

# The Role of Omani Women Associations in Empowering Female Job Seekers through Soft Skills Development: A Field Study in Light of Oman Vision 2040

Ghuzlan Ali Mohammed Albalushi

Health and Innovation Committee, Oman Women Association, Rustaq, Oman.

## Abstract

This paper examines how associations of Omani women empower females to find employment by training them in soft skills as part of Oman Vision 2040. This is mixed-methods research considering the opinions of 101 female job seekers who were surveyed, and the results of the open-ended interview were analyzed thematically. Significant values were also found on the most important areas of soft skills such as interview expression (Mean Difference = -1.50,  $p < 0.001$ ), problem-solving (Mean Difference = -1.39,  $p < 0.001$ ), time management (Mean Difference = +0.40,  $p = 0.005$ ), and overall self-confidence (Mean Difference = -1.88,  $p < 0.001$ ). Correlations were quite strong between expression confidence and entrepreneurial vision ( $r = 0.78$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) as well as between leadership skills and job market awareness ( $r = 0.68$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) and represent ripple effects of empowerment in various areas. Qualitative responses were analyzed thematically to show the necessity of practical training, employment corresponding services, and emotional empowerment. These results highlight the ability of women's groups to transform social lives and economic development. It provides practical solutions through adjusting training to various levels of education, enhancing collaboration among institutions, and incorporating emotional intelligence and leadership identity into the program process. Such observations help Oman to promote gender equity and encompass the personnel in workforce participation.

**Keywords:** Omani Women's Associations, Female Job Seekers Empowerment, Soft Skills Development, Oman Vision 2040, Women's Economic Participation, Employment Support Programs

## 1. Introduction

Women's empowerment in the workplace is a cornerstone of Oman Vision 2040's efforts to drive the Sultanate toward a diversified knowledge-based economy fueled by innovation and inclusivity. With the country taking this ambitious leap forward, active involvement by women in all sectors—technology and healthcare, entrepreneurship, and public administration—has been deemed imperative for sustainable development and competitive strength. Omani women's associations have become key organizations in this transition, offering specialized training, mentorship, and networking that bestow female job seekers with the essential soft skills needed in the modern, dynamic labor market [1-3].

Oman Vision 2040 calls attention to the role of gender equality as a support pillar of national development to raise women's participation in the labor market, particularly at the leadership level, and improve their

access to education and professional training [3-5]. The vision is underpinned by advanced legal reforms, including improved maternity leave arrangements and anti-discrimination legislation, which provide a better working environment for women to achieve their professional goals. Current statistics highlight the increasing power of women in the workforce: as of June 2024, more than 100,000 women were working in the public sector, and almost 120,000 worked in the private sector, demonstrating a consistent increase in female participation in the labor force [6].

Despite these improvements, there are still major issues that prevent women from being completely integrated into the workforce. Cultural orientation and customary gender roles are still affecting attitudes toward professional aspirations of women, tending to make domestic duties more important than career growth [7]. Gender discrimination, lack of access to mentorship, and pay equity also make the professional paths of most Omani women difficult. Furthermore, the pace of technological change and the changing needs of the new workplace necessitate that women upgrade their capabilities continuously—especially in the fields of digital skills, communication, and leadership [3, 7].

Finding solutions to these challenges is not merely an issue of equity but also a strategic necessity for Oman's economic stability. Research has identified that greater numbers of women working in the economy create more productivity, more innovation, and stronger business performance. Aware of this, Omani women's associations have redoubled their efforts to create training programs aimed at developing soft skills, career development, and work experience. These programs aim to remove obstacles to work and establish a culture of lifelong learning and professional improvement [3, 8].

This research seeks to assess the effectiveness of training and mentorship initiatives provided by Omani women's associations in developing soft skills among female job applicants in the context of Oman Vision 2040. Through content analysis of the experiences and opinions of participants in these programs, this study hopes to discover both the advantages and ongoing issues for women trying to find a place in the labor market. The results will help increase understanding of how specific interventions can improve women's employment prospects, facilitate their career growth, and ultimately spur the attainment of Oman's national development objectives.

Concisely, the study is located between national policy dreaming and grassroots practice. Although Oman Vision 2040 formulates the priority of gender equality and the participation of women in the economy as a national priority, women's associations are one of the main players that convert the vision into reality. Their soft skills training challenge is not just a policy measure, but a revolutionary wave that is social in the sense that it is trying to empower women to experience real inclusion in the economy.

The rest of the paper is organized in the following way: the Literature Review provides a synthesis of previous studies on the problem of women contributors to the labor market and factors that hinder their employment, and the importance of soft skills and women's associations. Methodology identifies research design, research instruments, and analysis strategy. The Results contain both the quantitative and qualitative results related to the effectiveness of training, and the Discussion reveals the policy and practice implications. Lastly, the Conclusion provides an overview of the main contributions and recommendations that can be put up in future efforts.

