2024). Mentorship can improve leadership visibility (Kipchirchir, 2024). Mentorship in WLDPs may connect women Sutton et al. (2024) evaluated the Sallie Rosen Kaplan Fellowship (N=86 postdocs), finding median confidence scores doubled and 98% recommended the program. Kipchirchir (2024) noted an increase in Kenyan women leaders from 19% to 22% but pointed out gaps in program design. Girma (2018) also found coaching and mentoring strongly correlated with leadership development ($r=0.584$, $p<0.01$).

2.3.2. Empowerment

Stephenson et al. (2024) suggest evaluating LDPs at individual (micro), workplace (meso), and societal (macro) levels. Their pilot data showed minimal organizational impact without systemic changes. Sayers Brown et al. (2024) reviewed 13 programs and found intersectionality

frameworks improved outcomes in 9 studies, but only one focused on ethnic minority women. O'Brien and Allin (2022) reported women's transformational changes mainly in confidence and authenticity tied to women-only environments, but stressed more research is needed on long-term impacts.

Beyene Seleshi (2019) reviewed Women Empowerment Programs in Ethiopia, highlighting efforts by UN agencies and NGOs to promote gender equality and women's leadership at local and national levels. The review emphasizes education, health, and economic opportunities as vital to women's empowerment, noting the challenges rural women face in agricultural labor and societal discrimination.

Other studies link education and LDPs to better economic and career outcomes for women. Arivumani (2024) found LDPs help women progress professionally, while Grove et al. (2005) show benefits at individual, organizational, and national levels. Programs like WELI and IDAS demonstrate how women's spaces for growth and networking help break gender bias (Debebe et al., 2016; Peterson, 2019).

Women's LDPs typically include four features: skill development, confidence building, networking, and addressing systemic barriers. Martínez et al. (2021) found 51% of women promoted after training, Clarke (2011) reported increased confidence in women-only spaces, and Peterson (2019) showed the importance of role models and peer support for networking. Sutton et al. (2024) and Sayers Brown et al. (2024) emphasize the need for programs to also tackle structural inequalities for lasting change.

2.3.3. Women Barriers Ethiopian Context

EMAH Consulting (2022) conducted 133 interviews and 32 focus groups (N=289) in Ethiopia, identifying societal stereotypes and work-life imbalance as barriers. Nigist (2019) reviewed 13 Ethiopian studies, finding 85% of studies cited gender stereotyping, 76% reported domestic burdens, Female Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) leadership remained 40% lower than males in Amhara/Addis Ababa, and Affirmative action raised female parliamentarians to 38%.

2.4 Conceptual Framework of the Study

In the context of this study, LDPs serve as the independent variable women empowerment the dependent variable. LDPs includes three key components networking, training, and mentoring. These factors influence women's personal, organizational, and socio-cultural empowerment.

Independent variables are the causes, meaning their implementation influences the dependent variable. The dependent variable represents the effect or outcome, showing how leadership development programs influence women's leadership journey. As such, changes in networking, training, and mentoring directly affect women's empowerment in leadership.

Several studies support this framework. Soegiarto et al. (2024) demonstrated that leadership development, mentorship, and employee empowerment enhance career progression. Kipchirchir (2024) emphasized mentorship as a key driver for women's leadership roles, while Deutsch et al. (2022) found that networking strengthens career satisfaction and leadership engagement. Additionally, Sutton et al. (2024) highlighted the role of training in developing self-confidence among women in leadership. This research builds upon these studies by examining how the effect of LDPs such as networking, training, and mentoring contribute to women's empowerment personal, organizational, and socio-cultural empowerment.

The conceptual framework of this study is therefore structured as follows,

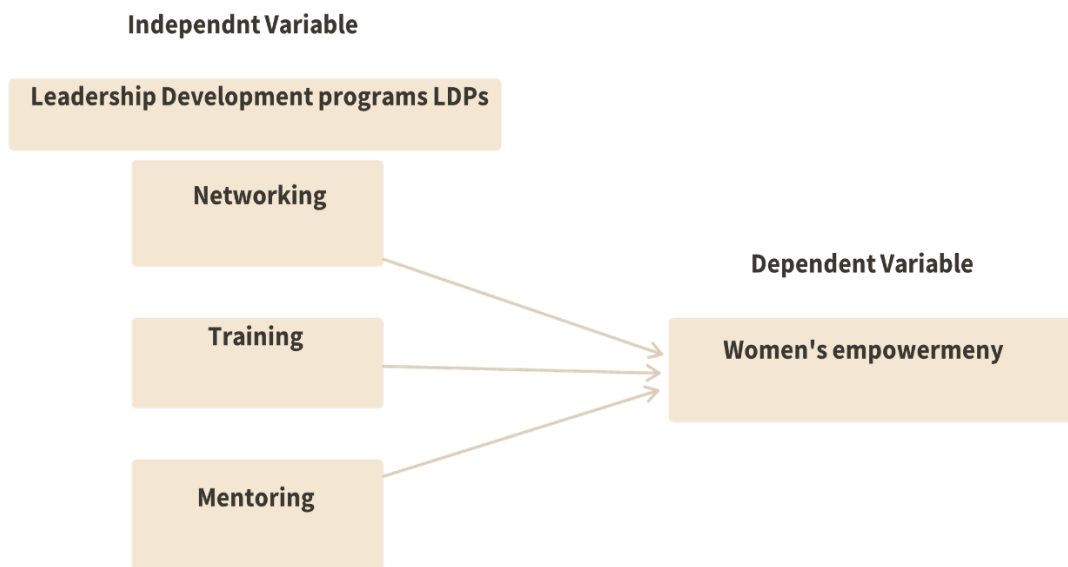


FIGURE 2:1 CONCEPTUAL MODEL OF THE STUDY

Source: Survey result, 2025

2.5. Hypotheses

Drawing from the reviewed literature and the relationships outlined in the conceptual framework, the following hypotheses considered

H1: Networking programs have a significant positive effect on women's empowerment in the case of AWiB.

H2: Training programs have a significant positive effect on women's empowerment in the case of AWiB.

H3: Mentoring programs have a significant positive effect on women's empowerment in the case of AWiB.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter presents the research methodology employed in this study. It includes research approach, design, study variables, area and target population, sampling methods, data collection methods and analysis, and reliability and validity of the data used to investigate the effect of AWiB's LDPs in women's empowerment.

3.1. Research Approach

The study used a mixed methods approach, both quantitative and qualitative research methods. The mixed-methods approach was selected to triangulate quantitative data surveys with qualitative insights open-ended responses and interviews, providing a holistic understanding of the effect of AWiB's LDPs in women's empowerment. According to Creswell & Plano Clark's (2017) recommendation for studies exploring complex social phenomena like empowerment, where numerical trends and lived experiences must complement each other. In this research, this approach provides both numerical data quantitative and rich personal insights qualitative on the effect of AWiB's LDPs on women's empowerment.

3.2. Research Design

The research combined descriptive and explanatory research design. The descriptive design was used to help identify structures and trends, according to Khanday and Khanam (2023) descriptive design provides a framework for data analysis explanatory design provides evidence of relationships between observed patterns and their potential causes and effects.

A cross-sectional study design was employed, as it allows data to be collected at a single point in time to analyze the relationship between AWiB LDPs and women's empowerment. According to Saunders et al. (2012), this approach provides a "snapshot" of the data, helping to identify

patterns or associations at a specific moment. Additionally, a case study approach was used to gather in-depth reflections from AWiB program participants. As Ibinwangi & Ogolo (2019) note, a case study focuses on examining a particular phenomenon within a specific organizational context.

3.3. Description of Study Variables

The study examined key variables including independent and dependent variables. The independent variables were the LDPs key components such as training, mentoring, and networking. These were evaluated using a modified version of Kirkpatrick's (1996) as shown in the study (Kurt, 2016) 4level model of evaluation. The model evaluated: 1) the Reaction to the participant's level of interest, motivation, and attention; 2) the Learning acquisition of knowledge and skill; 3) the Behavior transfer of learning into practice; and 4) the Results of the overall program impact, including financial and morale impacts. Adaptation kept the core evaluation criteria of the model but made it specific to the study context.

Women empowerment as the dependent variable was assessed on three dimensions: personal, organizational, and sociocultural empowerment. Measured through Spreitzer's (1995) Psychological Empowerment Scale (PES), a 12-item scale and four empowerment factors meaning, competence, self-determination, and impact.

Both instruments are employed on to 5-point Likert scale, from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). The Google form is organized into several sections parts one and two gather Background Information and address questions related to AWiB LDPs and empowerment. Part three consists of four open-ended questions. To boost the data, four semi-structured interview questions have been created.

Table 3.1 Study Variables and Measurement Instruments

Measurement Instrument	Variable	Components/Dimensions
Kirkpatrick Model	LDPs	Training, Networking, and Mentoring
Psychological Empowerment Scale	Women's Empowerment	Personal, Organizational, and Sociocultural

Note: All instruments were adapted from their original versions to align with the AWiB context.

Source: Survey result, 2025

3.4. Description of Study Area and Target Population

The study was conducted in Addis Ababa Ethiopia, where AWiB's headquarters and programs are based. The target population consisted of women who participated in AWiB's LDPs, including members and networking event attendees. The participants represented diverse professional backgrounds who attended and are members of AWiB's, ensuring diverse perspectives on the LDPs' effect.

3.5. Sampling Technique/Methods and Sample Size

The study employed a nonrandom purposive sampling method to select participants who had direct experience with AWiB's LDPs. This approach ensured that respondents could provide informed insights about the influence of the program. To broaden participation, snowball sampling was also used, where initial participants referred other eligible women from AWiB's network. This helped reach individuals who might not have been accessible through telegram lists.

The sample size was determined using Yamane's (1967) formula for finite populations.

$$\text{Where: } n = \frac{N}{1+N(e^2)}$$

n = Sample size

N = Total population

$e = 0.07$ (7% margin of error)

Total population: $N = 505$ (AWiB members during the study period)

$$\text{Calculation: } n = \frac{505}{1+505(0.07)^2}$$

Final Sample Size: 145

The final calculated sample size was 145, total population was the total number of AWiB members 505 at the time of data collection. A 7% margin of error was chosen for a 95% confidence level. Additionally, one woman manager was included in an interview to provide deeper insights. A total of 147 responses were received through Google Forms. However, 8 participants were excluded because they either had not participated in any AWiB programs or withdrew voluntarily. Therefore, the final valid sample size used in the analysis was 139, which remains within an acceptable range of the required sample.

3.6. Data Collection and Sources

3.6.1. Data Collection Sources

The research gathered data from two main sources primary and secondary data. Primary data was collected directly from participants through surveys, open-ended questionnaires, and interviews. Secondary data was obtained from AWiB's official website and their digital platforms. These secondary sources helped verify participant accounts and provided background on program design and evolution. This combination helped provide both first-hand insights and supporting background information.

3.6.2. Data Collection Instruments

The study used both quantitative and qualitative data. Quantitative data was collected through an online survey using Google Forms with 29 questions on a 5-point Likert scale,

measuring responses numerically. The same tool included qualitative data through 4 open-ended survey questions. The online format enabled efficient data gathering while maintaining consistency.

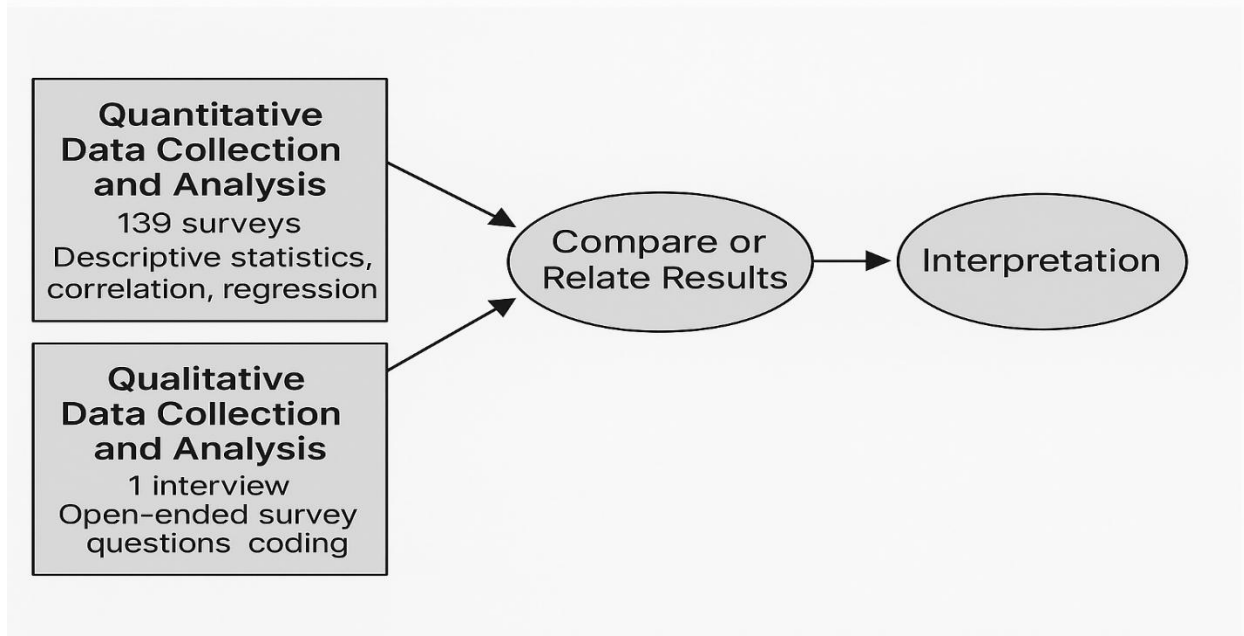
The other tool is 30-minute in-depth semi-structured interviews with AWiB's membership relation manager for a deeper investigation. Open-ended survey questions supplemented these insights with direct participant narratives. Questionnaires are effective research tools According to Kombo and Tromp (2006), in questionnaires, respondents can provide standardized answers while still expressing their views.

Surveys were distributed via AWiB's member telegram group and from that group contacted individually directly by telegram with a 3-week response window. Interviews were audio recorded (with consent), transcribed verbatim, and anonymized. All data collection procedures received ethical approval, with participants informed about data usage rights.

3.7. Data Analysis

This study employs a convergent mixed-methods design, where quantitative survey data and qualitative interview/open-ended responses were collected concurrently, analyzed independently, and then integrated to provide a holistic understanding of AWiB's effect on women's empowerment.

Below is a visual representation of the research design:



Source: Survey result, 2025

FIGURE 3.1: CONVERGENT MIXED-METHODS DESIGN

To examine relationships between program components networking, mentoring, training, and empowerment outcomes, inferential statistics were applied, including Pearson correlation and linear regression analysis, conducted using SPSS. The study used descriptive statistics means, frequencies, and standard deviations to summarize survey responses. Assumption tests normality, linearity, and homoscedasticity were performed to ensure valid results.

Interview records and open-ended responses were analyzed using thematic analysis which helped identify repeated patterns and themes in participant's experiences. This structured coding process ensured a systematic exploration of qualitative insights.

Quantitative survey data and qualitative interview/open-ended responses were triangulated and integrated to provide a holistic understanding of AWiB's effect on women's empowerment.

The study used a multiple linear regression model to predict empowerment outcomes:

$$Y = \alpha + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \varepsilon$$

Where:

Y = Women's Empowerment (dependent variable)

α = Intercept

β_1 = Coefficient for Training

β_2 = Coefficient for Networking

β_3 = Coefficient for Mentorship

X_1, X_2, X_3 = Mean values of each predictor variable

ε = Error term

The mean values for each independent variable were derived from the survey data and incorporated into the regression analysis.

3.8. Validity

Validity refers to how accurately a research instrument measures its intended construct (Kothari, 2004). To ensure validity face validity was confirmed through First, questions were carefully designed using clear, unambiguous language appropriate for the target respondents. Second, the instruments underwent a thorough review by research experts to verify their alignment with the study objectives. Third, during data collection, the researcher monitored responses to confirm proper question interpretation and completeness.

Construct validity was verified statistically Correlation analysis showed strong but distinct relationships between variables, and regression results demonstrated each LDP component's unique contribution to empowerment collectively affirming the instrument's accuracy in measuring intended variables. These measures helped establish that the collected data truly represented the phenomena under investigation (Robson, 2011).

3.9. Reliability Test

The reliability of all measurement scales was evaluated using Cronbach's alpha coefficients, with interpretation following Pallant's (2005) established thresholds for social science research. As shown in Table 3.2, all constructions demonstrated acceptable to excellent internal consistency, exceeding the minimum recommended threshold of $\alpha > .70$ for research instruments.

TABLE 3.2 RELIABILITY TEST 1

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	Standardized Cronbach's Alpha	Number of Items
Networking	0.808	0.799	5
Training	0.781	0.771	5
Mentoring	0.736	0.727	5
Women's Empowerment	0.734	0.732	7

Source: Survey result 2025

The scales were adapted from established instruments: networking, training, and mentoring items were derived from Kirkpatrick's 4-level evaluation (Kurt, 2016), while empowerment items used Spreitzer's (1995) Psychological Empowerment. As shown in Table 3.2, all standardized Cronbach's alpha values ranged from 0.727 to 0.799, confirming measurement stability across variables. All coefficients exceeded Pallant's (2005) recommended threshold of .70, these results provide robust evidence that each scale reliably measured its intended theoretical construct.

3.10. Ethical Considerations

The study followed strict ethical guidelines and received AWiB management approval, ensuring all standards were met.

The Google Forms survey began with an explanation of the study's purpose, usage of information, and voluntary participation. It assured the confidentiality of responses. Participants had to agree before continuing.

For the interview, the researcher explained the study's goals and informed the participant's rights. She obtained her verbal consent (which was recorded) and outlined the measures taken to protect her identity. Using both online consent for surveys and verbal consent for interviews, ensured methods were ethical and practical for this significant study on women's empowerment. All data was stored on password-protected devices and will be deleted according to research protocols. The steps followed international research ethics guidelines (Israel and Hay, 2006)

CHAPTER 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presents the integrated findings of the study investigating how AWiB's LDPs empower Ethiopian women. It begins with an overview of participant demographics to help contextualize the study. The chapter then explores how AWiB's three program components networking, training, and mentoring help women overcome key barriers to leadership. These barriers are categorized as personal, organizational, and sociocultural.

The results combine both quantitative data from 139 participants and qualitative insights from open-ended responses and an interview using mixed methods design. By analyzing both types of data together, the study highlights the measurable effects and lived experiences of women, showing how AWiB's culturally tailored programs contribute to leadership development in the Ethiopian context.

4.1. Demographic Information of Participant

This section examines participant demographics and program participation patterns to contextualize AWiB's effect on women's empowerment.

TABLE 4.1 DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF PARTICIPANTS

	Characteristics	Frequency	Percent
Gender	Female	139	100 %
	Male	0	0%
	Total	139	100 %
Age	2432	53	38.1%
	3341	56	40.3%
	4250	24	17.3%
	Above 50	5	3.6%
	Total	138	99.3%
Marital Status	Single	60	43.2%
	Married	74	53.2%
	Divorced	3	2.2%
	Widow	2	1.4%
	Total	139	100%
Level of Education	Highschool	2	1.4%
	Diploma	1	0.7%
	Degree	55	39.6%
	Masters	78	56.1%
	PhD	3	2.2%
	Total	139	100%
Current job position	Entry-level	15	10.8%
	Executive/Top Leadership	10	7.2%
	Freelancer	1	0.7%
	Midlevel	35	25.2%
	Self-employed	19	13.7%
	Senior level	59	42.4%
	Total	139	100%
	Entry-level	16	11.5%
	Executive/Top Leadership	10	7.2%

Career Stage Before AWiB	Freelancer	3	2.2%
	Midlevel	48	34.5%
	Self employed	4	2.9%
	Senior Level	44	31.7%
	Student	2	1.4%
	Unemployed	11	7.9%
	University student (senior)	1	0.7%
	Total	139	100%

Source: Survey result 2025

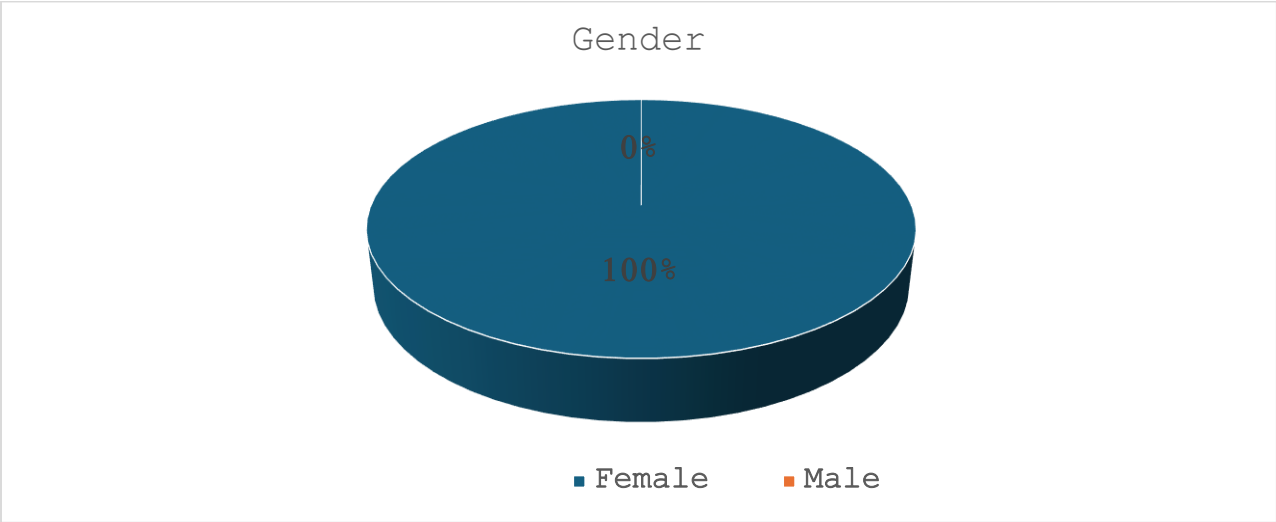


FIGURE 4.1. GENDER

Source: Survey result 2025

This study focused exclusively on female participants (n = 139), in line with AWiB’s women-only leadership development model. Research by Sayers Brown et al. (2024) supports this approach, showing that WLDPs effectively build confidence, leadership skills, and identity by tackling gender specific challenges.

Unlike typical mixed-gender training that often takes the "fix the women" approach (Ely et al., 2000), giving women the same training as men without accounting for systemic differences.

AWiB's model specifically targets the distinct barriers women face in leadership roles. This reflects AWiB's core mission of advancing Ethiopian women professionals (Billene, 2014). The women only structure gives us clearer, more focused insights into gender-specific leadership challenges (EMAH Consulting, 2022) and makes these findings more robust.

A women-only approach focused results but limit generalization to mixed gender contexts. Future research should compare these results with mixed gender programs to measure differences in outcomes.

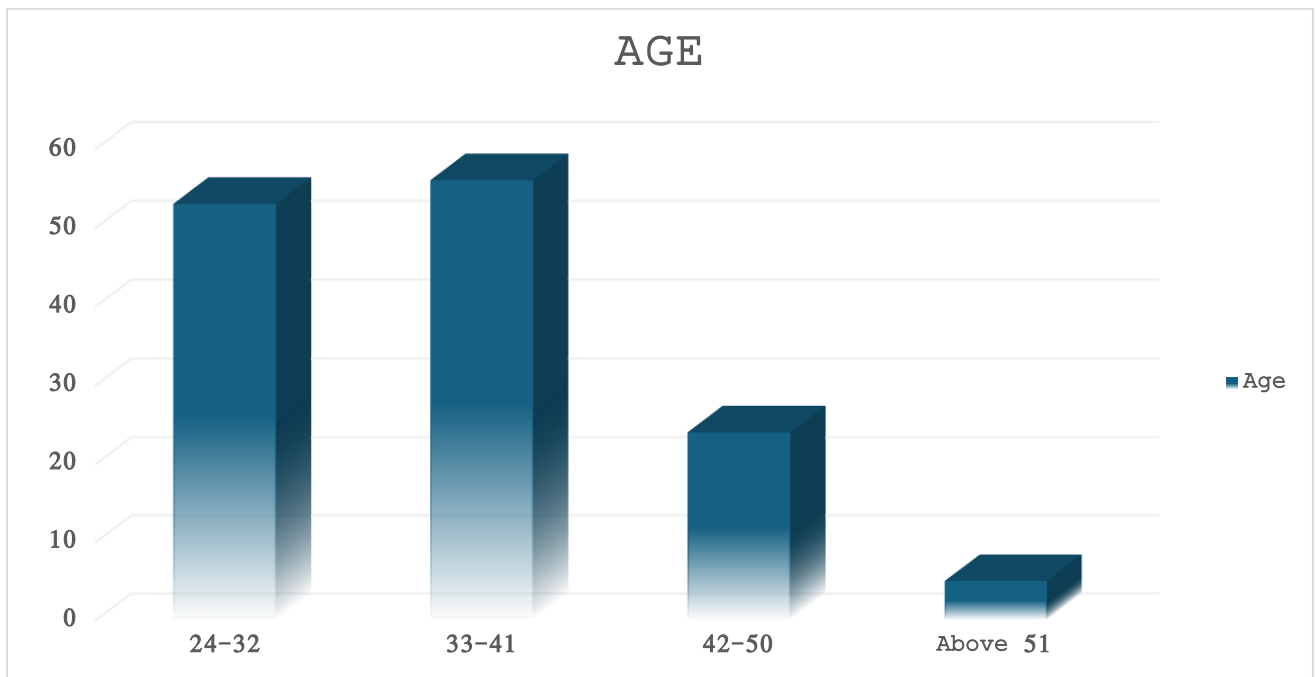


FIGURE 4.2. AGE

Source: Survey Output (2025)

The study examined the age distribution of AWiB's LDP participants (n=139). The data shows 77.6% of participants are aged 24–41, with nearly equal representation between 24–32 (38.1% n=53) and 33–41 (40.3% n=56) groups. This suggests that AWiB's primarily attract early mid-career professionals.