## **2. Literature Review**

The nexus of women's empowerment, labor force participation, and soft skills training has emerged as a priority area for research and policy consideration in the Gulf, more so in the context of national development frameworks like Oman Vision 2040. This literature review consolidates main conclusions

from more recent studies, policy papers, and labor market reports to place in perspective the status quo of Omani women in the labor market, challenges they encounter, and the success of interventions aimed at improving their employability via training in soft skills.

### **2.1 Women's Labor Force Participation in Oman**

Current statistics highlight advances and longstanding issues in women's labor force participation in Oman. As indicated by the World Bank, the percentage of women in the Omani labor force was 15.4% in 2024, showing a gradual but incremental increase relative to other years [9, 10]. Although this percentage is lower than the world average, it conceals some tremendous advances in some fields, including government, education, and healthcare, where women are being increasingly seen in technical as well as leadership positions [11, 12]. For example, in 2022, Omani women aged 15 years and above comprised 32.1% of economically active females, of whom more than 95,000 were working in the government sector and over 136,093 in the private sector [12]. These statistics reflect a dynamic turn towards increased female economic participation, though with considerable inequities across industries.

The male-to-female labor ratio in Oman is still high, at nearly 5.23 men for every woman, reflecting continued gender disparities in access to the labor market. Despite such obstacles, Oman is known to have advanced legal reforms and liberal policies, including increased maternity leave, anti-harassment covers, and equal pay requirements, that help promote a more supportive work environment for women's career ambitions. All of these are also in line with Oman Vision 2040, which categorically identifies gender equality and women's empowerment as catalysts for economic diversification and social harmony [5, 11, 13].

### **2.2 Cultural and Structural Constraints**

Studies on women's labor market participation in the Gulf have persistently noted several interconnected obstacles that prevent the workforce from becoming fully representative. Traditional notions of culture and gender roles continue to be powerful, tending to favor the domestic over the professional for women. Gender discrimination and restricted access to professional networks similarly limit women's career progress, especially in traditionally male-dominated sectors. Moreover, the dynamic nature of the rate of technological advancement and the changing needs of today's workplace necessitate women's constant skill upgrading, particularly in areas of computer literacy, communication, and leadership [11, 13].

There is a recurring gap in the employment of men and women throughout the region, with women's employment generally at the level of 20% versus men's at 80% [14]. This is reinforced by structural issues like inadequate childcare assistance, rigid working schedules, and absent targeted career mentoring for women [11, 13]. Youth women, especially, are exposed to exceedingly high unemployment rates, with 14.6% of the 15–24 age group in Oman unemployed in 2021, which only highlights the necessity of specialized interventions to usher them into the labor market [11].

### **2.3 Soft Skills and Employability**

Modern labor market studies highlight the increasing significance of soft skills—communication, teamwork, problem-solving, and flexibility—as factors that boost employability and career progression [15]. Omani employers and the Gulf economies in general demand not only technical skills but also good interpersonal skills in candidates, testifying to the move toward knowledge-based economies and digitalization [16]. Research emphasizes that Omani graduates typically lack these essential soft skills, which reduces their job market competitiveness and highlights the need for rigorous training programs [11, 17].

Soft skills training programs have been demonstrated to improve women's confidence, work readiness, and capacity to deal with intricate workplace settings [18]. For instance, job-searching programs that include real-life simulations, mentorship, and peer support have worked effectively to foster self-efficacy and professional connections among job candidates [19]. Incorporating soft skills training into overall empowerment programs is especially pertinent in the Omani context, where cultural and structural limitations routinely foreclose women's access to professional spheres [11].

## **2.4 Role of Women's Associations and Training Delivery**

Women's associations in Oman also have a crucial role to play in addressing the above challenges. Women's associations offer focused training, mentorship, and networking opportunities that improve the skills and confidence of women to perform effectively in the labor market. By offering programs that emphasize soft skills, career advice, and work experience, women's associations bridge the gap between education and the labor market, especially for young women and new graduates [11, 13].

Recent policy efforts, including the New Oman Labor Law, have further solidified the institutional infrastructure for women's empowerment through requirements of better maternity leave, anti-discrimination protection, and working accommodations. These changes, in addition to the activities of women's associations, have helped to slow but significantly expand women's participation in the workforce and representation in leadership roles [11, 12].

Empirical findings indicate that women who undergo association-organized training programs exhibit increased levels of self-esteem, effective communication skills, and enhanced sensitization to labor market demands [20]. Such effects are most evident in fields like technology, healthcare, and entrepreneurship, where women are being increasingly identified as a driving force for innovation and economic prosperity. For example, the success of women to lead institutions such as Bank Muscat, where Omani women make up more than 46% of employees, illustrates the transformative power of focused training and mentorship [11, 12].