This age distribution indicates that AWiB's programs primarily attract early to mid-career professional women. The findings align with O'Brien and Allin's (2022) UK study of women aged 23-33 but contrast with Parker et al., (2018) Australian study where participants were predominantly 57-67 years old. These differences demonstrate how program context influences participant demographics.

The concentration of participants in their 30s corresponds with Levinson's (1978) theory of adult development, which identifies (33-41 years) as a "settling down" phase where individuals establish their professional identity while managing increased personal responsibilities (Jeff, 2011). This suggests AWiB is effectively reaching women during a critical career development stage.

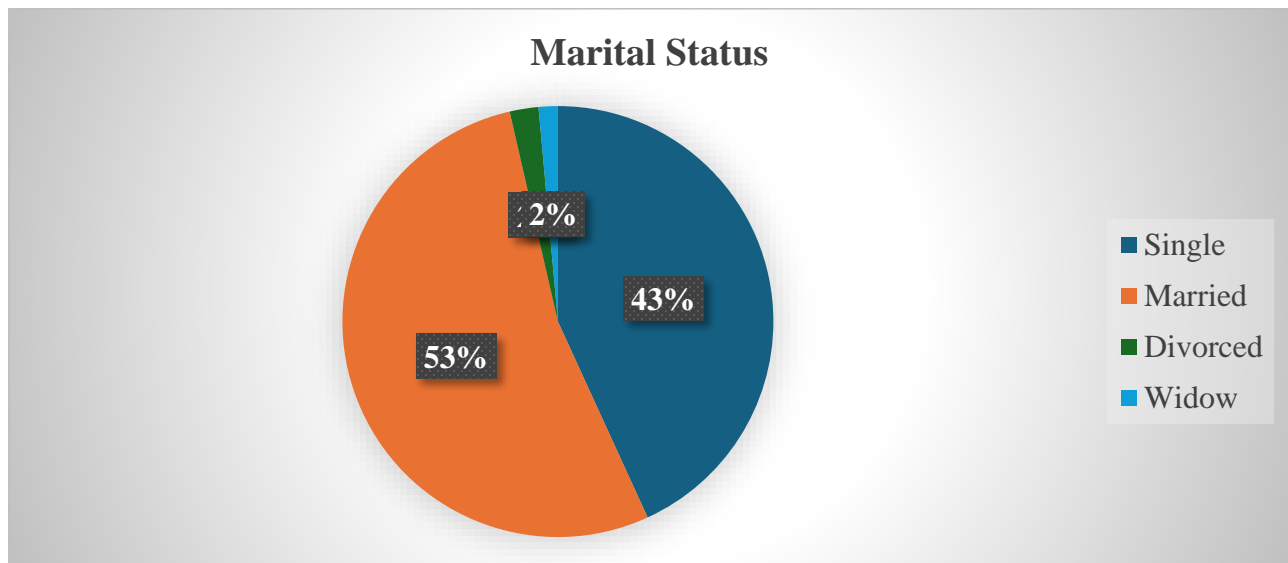


FIGURE 4.3. MARITAL STATUS

Source: Survey Output (2025)

Demographic data reveals a near split between married (53.2%) and single (43.2%) participants, reflecting AWiB's appeal across marital statuses. This reflects cultural norms where

marriage provides women with both economic stability and social standing. As Hewitt and Churchill (2020) note, marital status significantly influences women's resource access in many African and South Asian societies. The significant representation of single women (43.2%) aligns with global patterns in women's leadership development, where professional women increasingly prioritize career advancement before marriage (Nash and Moor , 2018). As Tadesse (2017) found, Ethiopian professionals often combine marriage and careers rather than delay them. This cultural framework helps explain why married women form the program's largest participant group.

On the other hand, this result is consistent with existing literature that highlights how many women in LDPs manage family and career responsibilities. Nigist (2019) and EMAH Social Development Consulting (2022) emphasized that married women in Ethiopia often face a "double burden" balancing household duties and childcare with professional responsibilities. Additionally, Billene (2014) discussed how AWiB's programming is particularly relevant for women seeking personal and professional growth amid such social pressures. The relatively high percentage of married participants may reflect a key demographic that is actively seeking support systems to balance career growth with societal expectations around family roles.

These findings highlight how the distribution of AWiB's programs reflects both cultural expectations favoring married women's participation and global trends of single women prioritizing leadership development while revealing gaps in serving divorced/widowed participants.

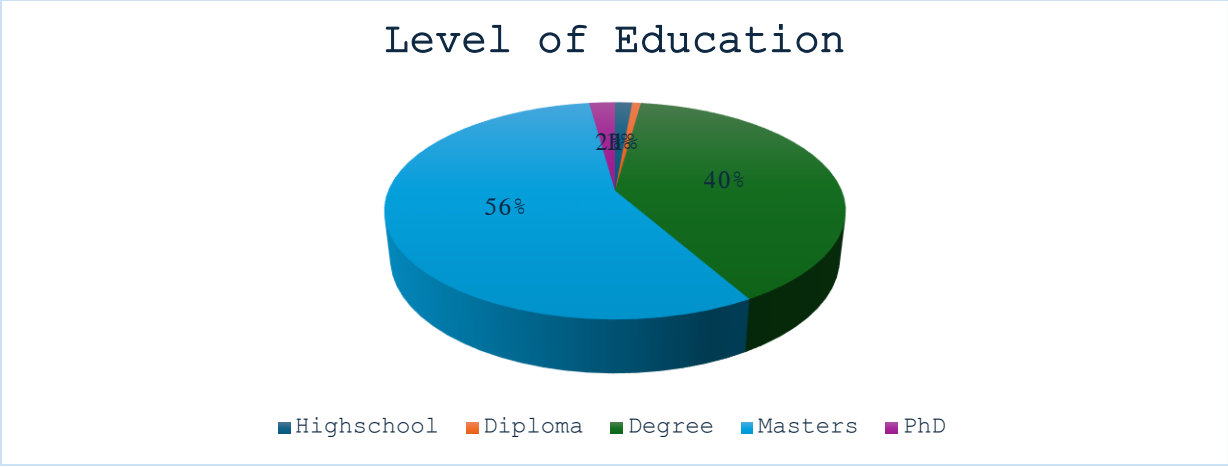


FIGURE 4.4. EDUCATION

Source: Survey Output (2025)

The data shows highly educated participants: 56% hold master’s degrees (n=78) and 40% have Bachelor’s degrees (n=55). This distribution reveals that 96% of AWiB participants possess at least a bachelor's degree, indicating a strong correlation between higher education and leadership development participation, and are willing to equip themselves more.

This contrasts with Soegiarto et al.’s (2024) Indonesian study (n=200), where only 20% had master’s degrees and 20% just high school diplomas. AWiB’s participants are significantly more educated. Three factors emerge to explain this distribution. First, AWiB's membership criteria explicitly target "professional women and entrepreneurs" (Billene, 2014), which inherently favors educated candidates. Second, Ethiopia's higher education expansion (World Bank, 2024) has created a growing pool of degree-holding women seeking leadership opportunities. Third, every program is in English language which can potentially discourage less educated women from participating.

To examine the relationships between women empowerment and the age group, marital status, and educational background, correlation analyses were conducted.

TABLE 4.2 DEMOGRAPHIC CORRELATIONS ANALYSIS

Correlations					
		Age group	Marital Status	Educational background	Women Empowerment
Women Empowerment	Pearson Correlation	-.177*	-.039	.060	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.038	.647	.486	
	N	138	139	139	139
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).					
*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).					

Source: Survey result, 2025

The results showed that only age group had a statistically significant but weak negative correlation with women empowerment, indicating that empowerment slightly decreases as age increases. Based on this finding, a simple linear regression was performed to further explore the predictive effect of age on empowerment.

TABLE 4.3 DEMOGRAPHIC ANOVA

ANOVA ^a						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	79.235	1	79.235	4.380	.038 ^b
	Residual	2460.418	136	18.091		
	Total	2539.652	137			
a. Dependent Variable: Women Empowerment						
b. Predictors: (Constant), Age group						

Source: Survey result, 2025

The ANOVA results indicated that the regression model was significant ($F(1, 136) = 4.38$, $p = 0.038$), confirming that age group is a meaningful predictor of women empowerment.

TABLE 4.4 DEMOGRAPHIC REGRESSION COEFFICIENTS

Coefficients ^a						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	29.576	.892		33.152	.000
	Age group	-.916	.438	-.177	-2.093	.038

a. Dependent Variable: Women Empowerment

Source: Survey result, 2025

The coefficient table showed that for each one-unit increase in age group, empowerment decreased by 0.916 points (B = -0.916, t = -2.093, p = 0.038), reinforcing the slight but significant negative relationship between age and women’s empowerment in this sample.

Career Progression Analysis

The analysis of career advancement patterns among AWiB participants provided detailed insights into positional changes and perceived empowerment across various professional levels.

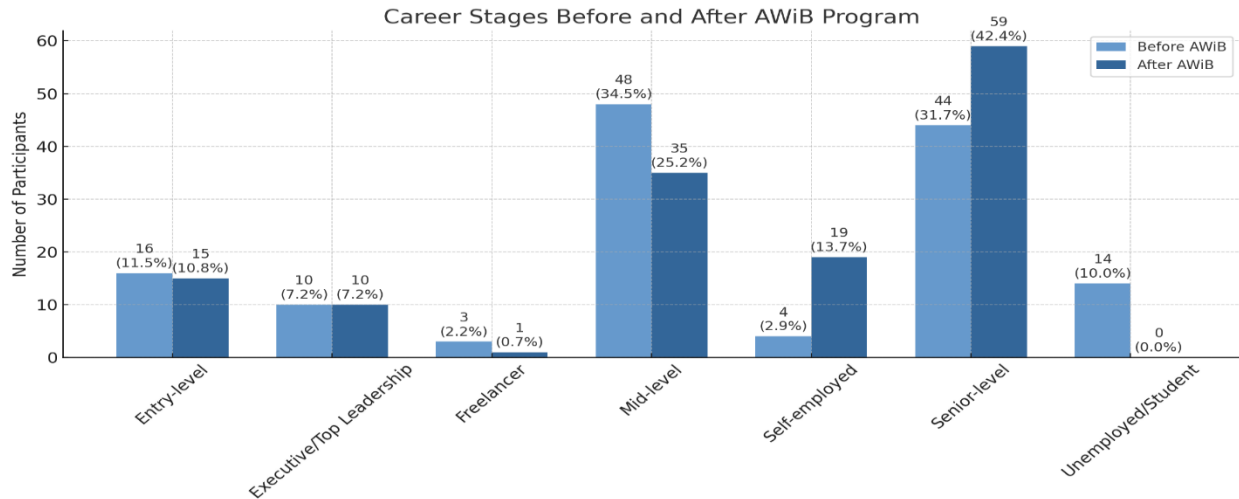


FIGURE 4.5. BEFORE AND AFTER AWiB

Source: Survey Output (2025)

The data showed in senior roles 33.75% increased after training. More women also become self-employed suggest they felt more confident to pursue an independent leadership path. Before the program, 4 people were self-employed. After the program, that number grew to 23 people. That means self-employment went up by nearly five times or in other words, it increased by 475%. In AWiB orientation, their management said everyone who completes the Mari program university students and recent graduates experience 100% job placement.

Participants found AWiB’s LDPs effective in boosting leadership confidence and career advancement. Out Of the 93 open ended respondents, 80% said they recommend the program, noting its significant role in their lives.

These findings resonate with Ford et al. (2021) study in the U.S., where structured leadership programs correlated with promotions and leadership growth over two years. This consistency underscores the cross-cultural relevance of targeted interventions for women’s career advancement. In contrast, Peterson’s (2019) Swedish study showed different results while participants gained personal growth, few saw job changes. This suggests that program design, particularly the integration of networking, training, and mentorship may explain AWiB’s stronger influence on tangible career outcomes.

Table 4.5 *Before vs. After AWiB Program key Anova Test result*

Analysis Phase	F-value	p-value	Effect Size (η^2)
Before Program	0.573	0.798	0.034
After Program	1.159	0.333	0.040

Source: Survey result, 2025

The statistical analysis reveals important insights about how AWiB’s programs affect women empowerment at different professional stages. Before participation, ANOVA results showed no significant differences in empowerment levels between job positions ($F[8,130] = 0.573$, $p = 0.798$), with a small effect size ($\eta^2 = 0.034$). This baseline equivalence confirms that participants, whether entry-level participant or executives, faced similar empowerment challenges initially. After completing the program, a second ANOVA ($F[5,133] = 1.159$, $p = 0.333$, $\eta^2 = 0.040$) again showed no positional differences demonstrating that AWiB’s benefits were distributed equally across all professional tiers.

Table 4.6 Paired Samples t-test

Paired Samples Statistics					
		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Before AWiB	4.55	139	1.986	.168
	After AWiB	4.51	139	1.691	.143

Source: Survey result, 2025

To evaluate whether participation in the AWiB program led to significant changes in career stage, a paired samples t-test was performed comparing participant’s career levels before and after joining AWiB. Participants reported a mean career stage of 4.55 (SD = 1.99) before AWiB and 4.51 (SD = 1.69) at the time of the survey.

Even though there were no statistically significant changes in empowerment levels or career stages across job positions, but many women moved into senior roles or became self-employed after joining AWiB.

AWiB Program Participants

AWiB provides a multifaceted leadership development platform designed to support Ethiopian women leaders in connecting, emerging, and growing together.

Key programs include:

- ✓ Monthly Networking at Hilton: Regular gatherings for professional connections and thought leadership discussions.
- ✓ Weekend Workshops: Intensive skill-building sessions focused on practical leadership development.
- ✓ Meri Mentorship Program: skill-building and One-on-one guidance pairing emerging leaders with experienced professionals.
- ✓ Haset Leadership Program: Specialized training for midcareer women in civil society organizations.

These interventions create safe and intentional spaces for personal and professional growth. AWiB’s philosophy, as articulated by one founder, emphasizes facilitation over direct empowerment: *“We don’t empower women; we create the platform for them to empower themselves.”*

TABLE 4.7 PROGRAM PARTICIPATION

Programs Attended	Frequency	Percent
Monthly Program at Hilton Hotel	23	17%
Monthly Program + Weekend Workshops	76	55%
Weekend Workshops <i>only</i>	17	12%
Meri Mentorship Program (<i>with/without</i> Weekend Workshops)	11	8%
Haset Leadership Program (<i>combined with other programs</i>)	3	2%
Other Combinations (May Forum, etc.)	9	6%
Total	139	100%

Source: Survey result, 2025

AWiB's data shows clear preferences 55% of women attend both monthly networking and workshops for connections and skills, while 17% join just monthly meetings. Together, these options serve 72% of participants, proving their value as core programs.

AWiB's flexible approach aligns with Martínez et al.'s (2021) findings that diverse program formats better serve participant's needs. Like their Spanish study showed, AWiB's mix of networking, workshops, and mentorship allows women to engage at their preferred level. This contrasts with Peterson's (2019) Swedish program, where some participants critiqued its rigid seminars and gender essentialist approach, despite its networking successes, which resulted in limited impact. AWiB's model proves that tailored programming works best.

The participation patterns can be explained by several key factors. The Monthly Program's reliable schedule and convenient location make it easy to attend, supporting Hochghan et al.'s (2024) findings about program consistency. Weekend Workshops attract members by providing practical skills that directly help careers. Fewer members join specialized programs, likely due to either not knowing about them or being too busy with work.

These trends provide useful guidance. The Monthly Program works well as a starting point for new members while combining monthly events and workshops effectively supporting leadership growth. AWiB could focus on better promoting these valuable opportunities to improve engagement with specialized programs.

4.2. Analysis of descriptive data

4.2.1 Descriptive analysis of the study variables

This section analyzes AWiB's LDP components networking, training, and mentoring to address research questions First, it examines how networking programs help empower women in

AWiB. Second, it explores the impact of training programs on women's empowerment. Third, it investigates how mentoring programs support women's empowerment. Finally, it identifies the personal, organizational, and cultural barriers that make it harder for women to feel empowered.

This chapter shows the measured effect on women's empowerment, combining quantitative survey results (n=139) with qualitative insights through a convergent mixed methods approach. Quantitative analysis employs descriptive statistics (means, standard deviations) to evaluate participant ratings of each program element, while qualitative data from open-ended responses enriches these findings with personal narratives. By triangulating these datasets collected concurrently but analyzed independently per pragmatic methodology the results demonstrate how AWiB's integrated LDP model addresses Ethiopia's unique barriers personal, organizational, and sociocultural women's leadership development.

4.2.1.1 Networking

Networking serves as a key practice in leadership development, enabling professionals to connect across different functions and areas to improve problem-solving capabilities (Day, 2000). AWiB implements structured networking sessions designed to address cultural barriers that often limit women's career advancement (Billene, 2014).

According Billene, (2014). The AWiB monthly networking events specifically aim to: Create safe spaces for personal storytelling, Develop confidence in professional self-expression and Establish supportive peer relationships.

The survey data from 139 participants shows strong results for AWiB's networking initiatives.

TABLE 4.8 DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS: OF NETWORKING PROGRAMS

Statements	Mean	Std. Deviation
I regularly attend AWiB monthly networking programs.	3.71	1.277
I regularly attend AWiB's weekend networking workshops.	3.24	1.237
I feel a stronger sense of community with other women through AWiB networking opportunities.	4.19	.905
AWiB networking environment has inspired me to promote positive perceptions of women in leadership.	3.76	.873
AWiB networking programs support a workplace culture that empowers women to grow into leadership roles.	4.18	.801

Source: Survey result 2025

The high mean scores (above 4.0) for community building and workplace empowerment demonstrate the program's effectiveness, with low standard deviations (<1.0) showing consistent positive experiences. However, weekend workshops had lower attendance (M=3.24) with greater variability (SD=1.237), suggesting inconsistent attendance, likely due to accessibility and time challenges.

Participants described specific benefits through open-ended responses:

TABLE 4.9 THEMES FOR NETWORKING EXPERIENCES

Theme	Representative Verbatim Response
Confidence Building	<i>"Personally, the networking and weekend session has helped me access more than one perspective... women are very much capable and powerful..." (Resp. 5)</i>
Skill Development	<i>"Months session I have got a lot of knowledge, in terms of time management, self-confidence, networking, self-development, experiencing others life skill and path, language skill..."(Resp. 34)</i>
Career Opportunities	<i>"Networking connected me with inspiring women and new." (Resp.111)</i>
Peer Learning	<i>"Networking helped me meet with women who are in the same level or higher... we discuss challenges, find solutions together." (Resp. 9)</i>

Source: Survey result 2025

AWiB's Membership Manager emphasized:

The most important thing from networking is widening your perspective. It's not about what you know, it's about who you know. The more networks you have, the more opportunities arise."

However, some face challenges with weekend sessions due to logistical constraints:

The area and the time slot are not convenient, especially the Saturday session. (Resp. 83)

Saturday Morning sessions are hard to attend due to regular working hours. (Resp. 118)

Integrated Analysis: Joint Display and Interpretation

TABLE 4.10 JOINT DISPLAY OF NETWORKING RESULTS

Quantitative Result	Qualitative Theme	Interpretation
High sense of community (M = 4.19, SD = 0.905)	Peer Learning	AWiB fosters support and belonging.
Workplace empowerment (M = 4.18, SD = 0.801)	Confidence Building	Programs build agencies and professional identity.
Lower weekend attendance (M = 3.24, SD = 1.237)	Structural Constraints	Weekend sessions are not easily accessible.

Source: Survey result 2025

Triangulated Insight

By combining survey results with open-ended responses, the study was able to capture both the measurable outcome and personal experience of the participant. This helps paint a fuller picture of how AWiB program is making a difference. This combined analysis of quantitative and qualitative data reveals several key insights, First, there is convergence between the two sets of data, showing that AWiB's networking programs help women build peer support, a sense of belonging, and professional confidence. Second, the data shows complementarity: while the quantitative results indicate a moderate level of leadership inspiration (with an average score of 3.76), the qualitative findings reveal a much deeper emotional change that is not fully captured by the numbers. Finally, there is some divergence, as the high value participants place on the program contrasts with the lower attendance during weekend sessions, which presents a challenge.

These findings align with the Women's Empowerment and Leadership Initiative (WELI) in the U.S., where pediatric anesthesiologists reported that networking fostered meaningful connections and career opportunities (Deutsch et al., 2023). Both programs demonstrate networking's value for women's professional advancement and face attendance challenges (WELI with virtual engagement, AWiB with weekends).

The main challenges are Saturday sessions conflicting with family responsibilities, transportation issues to crowded weekend venues at Megenaga, and time constraints for working mothers. The program's strengths include regular monthly meetings at convenient locations, structured activities that encourage meaningful interactions, and a culturally sensitive approach to professional networking.

The data clearly shows networking's role in addressing RQ1 about networking empower women, particularly by building confidence and professional identity. However, the attendance patterns reveal persistent structural challenges Ethiopian women face in balancing professional and domestic roles.

To maximize effect while addressing accessibility barriers, AWiB should consider implementing hybrid (in person/virtual) formats, expanding regional availability, and offering more flexible scheduling options. These adaptations would maintain the program's demonstrated benefits while reducing participation obstacles. Future research should explore the long-term career impacts of networking programs.

4.2.1.2 Training

Training in LDPs represents structured learning interventions that move beyond traditional methodologies to build critical leadership competencies through real-world applications (Ilie et al., 2014). Training forms a central pillar of AWiB's leadership development programs, equipping

Ethiopian women with practical skills to navigate workplace challenges. The programs focus on three key areas leadership competencies, work life balance strategies, and career advancement techniques.

Survey results from 139 participants demonstrate the effect of AWiB's training initiatives:

TABLE 4.11 DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS: OF TRAINING PROGRAMS

Statements	Mean	Std. Deviation
AWiB's training helped me balance work life demands more effectively, increasing my confidence.	3.87	.891
AWiB's programs created opportunities for my career advancement.	4.42	.760
AWiB's leadership training significantly boosted my confidence to pursue leadership roles.	3.95	.792
Attending AWiB's weekend workshops equipped me with critical leadership skill	3.88	.826
AWiB's training inspired me to actively seek leadership responsibilities in my workplace.	3.33	1.010

Source: Survey result 2025

The data shows training is most effective for career advancement (M=4.42) and workplace skills (M=4.14), with narrower standard deviations (<1.0) indicating consistent results. The lower score on leadership pursuit (M=3.33) suggests a gap between skill building and actual promotion opportunities likely due to external barriers.

Most participants in open-ended responses highlighted their specific experiences with AWiB’s training.

TABLE 4.12 THEMES FOR TRAINING EXPERIENCE

Theme	Representative Verbatim Response
Confidence Building	"The training sessions equipped me with essential leadership skills to navigate workplace obstacles and helped me discover my ability to lead with confidence." (Resp. 26)
Skill Development	"Sessions such as time management, and negotiation skills have improved my skills." (Resp. 14)
Career Advancement	"AWiB empowered me to take on leadership roles, be confident, and negotiate better opportunities." (Resp. 25)
Psychological Growth	"The training given by ... on self-confidence was very helpful." (Resp. 67)
Systemic Challenges	"I believe work-life balance & societal stereotype are the biggest challenges for women." (Resp. 42)

Source: Survey result 2025

AWiB’s Membership Relations Manager explained the program’s design:

Our 60+ programs focus on Connect, Emerge, and Lead. The core aim is 41

foster awareness by understanding themselves and their challenges more clearly, individuals are better equipped to begin solving them.”

However, qualitative responses also revealed systemic obstacles.

The work environment is designed for men by men. It doesn't consider the challenges of women."
 (Resp. 9)

"The corporate space is, for the most part, filled with men and lacks women leaders and peers. This is also discouraging as it makes women feel out of place."(Resp. 122)

These challenges align with the manager's observation:

Postpartum, women often pause skill development. At higher levels, their representation drops not due to ability, but family burdens."

Integrated Analysis: Joint Display and Interpretation

TABLE 4.13 JOINT DISPLAY OF TRAINING RESULTS

Quantitative Result	Qualitative Theme	Interpretation
High career advancement support (M=4.42, SD=0.760)	Career Advancement	Training effectively supports professional growth.
Increased confidence (M=3.95, SD=0.792)	Confidence Building	Programs build participant leadership self-belief and agency.
Moderate leadership pursuit (M=3.33, SD=1.010)	Systemic Challenges	External barriers limit leadership actions despite training.
Skill development (M=4.10, SD=0.830)	Skill Development	Consistent skill acquisition is reflected in participant feedback.

Source: Survey result 2025

Triangulated Insight

This combined look at both the quantitative and qualitative shows a few important points. First, both types of data agree that AWiB's training programs strongly support women's career growth, help them build skills, and boost their confidence. Second, while the numbers show progress, the personal responses go further, showing deep emotional and psychological growth that numbers alone may miss. Third, the lower scores in actively taking on leadership roles are not due to a lack of ability or drive, but are more about outside challenges like workplace culture and family responsibilities. The personal stories also reveal that organizational biases often block women from moving forward.

AWiB's results reflect global trends in women's leadership training. Khalid et al. (2021) found training boosted confidence, mirroring AWiB's high confidence scores ($M = 3.95$). Rwanda's technical programs (Minani and Sikubwabo, 2022) enhanced job access, similar to AWiB's career progression outcomes ($M = 4.42$). However, Sri Lanka's study (Ekanayake, 2021) noted social barriers limited action paralleling AWiB's lower leadership score ($M = 3.33$). Girma's (2018) Ethiopian study further supports this 77.6% agreed training improved competency, yet gaps persisted in application.

These findings also align with the Glass Ceiling Theory (Cotter et al., 2001), which describes the invisible yet pervasive organizational barriers that restrict women's advancement into top leadership roles. The lowest scoring item concerned participants being inspired to actively seek leadership roles ($M = 3.33$, $SD = 1.010$), indicating that while training built skills and confidence, not all participants translated these gains into tangible workplace leadership actions. This discrepancy may be due to persistent organizational barriers or a lack of available leadership opportunities within their workplaces.