## **2.5 Sectoral Trends and Future Outlook**

Sectoral analysis also identifies specific patterns of women's participation in the labor force in Oman. The public sector still absorbs a large percentage of Omani women, including education and administration, while the private sector provides expanding opportunities in technology, healthcare, and entrepreneurship. Emerging digital industries and burgeoning demand for technology-proficient professionals have opened new avenues for women to gain entry to high-growth sectors, if they are provided with adequate training and facilitation [11, 21].

Entrepreneurship is another field where Omani women are making significant contributions, with more than 14,000 female entrepreneurs working in wholesale, retail, and manufacturing sectors. This pattern indicates the entrepreneurial drive of Omani women as well as the facilitative environment established by policy reforms and initiatives spearheaded by associations [12, 22].

Forward-looking, literature indicates that continued investment in training in soft skills, mentorship, and career guidance will be essential to unlocking the optimum potential in women's workforce contribution in Oman. The inclusion of digital skills in training curricula, combined with actions to increase professional networks and eliminate structural obstacles, will further improve women's employability and leadership opportunities [11, 23, 24].

Overall, existing research underlines the importance of soft skills in enhancing women's employability and career development in Oman and the wider Gulf region. As much as tremendous progress has been registered in enhancing the participation of women in the labor force as well as leadership, there continue

to be existing barriers tied to culture, access, as well as skill disparities. Women's associations are key to overcoming these challenges, extending focused training and support that equips women with the abilities needed to thrive within an increasingly dynamic labor market. Ongoing policy creativity and investment in soft skill training will be paramount to the realization of Oman Vision 2040's ambitious objectives and realizing the full inclusion of women into the country's economic and social mainstream.

### 3. Methodology

#### 3.1 Study Design and Rationale

To guarantee the robustness and reliability of the findings, this study carried out an initial pilot study and then a main study. Sequential steps are widely advised in social science research because they help perfect the process and tools used, meaning the results can be applied to larger numbers and can be trusted. The point of the design is to assess the quality and practicality of the data collection measures, to correct any issues early, and to create a good base for the main research phase [25, 26].

##### 3.1.1 Pilot Study

Thirty-one female job seekers were included in the pilot study if they either attended or were interested in programs run by Omani women's associations. To get relevant information from the right people, purposive sampling was used so that participants could introduce the researchers to what the target population goes through [27]. Questions and instructions were checked for accuracy and relevance thanks to the pilot phase, as well as how well data could be collected.

Participants completed the questionnaire using Google Forms, a tool that gives them privacy and gathers results effectively and efficiently [28, 29]. The researchers designed the survey to discuss three primary themes: soft skills problems, what benefits people see from training, and ways to improve the programs. Open-ended questions, as well as Likert scales, were used for participant data, so quantitative and qualitative details could be collected. The mix of numbers and written accounts matches the standards in mixed-methods research, which is best used to look at social phenomena that are not simple [30, 31].

SPSS (v.25) was utilized in analyzing the pilot data. Descriptive statistics (the means and standard deviations) were calculated, and Cronbach's alpha was determined to evaluate the internal consistency of Likert-scale questions. The value of 0.842 alpha as the result of the 28 items is very strong for internal reliability [32]. These findings tested the consistency of the instrument and suggested slight changes before the prospect of a larger study.

#### 3.2 Data Analysis

Internal consistency was also recalculated on the main study data with the 28 Likert-scale items, resulting in Cronbach's alpha of 0.770, which indicates that the results may be acceptable in terms of reliability to allow further analysis, as shown in **Table 1**.

**Table 1. Internal Consistency of the 28-Item Survey Instrument**

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
0.770	28

Analysis of data for the study covered all aspects and mirrors the study's large population and main research purposes. Key statistics were used to describe the sample and its main variables. Independent

samples t-tests and ANOVA were applied to look at group means for age, education level, and work experience. The relationship between perceived training benefits and self-reported job readiness was studied with Pearson's correlation. In evaluating the effect of the training programs on the soft skills of the participants, a retrospective pre- and post-comparison study was done through paired sample analysis. All respondents were asked to answer the same questions two times: once pointing out their perceived competencies before the training, and once afterward, when they had also received it. The nature of the design was such that the experiment permitted within-subject comparisons, since the researchers could demarcate the response of the training intervention on individual development in the major domains of soft skills. The approach for regression varied, being linear or logistic based on the outcome variable, to determine how demographics and program characteristics influence key factors.

The open-ended parts of the data were analyzed thematically by applying Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase process [33]. Manual coding by two researchers, independent of each other, helped make the findings more reliable and unrestricted by bias. Themes that come up naturally were identified to give further context to the participants' experiences and ideas for bettering the program. The system used Microsoft Excel to help organize and record coded data.

This scientific method is commended for its ability to give a complete picture of difficult research and for pulling together research results from various data types. Surveys online are accessible and allow us to keep a safe distance, yet the results may be impacted by people who choose to participate and by data that is based on what subjects say.

### 3.3 Ethical Considerations

The institutional review board (Omani Women Association – Rustaq Branch, Oman) approved this study on 12 March 2025. All the participants got detailed information about the study goals, what was expected from them, and that they could take part or leave at any time. Before taking part in the survey, each person provided informed consent online. Both anonymity and confidentiality were faithfully applied to the collection, processing, and reporting of data.