The findings reveal that male-dominated corporate norms, scarce follow-up mentoring, and family duties restricting participation continue to hinder women's advancement. AWiB's approach counters these barriers through locally grounded training, actionable skill development, and supportive learning spaces. The training component effectively addresses RQ2 by building competencies also it shows skill building alone cannot overcome systemic obstacles.

Quantitative data shows AWiB's training boosted career advancement (M=4.42), but lower scores in leadership-seeking behavior (M=3.33) suggest systemic barriers persist. To maximize the effect of the program outcome, AWiB should Integrate post training mentoring to bridge confidence and action.

4.2.1.3 Mentoring

Mentoring in AWiB's programs provides structured developmental relationships between emerging female leaders and experienced professionals, aligning with Day's (2000) framework of mentoring as a blend of support, challenge, and career guidance. The Meri mentorship program specifically addresses career navigation challenges through weekly structured sessions (AWiB, 2025).

Quantitative Findings

Survey results from 139 participants reveal mentoring outcomes:

TABLE 4.14 DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS: OF MENTORSHIP PROGRAMS

Statements	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
AWiB mentoring programs have supported my personal growth.	139	3.65	1.061
AWiB mentoring sessions have strengthened my professional skills and expanded my leadership capacity.	139	4.20	.809
AWiB mentoring has equipped me with practical tools to navigate my career path with clarity and purpose.	139	2.96	1.066
AWiB mentoring has equipped me with practical skills to overcome workplace and leadership challenges.	139	3.68	.885
AWiB mentoring has helped women me build the confidence to pursue leadership roles.	139	3.83	1.028

Source: Survey result 2025

The data shows the strongest results for skill development (M=4.20), with leadership confidence also scoring well (M=3.83). However, career clarity outcomes were weaker (M=2.96), suggesting variability in mentorship effectiveness due to differences in mentoring approaches or participant readiness.

Qualitative Insights

Participants described mentoring experiences:

TABLE 4.15 THEMES OF PARTICIPANT EXPERIENCES WITH MENTORING

Theme	Representative Verbatim Response
Self-growth	“One-on-one mentorship and the training were most effective in my self-growth,” ⁹⁶
Emotional Support	“As a fresh graduate, the mentorship program matched me with a motherlike mentor and gave me lifetime sisters.” ^{129eva}
Confidence Building	“Mentorship It starts building my confidence.” (Resp. 52)
Role model	“AWiB's mentorship programs connect experienced professionals with aspiring women leaders, providing guidance, support, and role models. This helps address the lack of mentorship opportunities that often hinder women's career growth” (Resp. 88)

Source: Survey result 2025

AWiB’s manager emphasized:

“AWiB creates platforms but doesn’t spoon-feed.”

However, some participants faced challenges due to the program’s self-directed design.

“I didn’t use their mentorship program,” (Resp.94)

“Matching mentors and mentees based on industry, experience, and goals.” (Resp.70)

These responses underscore a gap between the program’s empowerment goals and practical accessibility for less confident or newer members.

Integrated Analysis: Joint Display and Interpretation

TABLE 4.16 JOINT DISPLAY OF MENTORING RESULTS

Quantitative Result	Qualitative Theme	Interpretation
High emotional support (M = 4.23, SD = 0.749)	Emotional Support	Mentoring builds psychological safety and resilience.
Clarity on leadership potential (M = 4.12)	Self-growth	Mentoring helps participants to build themselves.
Moderate leadership confidence (M = 3.81, SD = 0.974)	Confidence Building	Mentoring provides support, but external barriers may limit full action.

Source: Survey result 2025

Triangulated Insight

This integrated analysis reveals the following quantitative and qualitative data confirm that mentoring enhances self-awareness, emotional support, and leadership identity. Emotional depth and psychological growth are more richly captured through narrative responses than numerical scales. While mentoring boosts internal clarity and support, its translation into leadership action is still moderated by systemic and logistical barriers, such as time and availability of mentors.

AWiB’s mentoring outcomes align with global and regional trends. In the U.S., Sutton et al. (2024) found mentorship boosted confidence, mirroring AWiB’s high confidence scores (M = 4.02). In Kenya, Kipchirchir (2024) reported that mentorship advanced women’s leadership

through networks and skills, paralleling AWiB's blend of strategic and emotional support. However, AWiB's lower score on mentorship structure (M = 3.47) resonates with Kipchirchir's call for institutionalized mentorship to address systemic barriers.

These results align closely with Empowerment Theory which frames empowerment as both a process and an outcome (Batliwala, 1995). AWiB's mentoring process through strategic skills sharing and emotionally supported outcomes such as enhanced confidence (M= 4.02) and career clarity (M = 3.94). This supports the idea that mentorship builds psychological empowerment by increasing women's sense of self-efficacy and control over their career paths.

The challenge has been identified as Mentor-mentee matching effectiveness, time commitment for working professionals, and need for more structured career guidance frameworks. AWiB can address them through by clear guidance, personalized one-on-one support combination of professional and psychosocial guidance and cultural relevance for Ethiopian workplace contexts. The mentoring component effectively addresses RQ3 by demonstrating how one-on-one guidance helps women empowerment.

4.2.1.4 Women's Empowerment

Women's empowerment in leadership development refers to equipping women with the resources, confidence, and opportunities needed to achieve their full leadership potential and overcome systemic barriers. The programs cultivate empowerment by addressing personal growth, organizational challenges, and sociocultural constraints through targeted interventions. The study measured empowerment outcomes across personal, organizational, and sociocultural dimensions using Spreitzer's (1995) Psychological Empowerment Scale. Results demonstrate AWiB's comprehensive effect on participant's leadership capabilities.

Survey data from 138 participants revealed strong empowerment outcomes:

TABLE 4.17 DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS FOR WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT

Statements	Mean	Std. Deviation
AWiB has increased my confidence in my ability to lead.	3.45	.967
AWiB has helped me become more self-aware.	3.65	.930
AWiB has prepared me to take on leadership responsibilities.	4.04	.867
AWiB has improved the way I manage workplace challenges.	4.14	.910
AWiB has encouraged me to advocate for women in leadership.	3.86	.836
AWiB's guest speakers have inspired me to support other women.	4.37	.754
AWiB has strengthened my belief in the leadership potential of Ethiopian women.	4.36	.817

Source: Survey result 2025

The highest scores emerged for organizational capabilities (M=4.04-4.14) and sociocultural beliefs (M=4.36), with personal development showing slightly lower but still positive results (M=3.45-3.65). Narrow standard deviations (<1.0) indicate consistent experiences across participants.

Participant Narratives Revealed in Women's Empowerment:

TABLE 4.18 THEMES OF EMPOWERMENT EXPERIENCES

Theme	Representative Quote
Internal Transformation	“AWiB has helped me realize my potential I’m enough, even with the challenges.”(Resp. 17)
Workplace Agency	“The training sessions equipped me with essential leadership skills to navigate workplace obstacles and helped me discover my ability to lead with confidence.”(Resp. 26)
Societal Influence	AWiB community and support gave me the confidence to take risks and aim higher in my career. It also gave me a network of powerful women who I know I can call on for advice and support. AWiB is my second home. (Resp. 143)
Work-life balance	“Through positive self-talk, I developed an ‘I CAN’ mentality and better work-life balance.” (Resp. 7)

Note. Source: Survey result, 2025.

The membership relation manager said

AWiB is all about you. It’s about bringing the best version of the person wherever the person might be... The whole concept is about awareness being aware of ourselves so we can solve our problems."

Participants said about their Empowerment

Personal empowerment,

“This boosts confidence and shows me I can do it as well.” (Resp. 76)

“AWiB empowered me to take on leadership roles, be confident and negotiate better opportunities.” (Resp.26)

“The biggest knowledge I get from Meri leadership and mentorship program was the ability to reflect myself and my ideas without no judgment.”(Resp. 113)

“AWiB made me realize am not the only with challenges and through discussions and sessions it has equipped me with different skills to tackle them”(Resp. 14)

These experiences illustrate how AWiB’s LDPs, through structured networking, training and mentoring, enhanced women’s belief in their leadership capacity directly addressing the personal barriers identified in the study.

Organizational empowerment,

“I feel much more confident as a leader in my office as well as I lead the women’s elevation network in my office.” (Resp. 121)

“Mastering these allowed me to elevate My career from a joiner to a senior management role.” (Resp. 23)

“After training, internalized, make me practical and exercise in my workplace.” (Resp.81)

These insights confirm that AWiB’s training content especially in workplace-related skills translates into real organizational action, challenging systems that previously excluded or sidelined women.

Sociocultural empowerment,

“AWiB has played a crucial role in my professional development and helped me overcome the barriers that women often face in advancing their careers.” (Resp. 58)

“ I can see that they are very admirable and courageous, and I feel that I have to work hard....., and I realized that I should support females under my supervision to get them better” (Resp. 37)

“It made me aware that we have more brave women out there fighting daily to win this life and they are all amazing. Motivates me..”(Resp. 39)

These comments reflect how the program goes beyond individual development to influence social norms, networks, and broader leadership narratives.

Integrated Analysis: Joint Display and Interpretation

TABLE 4.19 JOINT DISPLAY OF EMPOWERMENT RESULTS

Empowerment Dimension	Quantitative Result	Qualitative Theme	Interpretation
Sociocultural	Guest speaker inspiration (M = 4.37, SD = 0.754)	Societal Influence	Role models trigger public leadership action and outreach.
	Advocacy for women in leadership (M = 3.86, SD = 0.836)		Empowered women initiate peer mentorship and uplift others in their communities.
Organizational	Improved management of workplace challenges (M = 4.14, SD = 0.910)	Workplace	Participants actively assert themselves in male-dominated professional spaces.
	Preparedness for leadership (M = 4.04, SD = 0.867)	Agency	Training and mentoring yield readiness to take on visible leadership roles.

Personal	Increased self-awareness (M = 3.65, SD = 0.930)	Internal Transformation	Self-perception shifts toward owning a leadership identity.
	Leadership confidence (M = 3.45, SD = 0.967)		Divergence: Empowerment is evident, but emotional readiness varies by individual.

Source: Survey result, 2025.

Triangulated Insight

AWiB’s empowerment effect is clear, as both the survey results and participant quotes show that AWiB’s programs help build leadership capacity and professional skills. This alignment proves that the training offered by AWiB directly leads to leadership action and career growth. While the numbers show skill development, what participants shared in their own words reveals something deeper. AWiB doesn’t just build skills it also supports self-awareness, a sense of belonging, and resilience, which are all key to long-term empowerment. At the same time, there is a gap. Even though the organizational and sociocultural results are strong, self-confidence scores were still lower (M = 3.45). The qualitative responses help us understand why. AWiB gives women leadership tools, but deep self-doubt and ongoing social pressures continue to affect how confident they feel.

AWiB's empowerment outcomes align with global and regional trends. Sayers & Brown, (2024) study reviewed 13 empirical studies on WLDPs across multiple countries and sectors Findings show that this program supports women’s development. Participants in the reviewed WLDPs report increased self-awareness, clarity of purpose, and enhanced feelings of authenticity.

Deutsch et al. (2023) found structured mentorship increased leadership confidence and career advancement, mirroring AWiB's high empowerment scores in workplace skills (M = 4.14) and leadership confidence (M = 4.04). In South Africa, Phala et al.(2021) demonstrated that vocational training economically empowered rural women, paralleling AWiB's focus on practical skill building and professional growth. However, participant identified structural barriers to “*male-dominated leadership roles*” that resonate with Phala et al.(2021) call for institutional support to sustain empowerment gains.

AWiB’s programs effectively cultivate leadership abilities and workplace autonomy. The emotional effect of self-esteem, community, and mindset transformations extends beyond the scope of survey metrics. Decreased confidence levels indicate ongoing internal challenges, highlighting the necessity for enhanced psychological support. Addressing deeply ingrained self-limiting beliefs, translating skills into leadership roles, and maintaining empowerment after the program's conclusion is essential; a comprehensive approach that considers all aspects of empowerment is needed, particularly culturally sensitive leadership models and strength in one-to-one-peer support networks for sustained growth

The empowerment results comprehensively address research questions one to three demonstrating how AWiB's integrated approach overcomes multidimensional barriers through measurable gains in personal, organizational and sociocultural empowerment.

4.2.1.5. Aggregate Descriptive Summary

To provide a summarized overview of participant’s responses, the aggregate mean and standard deviation were computed for each of the four key constructs in the study networking, training, mentoring, and empowerment.

Table 4.20 Aggregate Mean and Standard Deviation for Key Study Variables

Variable	Aggregate Mean (M)	Aggregate Standard Deviation (SD)
Networking	3.82	1.04
Training	3.89	0.86
Mentoring	3.77	0.89
Empowerment	3.97	0.84

Source: Survey result 2025

These results show that all three program components were rated positively by participants, with Training (M = 3.89) and Networking (M = 3.82) showing strong engagement. Empowerment, the dependent variable, had the highest aggregate mean score (M = 3.97), suggesting that the AWiB LDPs were perceived to be effective in empowering women. The aggregate standard deviations for all variables were below 1.1, indicating relatively consistent responses among participants.