### 3.4 Methodological Justification

The described approach uses established methods that fit the objectives for this research. The purpose of the two-phase design is to verify that research tools and processes are correct and can be depended on before using them widely. Using online surveys through Google Forms means surveys are efficient, can be accessed easily, and protect the privacy of participants. With quantitative data and qualitative data, the research problem is understood from all sides, and the research can be analyzed more deeply. The approach being used aims to make sure the study generates dependable, locally meaningful, and applicable results about women's empowerment and opportunities for work in Oman.

## 4. Results

### 4.1 Sample Characteristics

One hundred and one females seeking employment in different governorates in Oman took part in the research. Most of them were in Muscat (28.7%), South Al Batinah (25.7%), and North Al Batinah (19.8%). The largest group of participants belonged to the 25-34 age index (54.5%), higher education diploma (50.5%), and below two years of experience in the workplace (42.6%), as shown in **Table 2**. This demographic profile is a youthful, educated, entry-level populace actively in need of employment assistance.

**Table 2. Demographic Profile of Study Participants (N = 101)**

Variable	Categories	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
<b>Governorate</b>	Muscat	29	28.7
	North Al Batinah	20	19.8
	South Al Batinah	26	25.7
	Al Dakhiliyah	12	11.9
	Adh Dhahirah	4	4.0
	South Ash Sharqiyah	4	4.0
	North Ash Sharqiyah	3	3.0
	Dhofar	3	3.0
<b>Wilayah</b>	Rustaq	13	12.9
	Bahla	3	3.0
	Al Hamra	6	5.9
	Seeb	10	9.9
	Muscat	12	11.9
	Al Amerat	6	5.9
	Al Khaboura	4	4.0
	Salalah	3	3.0
	Ibri	4	4.0
	Barka	6	5.9
	Shinas	6	5.9
	Al Awabi	2	2.0
	Al Musannah	2	2.0
	Al Qabil	2	2.0
	Sohar	2	2.0
	Al Kamil Wal Wafi	1	1.0
	Ayni	3	3.0
	Jalan Bani Bu Hassan	2	2.0
	Izki	1	1.0
	Nizwa	1	1.0
	Manah	1	1.0
	Nakhal	1	1.0
	Wadi Al Maawil	1	1.0
	Saham	1	1.0
	Qurayyat	1	1.0
	Al Mudhaibi	1	1.0
	Al Hazm	1	1.0
	Sur	1	1.0
	Liwa	4	4.0
<b>Age</b>	Under 25 years	11	10.9
	25–34 years	55	54.5
	35–44 years	24	23.8

	45 years and above	11	10.9
<b>Qualification</b>	Secondary	12	11.9
	Diploma	51	50.5
	Bachelor	28	27.7
	Master	8	7.9
	Doctorate	2	2.0
<b>Experience</b>	No experience	21	20.8
	Less than 2 years	43	42.6
	2–5 years	11	10.9
	More than 5 years	26	25.7

## 4.2 Descriptive Analysis of Soft Skills Challenges

According to the participants, the soft skills faced moderate challenges before the trainees attended the training programs. The greatest problems were also experienced in terms of expression in interview ( $M = 2.33$ ,  $SD = 1.07$ ), shyness at formal meetings ( $M = 2.41$ ,  $SD = 1.27$ ), problem solving skills ( $M = 2.46$ ,  $SD = 1.28$ ) and time management ( $M = 2.46$ ,  $SD = 1.29$ ). It is also important to point out that the lowest mean score ( $M = 2.12$ ,  $SD = 1.06$ ) was on negotiation skills, and that area is a matter of concern, as shown in **Table 3**. These findings indicate that the study respondents did not have confidence and competence initially in some of the major interpersonal and cognitive areas that are critical in a competitive labor market.

**Table 3. Descriptive Statistics for Key Variables Related to Soft Skills and Training Outcomes (N = 101)**

Variable	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD
<b>Soft Skills Challenges</b>	1.00	5.00	2.73	0.63
<b>Interview Expression</b>	1.00	5.00	2.33	1.07
<b>Shyness in Formal Situations</b>	1.00	5.00	2.41	1.27
<b>Problem-Solving Skills</b>	1.00	5.00	2.46	1.28
<b>Negotiation Skills</b>	1.00	5.00	2.12	1.06
<b>Time Management</b>	1.00	5.00	2.46	1.29
<b>Teamwork in Diverse Settings</b>	1.00	5.00	3.38	1.38
<b>Adaptability to Digital Work</b>	1.00	5.00	3.46	1.24
<b>Social and Family Barriers</b>	1.00	5.00	3.59	1.29
<b>Digital Skills</b>	1.00	5.00	3.51	1.19
<b>Professional Networking</b>	1.00	5.00	3.65	1.15
<b>Perceived Training Benefit</b>	1.00	5.00	3.18	1.05
<b>Confidence Before Training</b>	1.00	5.00	2.06	1.08
<b>Confidence After Training</b>	1.00	5.00	3.94	1.08
<b>Critical Thinking Development</b>	1.00	5.00	3.86	1.02
<b>Leadership and Teamwork Skills</b>	1.00	5.00	4.05	1.02
<b>Practical Confidence Post-Training</b>	1.00	5.00	3.89	1.05
<b>Job Market Awareness</b>	1.00	5.00	3.82	1.05

<b>Expression Confidence Post-Training</b>	1.00	5.00	3.82	1.04
<b>Entrepreneurial Vision</b>	1.00	5.00	3.71	1.08
<b>Innovative Problem-Solving</b>	2.00	5.00	3.84	0.91
<b>Self-Development Initiative</b>	1.00	5.00	3.90	0.95
<b>Sustainability Proposals</b>	1.00	5.00	3.12	1.19
<b>Follow-Up After Training</b>	1.00	5.00	4.18	1.08
<b>Employment Partnerships</b>	1.00	5.00	4.28	1.11
<b>Customized Training Programs</b>	1.00	5.00	4.35	1.00
<b>Practical Field Training</b>	1.00	5.00	4.33	1.05
<b>Career Guidance Sessions</b>	1.00	5.00	4.41	0.94

**Note.** SD = Standard Deviation. Variables are based on participant self-reports using 5-point Likert scales (5 = Strongly Disagree to 1 = Strongly Agree).

### 4.3 Perceived Benefits of Training Programs

Post-training results have shown significant changes in a variety of areas. The participants also experienced an increase in expression confidence ( $M = 3.82$ ,  $SD = 1.04$ ), innovative problem-solving ( $M = 3.84$ ,  $SD = 0.91$ ), a leadership and teamwork ability ( $M = 4.05$ ,  $SD = 1.02$ ), job market awareness ( $M = 3.82$ ,  $SD = 1.05$ ), entrepreneurial vision ( $M = 3.71$ ,  $SD = 1.08$ ), and self-development initiative ( $M = 3.90$ ,  $SD = 0.95$ ) (Table 3). The training programs would be effective (based on the evaluated results) in meeting the current gaps that had been identified.

Regarding the program components, career guidance sessions ( $M = 4.41$ ), individualized training ( $M = 4.35$ ), hands-on-field training ( $M = 4.33$ ), employment partnerships ( $M = 4.28$ ), and follow-up during training ( $M = 4.18$ ) were evaluated as the most helpful ones. Such high scores reveal that the participants have high levels of satisfaction and the perceived relevance and applicability of training information to the employment situations in real life.

### 4.4 Paired Sample Comparisons

It was found out that there was substantial learning growth of critical soft skills after the training. **Table 4** shows that the participants reported an increased interview expression (Mean Difference = -1.50,  $p < 0.001$ ), problem-solving (Mean Difference = -1.39,  $p < 0.001$ ), and time management confidence (Mean Difference = +0.40,  $p = 0.005$ ). There was also increased teamwork and leader skills (Mean Difference = -0.67,  $p < 0.001$ ), awareness of the job market (Mean Difference = -0.32,  $p = 0.033$ ), and the perceived value of training due to professional networking (Mean Difference = +0.48,  $p < 0.001$ ). By far, the greatest improvement was in general self-confidence (Mean Difference = -1.88,  $p < 0.001$ ), which shows that the programs influenced the employment preparedness of the participants highly.

**Table 4. Paired Sample Comparisons of Pre- and Post-Training Soft Skills Indicators**

Comparison Pair	Mean Difference	p-value	Interpretation
<b>Interview Expression – Expression Confidence Post-Training</b>	-1.50	0.000	Significant improvement in communication confidence
<b>Problem Solving – Innovative Problem Solving</b>	-1.39	0.000	Enhanced problem-solving ability

<b>Time Management – Training Impact Confidence</b>	+0.40	0.005	Increased confidence in managing time
<b>Teamwork Diversity – Leadership &amp; Teamwork Skills</b>	-0.67	0.000	Improved collaboration and leadership
<b>Digital Skills – Job Market Awareness</b>	-0.32	0.033	Better understanding of labor market dynamics
<b>Professional Networking – Training Benefit Extent</b>	+0.48	0.000	High perceived training value
<b>Training Impact Confidence – Confidence Post-Training</b>	-1.88	0.000	Strong boost in self-confidence

**Note.** A negative mean difference means that there is improvement in post-training scores over the pre-training scores. The differences are all statistically significant ( $p < 0.05$ ), indicating objective improvement in such areas as communication, problem solving, confidence, and improvement in job readiness because of having attended the training programs.