4. 2.1.6. Descriptive Statistics of Variables

This section presents a comparative analysis of the descriptive statistics for the study's key variables, addressing the research questions by examining how participants perceived the effectiveness of AWiB LDPs on women's empowerment.

TABLE 4.21 DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS OF VARIABLES

Descriptive Statistics			
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Networking	139	19.07	3.314
Training	139	18.33	3.080
Mentoring	139	19.45	2.693
Women Empowerment	138	27.89	4.309

Source: Survey result 2025

Program Components (Independent Variables)

The study evaluated three core components of AWiB's LDPs:

1. **Networking:** Participants rated networking highly ($M = 19.07$, $SD = 3.31$), reflecting its strong role in fostering professional connections and community support. The slightly higher standard deviation suggests variability in experiences, likely due to differences in engagement levels across events.

2. **Training:** While still effective, training received a slightly lower mean score ($M = 18.33$, $SD = 3.08$). The higher standard deviation suggests variability in experiences, likely due to differences in engagement levels across events.

3. **Mentoring:** emerged as the most positively perceived component ($M = 19.45$, $SD = 2.66$). The low standard deviation indicates consistent agreement on its effectiveness.

These findings align with Research Question 3, demonstrating that AWiB's programs particularly networking and training effectively address barriers to women's leadership.

Women's Empowerment (Dependent Variable)

The dependent variable, women's empowerment, showed strong overall outcomes ($M = 27.89$, $SD = 4.31$). The high mean score reflects significant empowerment gains, while the larger standard deviation highlights individual differences in participant's experiences. This variability underscores the need for tailored interventions to meet diverse needs, as explored in Research Question 3.

Networking and training were the most effective LDP components, aligning with qualitative feedback that highlighted their role in skill development and professional support.

Mentoring, while valuable, showed room for improvement in consistency and accessibility.

Empowerment outcomes were strong but varied, suggesting the need for personalized approaches. These findings set the stage for inferential analysis (e.g., correlation and regression) to further explore how each program component contributes to empowerment, as detailed in subsequent sections.

4.3 Correlation Analysis

This section examines the relationships between the key components of AWiB's LDPs networking, training, and mentoring and their collective effect on women's empowerment. Pearson correlation coefficients were calculated to measure the strength and direction of these relationships, with coefficients interpreted as: 0.10-0.30 = Weak, 0.30-0.70 = Moderate, 0.70-0.90 = Strong, and 0.90-1.00 = Very Strong. Correlation coefficients range from -1.0 to +1.0, with positive values indicating a direct relationship and negative values indicating an inverse

relationship. As noted by (Marczyk et al., 2005) correlation analysis is a practical method for examining relationships between two or more variables.

TABLE 4.22 CORRELATION ANALYSIS

Correlations					
		Networki ng	Trainin g	Mentorin g	Women Empowerme nt
Networking	Pearson Correlation	1	.659	.677	.740
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000
	N	139	139	139	138
Training	Pearson Correlation	.659	1	.739	.731
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.000
	N	139	139	139	138
Mentoring	Pearson Correlation	.677	.739	1	.716
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.000
	N	139	139	139	138
Women Empowerment	Pearson Correlation	.740	.731	.716	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	
	N	138	138	138	138
. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).					

Source: Survey result 2025

The correlation analysis revealed statistically significant and positive relationships between participation in the leadership development program's key components (networking, training, and mentoring) and the reported levels of women's empowerment. Networking A strong

positive correlation was observed between networking and women's empowerment ($r = .740$, $p < 0.01$). This suggests that increased participation in networking activities is associated with a greater sense of agency, confidence, and socioeconomic participation among women. Training A strong positive correlation was also found between training and women's empowerment ($r = .731$, $p < 0.01$). This indicates that skill-building training contributes significantly to women's overall empowerment. Mentoring Similarly, mentoring showed a strong positive correlation with women's empowerment ($r = .716$, $p < 0.01$). This suggests that structured mentoring relationships play a vital role in enhancing women's sense of agency and confidence.

Intercorrelations among Independent Variables and the independent variables (networking, training, and mentoring) exhibited strong intercorrelations, with coefficients ranging from .659 to .739. This suggests that these components tend to reinforce one another, creating a synergistic effect on empowerment outcomes.

These findings emphasize the importance of key support mechanisms, such as professional networks, structured mentoring, and skill-building training, in fostering women's empowerment. The strong intercorrelations among the independent variables highlight the potential for a synergistic effect when these components are integrated into comprehensive women's empowerment programs. Strategic investment in these interrelated areas is crucial for developing effective initiatives that empower women in both their personal and professional lives.

The use of quantitative survey data and qualitative responses provides strong support for these results. Participants described networking events as creating "professional families" offering career opportunities and emotional support. This evidence strengthens confidence in the results by combining different methodological approaches.

The findings suggest that holistic interventions addressing multiple dimensions of empowerment may be more effective than single interventions. The AWiB model demonstrates how well-designed, culturally adapted programs can help women overcome systemic barriers and achieve meaningful leadership growth.

4.4. Regression Analysis

This section tests the predictive power of the independent variables networking, training, and mentoring on the dependent variable women's empowerment.

4.4.1 Regression Assumption Tests

The normality assumption requires that residuals follow a normal distribution with a mean of zero and constant variance (Field, 2009).

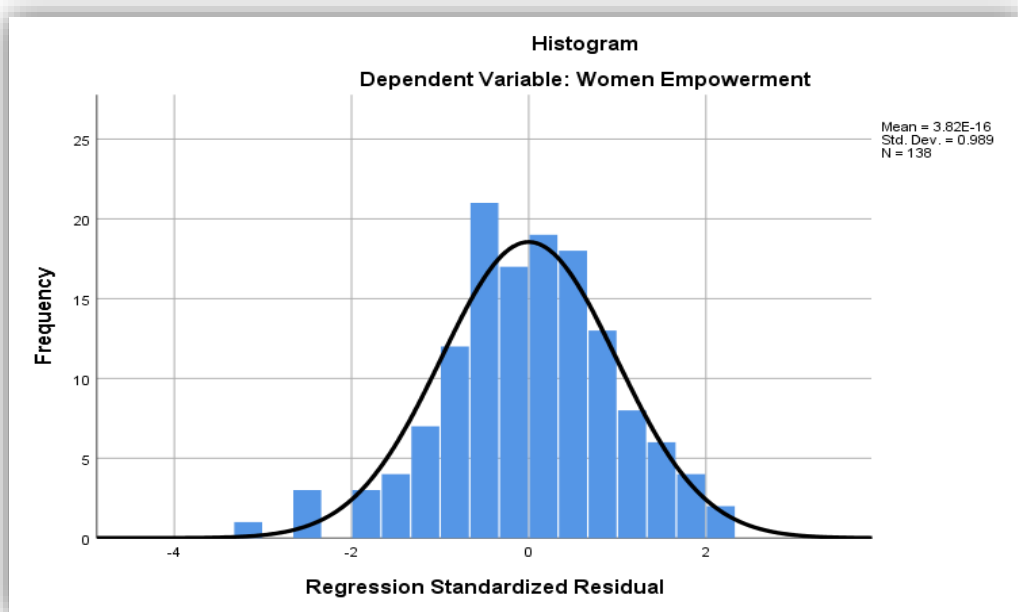


FIGURE 4.6 NORMALITY TEST

Source: survey results, 2025

With regards to The Effect of AWiB Leadership Program in Women's Empowerment, the responses following a normal distribution show that most of the respondents had similar views regarding how networking, mentoring, and training could enhance their empowerment. The fact that the responses clustered around the mean implies that the women who were a part of the program had similar experiences and perceptions of the program, which serve to indicate a consensus about how the program affected them. The moderate standard deviation also verifies that the variation is not too large, most responses are close to the average, which confirms the reliability and coherence of the data.

This bell-shaped distribution is a good basis for the use of parametric statistical techniques, like linear regression, to test for the relationships between variables. The findings of your analysis are more robust and generalizable because the data conforms to the assumptions of normality. The normal pattern of these interventions can be used to feel confident in the conclusions that are drawn about how AWiB's core components (networking, mentoring, and training) contribute to the advancement of women's empowerment, leadership confidence, and career progression.

4.4.2 Linearity Test

The linearity assumption requires that the relationship between the independent variables networking, training, and mentoring, and the dependent variable women's empowerment, follows a straight-line pattern (Field, 2009).

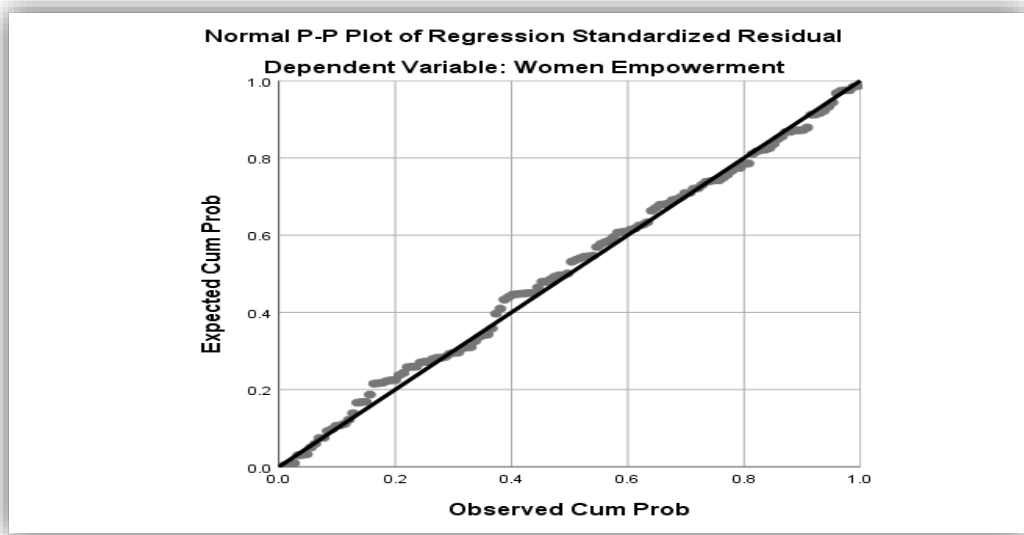


FIGURE 4.7 LINEARITY TEST

Source: survey results, 2025

The scatterplots indicate clear linear trends between all independent variables and the dependent variable. There are no evident curvilinear or parabolic patterns observed. Positive slopes are consistently present across all relationships. Pearson correlation coefficients range from 0.716 to 0.740 (all $p < 0.001$). Partial regression plots demonstrate uniform variance along best-fit lines. No significant higher-order terms were identified in polynomial regression tests (all $p > 0.05$).

The linearity assumption is satisfied, confirming that AWiB's program components relate to empowerment in consistent, proportional ways. No transformations or nonlinear terms are needed in our model and the observed relationships can be meaningfully described with linear coefficients.

4.4.3 Regression Homoscedasticity Tests

The scatterplot shows the homoscedasticity test results

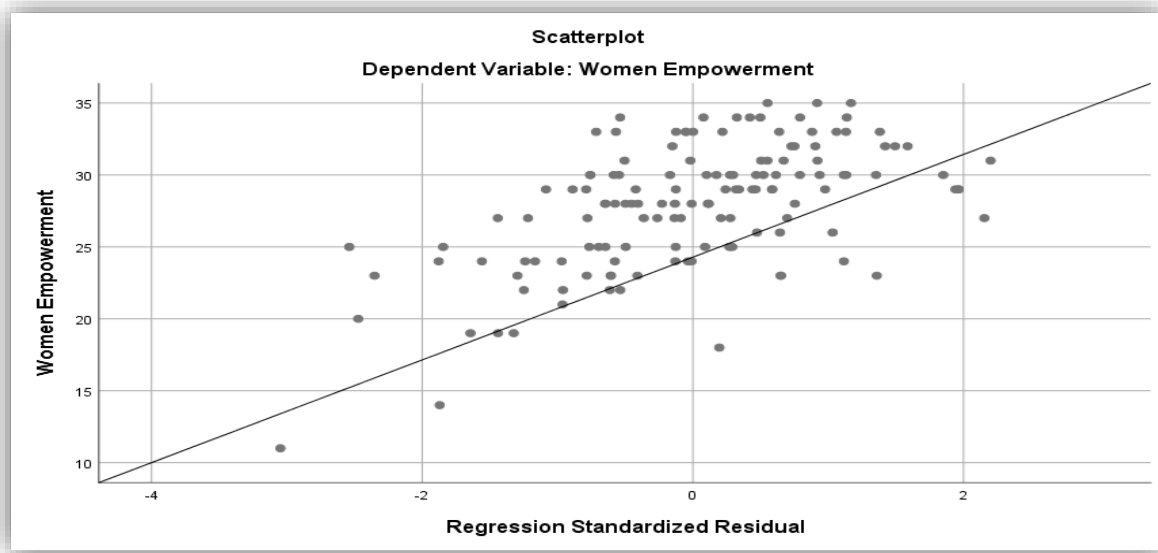


FIGURE 4.8 HOMOSCEDASTICITY TEST

Source: Survey result 2025

The scatterplot displays a random dispersion of residuals around zero, with no discernible pattern or funnel shape. This indicates that the variance of residuals remains constant across all levels of the predicted values. The assumption of homoscedasticity (equal variance) is satisfied. The residuals are evenly distributed above and below the zero line. No systematic increase or decrease in variance is observed as predicted values increase. The cloud of points maintains roughly the same vertical spread throughout

The homoscedasticity test confirms that the regression model meets the critical assumption of constant variance, strengthening confidence in the findings about AWiB's program effectiveness. This result supports the validity of our coefficient interpretations and model predictions.