## 4.5 Correlation Analysis

The relations between the major outcomes after training, the findings of the study also indicated positive significant relationships among several variables. Entrepreneurial vision had a strong correlation with expression confidence ( $r = 0.78$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), leadership and teamwork skills ( $r=0.70$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), and self-development initiative ( $r=0.66$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). Similarly, the factor of job market awareness had a positive relationship concerning leadership and teamwork skills ( $r = 0.68$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) as well as self-development initiative ( $r = 0.64$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). The given findings imply that enrichment in one area, including communication confidence, is highly likely to promote enhancement of close spheres, including leadership ability and active career building.

**Table 5** shows these interrelationships, detecting the inherent nature of integrated development of soft skills, including the possibility of a training intervention to produce compound-type returns in a variety of employability domains.

**Table 5. Pearson Correlation Coefficients Among Key Post-Training Outcomes (N = 101)**

Variable	1	2	3	4	5
<b>1. Job Market Awareness</b>	—				
<b>2. Expression Confidence (Post)</b>	0.63**	—			
<b>3. Entrepreneurial Vision</b>	0.60**	0.78**	—		
<b>4. Leadership &amp; Teamwork Skills</b>	0.68**	0.70**	0.66**	—	
<b>5. Self-Development Initiative</b>	0.64**	0.66**	0.61**	0.70**	—

**Note.** All the correlations are significant at  $p < 0.01$ . Variables are measured by self-reports of post-training in terms of confidence, leadership, overall job awareness, and initiative.

## 4.6 ANOVA Results

To compare the education level on the various training outcomes, one-way ANOVAs were calculated in a series of each outcome. The education level showed a statistically significant effect on all five outcome

variables, and training impacted confidence and Leadership and Teamwork skills had medium effect sizes (0.188 and 0.187, respectively), as shown in **Table 6**.

The results obtained by post hoc analysis showed that the participants who hold the Diploma always reported their scores to be higher than their peers holding Secondary or Doctorate in various areas, such as confidence, leadership, and entrepreneurial vision. On the contrary, the least-scored groups were participants who had a Doctorate in terms of Expression Confidence and Entrepreneurial Vision, which may indicate that the training material did not match the previous experience or expectations held by the specialized personnel.

**Table 6. Summary of One-Way ANOVA Results by Education Level Across Key Training Outcomes**

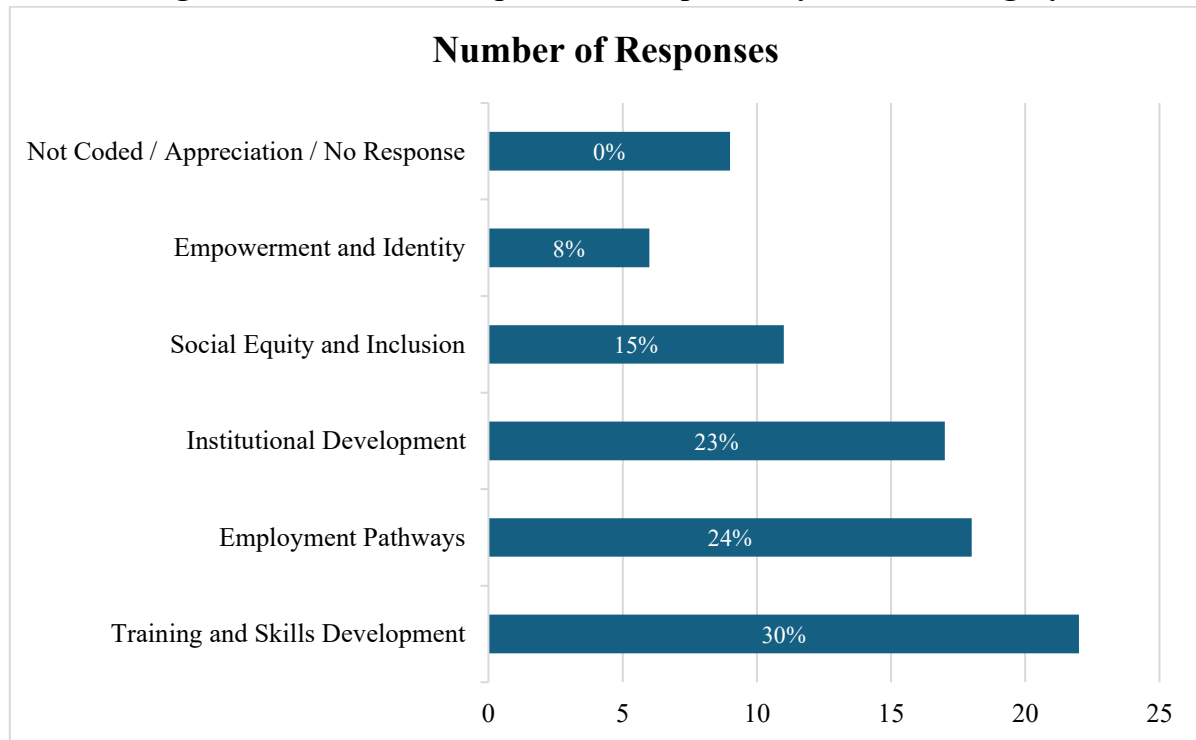
Outcome Variable	F (df = 4, 96)	p-value	$\eta^2$ (Effect Size)	Significant Post Hoc Differences (Tukey HSD, $p < .05$ )
Training Impact Confidence	5.55	0.000	0.188	Diploma > Secondary (0.016), Diploma > Master (0.036)
Job Market Awareness	3.18	0.017	0.117	None (marginal: Diploma > Secondary, $p = 0.075$ )
Leadership & Teamwork Skills	5.52	0.000	0.187	Diploma > Secondary (0.032), Diploma > Master (0.016), Diploma > Doctorate (0.049)
Expression Confidence	3.79	0.007	0.136	Diploma > Doctorate (0.006), Bachelor > Doctorate (0.011)
Entrepreneurial Vision	3.75	0.007	0.135	Diploma > Doctorate (0.013), Bachelor > Doctorate (0.021)