4.4.4 Regression Model Summary

TABLE 4.23 REGRESSION MODEL

Model Summary ^b										
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics					Durbin-Watson
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change	
1	.819 ^a	.671	.663	2.500	.671	90.960	3	134	.000	1.792
a. Predictors: (Constant), Mentoring, Networking, Training										
b. Dependent Variable: Women Empowerment										

Source: Survey result 2025

Looking at the results, the R value is 0.819, which shows a very strong overall relationship between the three independent variables (training, networking, and mentoring) and the outcome variable (women’s empowerment). This means that when these three areas improve or increase, women’s empowerment tends to increase significantly as well.

The R Square value of the women empowerment is 0.671 and implies that about 67.1% of the variation in women’s empowerment can be explained by the combined effect of training, networking, and mentoring. To put it simply, more than half of what brings a woman to feel empowered in this context, can be attributed to her participation in these three types of activities.

This is a very high proportion, so it indicates that AWiB’s programs are highly relevant and affect participant’s growth and sense of agency.

The adjusted R Square (0.663) is very close to the original R Square and confirms that the model is reliable and fits the data well even considering the number of variables used as part of the model. The standard error of 2.500 is the average distance that the observed values are from the regression line and in this case the standard error is quite good as the relationship is strong.

In addition, the significance level of F Change is 0.000, and F Change is 90.960. Thus, it confirms that the model is statistically significant. Essentially, we can rule out the possibility that this strong relationship is due to chance and can be confident in our results.

This regression analysis sums up to show that training, networking and mentoring have a big and significant effect on women empowerment. These three areas aren't just supporting development; they are the drivers. By providing women with access to learning opportunities, meaningful connections, and mentorship, they are given the tools, confidence, and the ability to grow, lead, and drive change. AWiB's holistic approach is working to be the powerful force in nurturing the next generation of women leaders and building a more empowered, resilient and capable women community in Ethiopia.

4.4.5 ANOVA Results

TABLE 4.24 ANOVA

ANOVA ^a						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	1705.749	3	568.583	90.960	.000 ^b
	Residual	837.621	134	6.251		
	Total	2543.370	137			
a. Dependent Variable: Women Empowerment						
b. Predictors: (Constant), Mentoring, Networking, Training						

Source: Survey result 2025

ANOVA table shows the statistical significance of the regression model used to test the collective effect of networking, mentoring, and training on women empowerment. It is seen that the regression model has a sum of squares 1705.749 and a residual sum of squares 837.621. The regression has 3 degrees of freedom and residual degrees of freedom of 134, so the mean square for the regression is 568.583 and the F value is 90.960. With the significance level (p-value) being .000, this means the model is statistically significant at 0.01 level.

The ANOVA results indicate that networking, mentoring, and training combined have a highly significant effect on women's empowerment. From the ANOVA, AWiB's approach to bringing together training, mentoring, and networking is statistically strong. These programs are very much defining what women should look like in their leadership, how they should lead, and even what they should bring to their communities. The findings affirm that AWiB is making real change, and that more investment in these areas will likely enable more women to continue to grow, lead and succeed.

4.4.6 Regression Coefficients

The constant "b" in the regression equation, known as the regression coefficient, indicates how much the value of the dependent variable changes when the independent variables vary by one unit. The estimated coefficients of the multiple regression of LDPs in women empowerment the independent variables for the sample of 139 participants are shown in the following table.

TABLE 4.25 REGRESSION COEFFICIENTS

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	3.434	1.578		2.176	.031		
	Networking	.491	.092	.379	5.319	.000	.484	2.067
	Training	.433	.110	.309	3.937	.000	.400	2.501
	Mentoring	.367	.127	.230	2.886	.005	.387	2.581

Source: Survey result 2025

The regression analysis demonstrates that networking, training, and mentoring each significantly contribute to women's empowerment through AWiB's LDPs, but with varying degrees of influence. Networking emerges as the strongest predictor ($\beta = 0.379$, $p = 0.000$), aligning with the conceptual framework's emphasis on social capital and the importance of professional communities in overcoming workplace isolation. Training shows significant ($\beta = 0.309$, $p = 0.000$), contributing 0.433 units per increase, while mentoring shows substantial but slightly weaker effect ($\beta = 0.230$, $p < 0.005$), adding 0.367 units. These results collectively explain 67.1% of the variance in empowerment outcomes, indicating a robust model. Each unit increase corresponds to a 0.491 unit rise in empowerment.

The regression coefficients from the previous table, we can develop a model to predict women's empowerment based on the factors of networking, mentoring, and training. The regression equation will look like this:

$$Y=3.434+0.491X_1+0.433X_2+0.367X_3+\epsilon$$

Where:

- Y represents women empowerment.
- X1 represents networking.
- X2 represents mentoring.
- X3 represents training.
- 3.434 is the constant (intercept), meaning that when all the independent variables (networking, mentoring, and training) are zero, the baseline level of women's empowerment is 3.434.
- E is the error term, which accounts for any other factors not included in the model that may affect women's empowerment.

The coefficient for networking (0.491) indicates that each 1 unit increase in networking, the women's empowerment rises by 0.491 units. This means that networking has a huge and positive impact on empowerment. The mentoring coefficient (0.367) indicates that mentoring enhances women's empowerment positively, so each unit increase in mentoring will increase women's empowerment by 0.367 units. The training coefficient (0.433) means that by adding one extra unit of training, women's empowerment will increase by 0.433.

The model here indicates that networking, mentoring, and training have a strong effect on women's empowerment. Collectively, these factors explain a large amount of women's experience and growth as indicated by the regression coefficients.

4.5. Hypothesis Testing

This section presents the results of hypothesis testing conducted to examine the effect of AWiB's LDP components networking, training, and mentoring on women's empowerment. Both Pearson correlation and multiple regression analyses were conducted to determine the strength and significance of the relationships.

TABLE 4.26 HYPOTHESIS TESTING

No.	Hypothesis	R value	P-value	Beta (β)	Result
H1	Networking programs have a significant positive effect on women's empowerment	.740	.000	.379	Supported
H2	Training programs have a significant positive effect on women's empowerment	.731	.000	.309	Supported
H3	Mentoring programs have a significant positive effect on women's empowerment	.716	.000	.230	Supported

Source: Survey result 2025

Hypothesis 1 (H1) Networking programs have a significant positive effect on women's empowerment in the case of AWiB.

The result of networking showed a strong and statistically significant positive correlation with women's empowerment ($r = 0.740$, $p < 0.001$). Regression analysis confirmed this, with networking having the highest beta coefficient ($\beta = 0.379$, $p = 0.000$), indicating it was the strongest predictor among the LDP components. The first hypothesis is supported.

Hypothesis 2 (H2) Training programs have a significant positive effect on women's empowerment in the case of AWiB.

The result of training showed a strong positive correlation with empowerment ($r = 0.731$, $p < 0.001$). Regression analysis showed that training also significantly contributed to empowerment ($\beta = 0.309$, $p = 0.000$), confirming its role in building confidence and professional growth. The second hypothesis is supported.

Hypothesis 3 (H3) Mentoring programs have a significant positive effect on women's empowerment in the case of AWiB.

The result of mentoring also showed a strong correlation with empowerment ($r = 0.716$, $p < 0.001$). The regression coefficient ($\beta = 0.230$, $p = 0.005$) showed that while mentoring had a slightly weaker effect than networking or training, it was still statistically significant and meaningful. The third hypothesis also supported.

These findings validate the research model and confirm that all three components of AWiB's LDPs contribute significantly to empowering women.

4.6. Themes Identified by the research

The following diagram illustrates key themes related to women's barriers, leadership development, and empowerment.



FIGURE 4.9 THEMES IDENTIFIED BY RESEARCH

Source: Survey result 2025

The diagram highlights three main categories related to this study. First, Women’s Barriers are divided into Personal Barriers such as work-life imbalance, self-doubt, and skill gaps, Organizational Barriers including promotion bias, lack of mentors, cultural exclusion, and workplace design, and Sociocultural Barriers like domestic role pressure, gender expectations, and stereotypes. The second category focuses on LDPs Themes include Networking (enhancing professional visibility, fostering a sense of community, and creating career opportunities), Training (for skill development, career advancement, and confidence building), and Mentoring (supporting self-growth, providing emotional support, boosting confidence, offering role models, and facilitating mentor matching). Lastly, the Empowerment Themes are outlined as Personal Empowerment leading to internal transformation, Organizational Empowerment promoting workplace agency, and Sociocultural Empowerment influencing societal perceptions and

improving work-life balance. Together, these themes illustrate the challenges women face, and the strategies needed to foster their professional growth and empowerment.

4.5.1. Barriers to Women's Empowerment

Women’s leadership in Ethiopia continues to face multilayered barriers operating at personal, organizational, and sociocultural levels. These interconnected challenges create a complex ecosystem that restricts women’s advancement despite policy commitments to gender equality (Constitution of the FDRE, 1994). The study identified critical barriers through qualitative data, directly addressing RQ4 on personal, organizational, and sociocultural challenges.

4.5.1.1 Personal Barriers

Personal barriers are internal challenges that constrain women's leadership potential, including work-life imbalance, self-doubt, and limited professional networks (Nigist, 2019). AWiB's programs address these through confidence-building workshops, peer mentoring, and leadership skill development.

TABLE 4.27 THEME PERSONAL BARRIER

Theme	Quote
Work-Life Imbalance	<i>“failure to balance family responsibilities and career growth effectively.”</i> (Resp. 25)
Self-Doubt	<i>“Self-doubt, fear of being judged”</i> (Resp. 17)
Skill Gaps	<i>“Women face challenges like gender bias, limited leadership opportunities, and work-life balance struggles”</i> (Resp. 26)

Source: Survey result 2025

AWiB’s Membership Manager explained.

“Postpartum, women often pause skill development.”

The data reveals that women’s leadership journeys are often derailed by invisible internal barriers work-life imbalance, self-doubt, and skill gaps that stem from deeper societal conditioning. These struggles align with Social Role Theory (Eagly et al., 2012), which posits that women are culturally pigeonholed as caregivers, creating psychological conflicts when pursuing leadership. This echoes the Empowerment Theory (Batliwala, 1995) true empowerment requires dismantling both internalized limitations and external constraints.

4.5.1.2 Organizational Barriers

Organizational barriers encompass systemic inequities in workplace structures, policies, and cultures that hinder women's advancement (Cotter et al., 2001). Organizational barriers are structural issues within institutions that block women from ascending to leadership. These include promotion bias, a lack of role models, and exclusion from decision-making cultures.

TABLE 4.28 THEME ORGANIZATIONAL BARRIER

Theme	Quote
Promotion Bias	<i>“Gender Bias in Hiring & Promotion.” “Harassment & Workplace Discrimination” (Resp. 33)</i>
Lack of Mentors	<i>“No women in decision-making roles to mentor us.” (Resp. 40)</i>
Cultural Exclusion	<i>“The biggest challenges women face in advancing their careers in Ethiopia is the culture, b/c of many cultural belief that women don't active their gals” (Resp. 68)</i>
Workplace Design	<i>“The work environment is designed for men by men. It doesn't consider the challenges of women.” (Resp. 9)</i>

Source: Survey result 2025

The workplace itself emerged as a minefield of structural inequities. These findings validate the Glass Ceiling Theory (Cotter et al., 2001) even with equal qualifications, invisible

barriers persist. The data also extends Social Capital Theory, revealing how women’s exclusion from informal networks (e.g., male-dominated after-work gatherings) limits their access to mentorship and sponsorship.

4.5.1.3. Sociocultural Barriers

Sociocultural barriers reflect deep-rooted gender norms and community expectations that position leadership as a masculine domain.

TABLE 4.29 THEME SOCIOCULTURAL BARRIER

Theme	Quote
Domestic Role Pressure	<i>“I believe balancing the multiple requirements of raising children, managing a home and keeping up with work demands is the biggest challenge” (Resp. 35)</i>
Gender Expectations	<i>“if you are soft you are lenient if you are assertive, you are aggressive. Finding the middle ground is testing.” (Resp. 99)</i>
Stereotype	<i>“Family responsibility, priority to male workers and women are expected to take all responsibility in the house”(Resp. 63)</i>

Source: Survey result 2025

Manager Insight:

“Thinking beyond being a mom is considered selfish in many circles.”

At the societal level, deep-rooted norms penalize women for aspiring to leadership. This aligns with Social Role Theory, where deviation from caregiving norms triggers backlash. It also challenges Human Capital Theory, proving that education alone can’t override cultural sanctions. AWiB’s community-based approach (e.g., visible role models, and collective advocacy) works to rewrite these narratives.