**Note.**  $\eta^2$  = Eta-squared. All ANOVAs used a fixed-effect model. Harmonic mean sample size = 6.547. Post hoc comparisons were conducted using Tukey's HSD.

## 5. Qualitative Analysis

As an additional measure to the quantitative analysis, a qualitative element was used to obtain a more in-depth understanding of the opinions of women of Oman in connection with the role and performance of associations of variant women in Oman. The participants were posed an open-ended question: *What is your advice to Omani women's associations?* Thematic analysis was performed on the data points that were collected. The answers were in Arabic, whereas in this case they needed to be translated into English and then coded inductively to see the common patterns and themes. There were five themes of analysis, which covered Training and Skills Development (30%), Employment Pathways (24%), Institutional Development (23%), Social Equity and Inclusion (15%), and Empowerment and Identity (8%). **Figure 1** shows the distribution of those themes.

**Figure 1. Distribution of qualitative responses by thematic category**



The most protruding theme was **Training and Skills Development**, which constituted 30% of the responses. Most of the women urged the importance of practical, specialized, and continuous training. Among the recommendations were vocational courses to include sewing, English, and management, and even training institutes should be set up to adequately equip women in the labor market. The other theme (24%) was the **Employment Pathways**. There was a desire among respondents to have job placement support, employer partnerships, and follow-up on job seekers. Several participants encouraged the association of women to be more active in facilitating job opportunities and income-generating activities, such as getting into partnership with institutions like the government and privately owned institutions. Twenty-three percent of the responses fell under **Institutional Development**. Those who participated in the research advised on the better infrastructure, the quality of the programs, and the rewards for those being trained. Some others requested more freedom for associations, more matching with the national development plans, like Oman Vision 2040. The recommendations were to offer to build facilities for associations, improve the management of programs, and ensure greater visibility by creating events and outlets. **Social Equity and Inclusion** constituted 15% of the responses. Referring to the vulnerable groups, such participants emphasized the necessity of assisting unmarried women and people with no stable income. The respondents insisted on knowledge source overall programming activities, in all age groups, as well as the elimination of costs that could hinder the attendance of training workshops and events. Others also demanded emotional resources and more resources. Lastly, there were **Empowerment and Identity** that came through 8% of responses. The characteristics of these participants were that they emphasized internal empowerment of women, where associations were encouraged to empower women to develop self-confidence, emotional intelligence, and leadership tenets. Instead of being taught just the techniques of traditional roles or being trained in merely technical skills, respondents recommend programs that help the person develop a feeling of self-worth and be self-reliant. A participant wrote, in a

powerful line that, “*Omani women today not only need someone to train them in a skill or craft, but also to create in them a feeling of 'I can and deserve' and create an environment in which to bear fruit*”.

Overall, the qualitative data show that the women of Oman consider associations of women not only as service providers but also as empowering, inclusive, and transformative agents. The feedback provides a guide as to how such associations can transform to adapt to the changing and various demands of the communities being served.

## **6. Discussion**

### **6.1 Empowerment through Soft Skills: A Measurable Transformation**

This research confirms the transformative nature of soft skills training sessions that can be provided by the Omani female associations. Participants have given great improvement in major aspects of communication, leadership, problem-solving, and self-confidence, among others- aspects that have become important in the dynamically competitive labor market. Self-confidence had the biggest improvement, mean difference: -1.88 ( $p < 0.001$ ), which implies that the training provided not only technical expertise but also a sense of personal control and readiness in people who participated in it. Such results are in line with the findings of international studies proving that soft skills education increases female labour marketability, especially in situations when structural and cultural constraints still exist [34]. Islam and Mostafiz (2023) concluded in rural Bangladesh that the soft skills training provided a great contribution to the communication, decision-making, and business performance of the women, which helped in both personal development as well as economic prosperity for the women [35]. Equally, Ubfal et al. (2022) in Jamaica, a randomized controlled trial, revealed that intensive soft-skills training boosted entrepreneurial performance along with adoption of superior business practices; however, the long-term effects were longer among men [36]. The applicability of ICT-based soft skills education, demonstrated to be beneficial in Pakistan, was proven by Hassan et al. (2020) since they revealed that it directly and positively impacted women's employability and entrepreneurial ability [37]. Taken together, these results help to emphasize the importance of systematic soft skills training in enhancing job readiness and supportive economic engagement of women, especially in developing and transitional economies.