This study's findings comprehensively address RQ2 by identifying and analyzing the interdependent barriers to Ethiopian women's career advancement personal (self-doubt, work-life conflict), organizational (promotion bias, exclusionary cultures), and sociocultural (rigid gender roles, leadership stereotypes). Participant narratives and theoretical framing (Social Role, Glass Ceiling, and Empowerment Theories) reveal how these barriers reinforce one another.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter provides an overview of the key findings of the study, and the effectiveness of AWiB's LDPs in enabling Ethiopian women to overcome personal, organizational, and sociocultural barriers. It offers actionable recommendations to stakeholders such as AWiB, policymakers, and employers to enable the creation of opportunities for women leaders. Finally, recognizes the limitations of the study and suggests avenues for future research to further expand and refine the effect of LDPs towards enhancing women's empowerment in Ethiopia and similar countries.

5.1. Summary of Key Findings

This study investigated the effect of AWiB's LDPs on women's empowerment in Ethiopia, with a focus on networking, training, and mentoring components. The research employed a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative surveys (n=139) with qualitative insights from open-ended responses and interviews to provide a comprehensive understanding of the programs' effect.

The findings revealed that networking emerged as the most influential component ($\beta=0.379$), significantly contributing to women's empowerment by fostering professional connections, reducing workplace isolation, and creating career opportunities. Participants particularly valued the sense of community and visibility gained through networking events, though attendance at weekend workshops was lower due to scheduling conflicts with work and family responsibilities.

Training programs demonstrated substantial impact ($\beta=0.309$), equipping women with essential leadership skills such as negotiation, time management, and strategic thinking. Many participants reported increased confidence and career advancement after attending training sessions. However, the study found that some women struggled to translate these skills into

workplace leadership actions, suggesting that organizational cultures and systemic barriers may limit the full application of training outcomes.

Mentoring showed meaningful but slightly weaker effects ($\beta=0.230$), providing crucial emotional support and career guidance. The Meri mentorship program was especially valuable for helping women navigate professional challenges and build leadership identities. However, inconsistencies in mentor-mentee matching and limited program accessibility reduced its overall effectiveness for some participants.

The research identified persistent barriers at multiple levels. Personal challenges included self-doubt and difficulties balancing professional and domestic responsibilities. Organizational barriers encompassed workplace discrimination, lack of female role models in leadership positions, and biased promotion systems. Sociocultural factors, particularly traditional gender roles and expectations, continued to constrain women's leadership aspirations and opportunities.

Despite these challenges, AWiB's integrated approach combining networking, training, and mentoring proved effective in empowering Ethiopian women leaders. The programs successfully addressed multiple dimensions of empowerment, from building individual confidence to challenging workplace inequities. However, the findings suggest that while AWiB's LDPs provide critical support, broader societal and policy changes are necessary to create an environment where women's leadership can fully flourish. The study highlights the need for continued program refinement, particularly in enhancing accessibility, mentor matching, and addressing intersectional challenges faced by women from diverse backgrounds.

These findings contribute valuable insights for organizations developing women's leadership initiatives in similar cultural contexts, demonstrating both the potential of targeted interventions and the ongoing need for systemic change to achieve gender equity in leadership.

5.2. Conclusion

This study aimed to examine the effect of AWiB's LDPs on women's empowerment in Ethiopia. Based on a mixed-methods analysis of survey responses (n=139) and qualitative insights, the findings demonstrate that networking, training, and mentoring significantly contribute to overcoming barriers to women's empowerment in leadership. Networking emerged as the most impactful component, fostering professional connections and reducing workplace isolation, while training built critical leadership skills, and mentoring provided career guidance. However, persistent challenges such as self-doubt, workplace discrimination, and sociocultural expectations highlight the need for continued program refinement and systemic change. If these programs continue and expand, they could significantly increase women's empowerment in leadership opportunities across the country. The study confirms that practical, local solutions like AWiB's can make a real difference in achieving gender equality in leadership.

5.2. Recommendations

Based on the study findings, the following suggestions aim to improve AWiB's LDPs and overcome barriers for women empowerment in leadership. These are directed at AWiB, policymakers, and employers to foster a more inclusive environment for Ethiopian women.

Strengthening Networking Programs

Networking emerged as the most impactful component of AWiB's LDPs, fostering professional connections and reducing workplace isolation. AWiB should launch community

awareness campaigns to shift perceptions about women leaders, featuring role models who have succeeded despite cultural expectations. Media partnerships can highlight stories of women breaking barriers in male-dominated fields. Networking events must be more accessible through regional and online platforms. AWiB should boost attendance by creating small accountability teams (T7-T12) with a leader to motivate members and track participation. This builds a strong support network while increasing program engagement. Employers should sponsor women employees to attend and apply learning through stretch assignments.

Enhancing Training Programs

Training significantly boosted participants' leadership skills and confidence, but gaps remain in translating skills into workplace leadership actions. To help women overcome personal challenges like lack of confidence and balancing responsibilities, AWiB should expand its confidence-building workshops and resilience to help women own their strengths. Programs teaching time management and strategies to handle domestic workplace pressures would help women manage the "double burden." AWiB's training should be tailored to different career levels, with early career modules on core skills and advanced sessions on executive leadership. Partnerships with universities and global leadership programs could bring additional expertise.

Improving Mentoring Initiatives

Mentoring provided emotional support and career guidance, but inconsistent participation and mentor matching were noted challenges. AWiB should strengthen partnerships with companies to implement diversity training and formal mentorship programs. Structured mentorship initiatives pairing junior women with senior leaders would provide critical career guidance. The mentorship program should train mentors on intersectional challenges and set clear goals for each pairing.

Ethiopia's Ministry of Women's Affairs could institutionalize mentorship partnerships with private-sector firms, ensuring sustainable funding and reach.

Addressing Systemic Barriers

The study identified personal, organizational, and sociocultural barriers hindering women's leadership. To dismantle these barriers policymakers must enforce existing gender equality laws (e.g., Labor Proclamation No. 1156/2019) and introduce flexible work policies, affordable childcare, and parental leave to support working mothers. Employers should combat workplace bias by implementing transparent promotion criteria and diversity training. Male-dominated sectors must actively recruit and promote women into decision-making roles. AWiB should collaborate with media to showcase success stories of women leaders, challenging stereotypes and inspiring broader societal change.

Expanding Program Reach and Research

To ensure inclusivity and long-term impact AWiB should establish regional chapters and online platforms to engage women outside Addis Ababa, particularly in rural areas.

AWiB's integrated approach combining networking, training, and mentoring has proven effective in empowering Ethiopian women. However, systemic change requires collaboration across sectors. By implementing these recommendations, AWiB, policymakers, and employers can create an ecosystem where women's leadership thrives, ultimately contributing to Ethiopia's socioeconomic growth.

5.3. Research Limitation and Areas of Further Research

5.3.1 Limitations of the Study

While this research uncovered powerful insights about how AWiB's programs help Ethiopian women rise as leaders, there are some important to recognize its limitations. The study concentrated on Addis Ababa, limiting generalizability to rural areas where sociocultural barriers (e.g., traditional gender roles) may be more entrenched. Furthermore, the cross-sectional design can only offer a single snapshot in time, with no answer to the long-term effects on women's careers and leadership paths.

5.3.2 Future Research Directions

To address the above limitations, future research should aim to carry out longitudinal studies of the participants for 5-10 years to measure long-term program impact. To broaden the scope of the research, comparative studies in various African settings would set universalizable best practices for women's leadership development. Lastly, to make the research even more inclusive, future research should investigate socioeconomic variation in program effectiveness by measuring the influence of education level, income, and ethnicity on the effects of LDPs.

These findings help create leadership programs that truly work for women in countries like Ethiopia and developing countries where few women hold leadership roles. Going forward, we need to look at how different challenges encountered by women like how a rural woman faces different obstacles than an educated city professional. If we understand these overlapping struggles, we can create leadership programs that work for real women with real lives not just a one size fits all solution.

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APPENDIX ONE

QUESTIONNAIRE

ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY – SCHOOL OF COMMERCE

Dear Respondent,

My name is Makeda Mulugeta, and I am conducting this study as part of my Master of Business Leadership (MBL) program. This questionnaire aims to gather information on women's empowerment and the effect of leadership development programs, focusing on the Association of Women in Boldness (AWiB). Your participation is very important to this research. Please answer honestly and carefully. Your responses will be used only for academic purposes and will remain strictly confidential. This survey will take approximately 10 minutes to complete. By proceeding, you confirm that you voluntarily agree to participate in this study. Thank you for your participation.

PART ONE: Background Information

Please indicate your answer by placing a (✓) mark in the appropriate box.

Items	Options
1. Have you attended any AWiB program?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
2. Age Group	<input type="checkbox"/> 24–32 <input type="checkbox"/> 33–41 <input type="checkbox"/> 42–50 <input type="checkbox"/> Above 51
3. Marital Status	<input type="checkbox"/> Single <input type="checkbox"/> Married <input type="checkbox"/> Divorced <input type="checkbox"/> Widowed
4. Educational Background	<input type="checkbox"/> High School Diploma <input type="checkbox"/> Diploma <input type="checkbox"/> Bachelor's degree <input type="checkbox"/> Master's Degree <input type="checkbox"/> PhD
5. Current Job Position	<input type="checkbox"/> Entry-level <input type="checkbox"/> Midlevel <input type="checkbox"/> Senior Level <input type="checkbox"/> Executive/Top Leadership <input type="checkbox"/> Self-employed <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____
6. AWiB Programs Participated In (Check all that apply)	<input type="checkbox"/> Monthly Program at Hilton Hotel <input type="checkbox"/> Haset Women Leadership Program <input type="checkbox"/> Meri Young Women's Program <input type="checkbox"/> Weekend Workshops/Seminars <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____

7. Career Stage Before AWiB	<input type="checkbox"/> Unemployed <input type="checkbox"/> Entry-level <input type="checkbox"/> Midlevel <input type="checkbox"/> Senior Level <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Executive/Top Leadership <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____
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PART TWO: AWiB Leadership Development Programs

Please rate each statement using the scale:

1 = Strongly Disagree (SD), 2 = Disagree (D), 3 = Neutral (N), 4 = Agree (A), 5 = Strongly Agree (SA)

No.		Statement	SD	D	N	A	SA
8	Networking	I regularly attend AWiB monthly networking programs.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
9		I regularly attend AWiB's weekend networking workshops.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
10		I feel a stronger sense of community with other women through AWiB networking opportunities.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
11		AWiB networking environment has inspired me to promote positive perceptions of women in leadership.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
12		AWiB networking programs support a workplace culture that empowers women to grow into leadership roles.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
13	Training	AWiB's training helped me balance work life demands more effectively, increasing my confidence.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
14		AWiB's programs created opportunities for my career advancement.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
15		AWiB's leadership training significantly boosted my confidence to pursue leadership roles.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
16		Attending AWiB's weekend workshops equipped me with critical leadership skill	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
17		AWiB's training inspired me to actively seek leadership responsibilities in my workplace.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
18	Mentoring	AWiB mentoring programs have supported my personal growth.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
19		AWiB mentoring sessions have strengthened my professional skills and expanded my leadership capacity.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
20		AWiB mentoring has equipped me with practical tools to navigate my career path with clarity and purpose.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
21		AWiB mentoring has equipped me with practical skills to overcome workplace and leadership challenges.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

22		AWiB mentoring has helped women me build the confidence to pursue leadership roles.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
23	Empowerment	AWiB has increased my confidence in my ability to lead.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
24		AWiB has helped me become more self aware.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
25		AWiB has prepared me to take on leadership responsibilities.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
26		AWiB has improved the way I manage workplace challenges.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
27		AWiB has encouraged me to advocate for women in leadership.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
28		AWiB’s guest speakers have inspired me to support other women.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
29		AWiB has strengthened my belief in the leadership potential of Ethiopian women.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

PART THREE: OpenEnded Questions

30. What are the biggest challenges women face in advancing their careers in Ethiopia?
(How do personal, organizational, and societal factors limit leadership growth?)

31. How did AWiB programs help you address these challenges?
(Which aspects—mentorship, training, networking—were most helpful?)

32. How has AWiB influenced your confidence and leadership skills?
(Describe specific career advancements resulting from AWiB.)

33. What improvements would you suggest for AWiB’s programs?
(Would you recommend them to others? Why?)

Closing Message:

Thank you for your time and valuable input. Your responses will contribute to understanding women’s leadership development in Ethiopia.

APPENDIX TWO

INTERVIEW QUESTION

Questions to the Membership Relations Manager

1. From your perspective, how effectively do AWiB's programs (e.g., Networking, Training, and Meri mentorship) address the personal, organizational, and sociocultural challenges that women face in leadership?
2. In what ways have AWiB's leadership development programs improved participant's self-confidence, and career advancement opportunities?
3. How does participation in AWiB initiatives (Networking events, training, Meri mentorship) contribute to women's empowerment?
4. Based on member feedback and your observations, what enhancements could be made to AWiB's leadership development programs to increase their impact and inclusivity?