### **6.2 Interconnected Growth: The Ripple Effect of Empowerment**

Correlation results indicated that there were strong relationships among the post-training outcomes that were statistically significant. Examples include that the expression confidence was highly related to entrepreneurial vision ( $r = 0.78$ ) and leadership capacity ( $r = 0.70$ ), which implies that an increase in one aspect can be the driver of growth in the other. Such interdependence implies that the process of individual skills training via soft skills class can be seen as a compound effect one as it not only shapes the professional skills of the learner but also enhances the future career perspectives and personal developmental paths. The roles of integrated training models based on communication, leadership, and critical thinking appear to be strengthened by the findings. This is repeated in industry-specific scenarios, e.g., Kramarenko (2024) shows that soft skills in agricultural business need to be put into practice, which is critical in helping one go through complicated employment situations: leadership, communication, teamwork, and so on [38]. On the same note, a recent study notes that professional growth in the technologically changing environment mainly involves emotional intelligence, adjustment skills, and interpersonal communication [39]. Lastly, educational research studies on a global scale emphasize the importance of soft skills training being integrated into the curriculum, especially during times after the

pandemic that has seen empathy, cooperation, and cultural adaptability as equally important towards personal and group success [40].

Moreover, many studies always affirm the suggestion that soft skills are not only dependent, but they are synergistic. An example of this is that self-efficacy and the confidence of expression are intimately connected with the vision in entrepreneurship and leadership growth [41, 42]. As argued by Cherniss et al. (1998), effective leadership is dependent upon emotional intelligence, i.e., the ability to be self-aware and able to express oneself [43].

### **6.2 Education Matters: Tailoring Programs for Diverse Learners**

The findings indicate that there is a need to focus on the training content according to the level of education of the trainees. There was also a greater gain reported in several outcome variables, such as confidence and leadership among diploma holders. Conversely, doctoral holders were not in good positions to make major improvements following considerable similarity between training content and their previous expertise or expectations. These results imply that a common-sense solution, akin to one-fits-all-solutions may not be ideal. Rather, training programs must be diverse and versatile, with various patterns of training provided to those candidates who are at the start of their careers, who have most of the work experience, and who are highly educated individuals aspiring to the top leadership positions. These conclusions are consistent with the larger body of evidence that training interventions should be tailored to the limitations and interests of women on various levels of education and career [44]. The latter produces more effective results regarding relevance, engagement, and long-term impact as a modular, learner-centered one.

### **6.3 Voices from the Field: What Women Want**

The statistical results were supplemented by qualitative data, bringing an added dimension to the study. The subjects underlined the importance of work-related, lifelong education and more positive employment connections. Others demanded job placements, collaboration with employers, and follow-ups so that training would lead to a practical opportunity. Others talked about the role of institutional development, that is, urged women's associations to upgrade their infrastructure, align themselves with national development perspectives, and increase their presence. Particularly, many of the responses were devoted to the topics of emotional empowerment and identity development. Women wanted programs that produce something more than teaching the skills, including producing self-worth, resilience, and identity as a leader. One participant explained eloquently that, today, Omani women not only require someone to train them in one skill or craft, but also to instill into them the sense of I can, and I deserve. These observations echo those in other women-in-technology programs in South Asia and Africa, in which women were not only eager recipients of technical training but also sought emotional, personal identity, and credence information about an institution and their perceptions of it as viable and worthwhile institutions that can receive them and turn them into technologists [35, 45].

### **6.4 Policy and Practice: Charting the Way Forward**

Such findings have significant implications for policymakers, practitioners, and women's associations. To start, training programs are to be made flexible and personal according to the variety of needs of the participants, having different levels of education and different stages of their careers. Second, collaboration with employers, government, and the private sector is an important factor in connecting training and employment. Third, the use of emotional intelligence, self-efficacy, and the concept of leadership identity in training curriculum must be incorporated to bring about holistic empowerment. Lastly, institutional aid can magnify the extension, authentic legitimacy, and the lasting effect of female non-government organizations (through support of funding, infrastructure, and alignment of policy).

Lastly, a combination of support by institutions, including funding, infrastructure, and alignment in policies, can extend the range, credibility, and sustainable effect of women's organizations. These guidelines are in line with the world system of gender-responsive training and Sustainable Development Goals [34, 44].

### **6.5 Limitations and Future Directions**

The study presents worthy information, but it does not come without limitations. The bias may be introduced by the reliance on self-reported data, and the online survey form might have left out women with poor access to the Internet. Also, there is no comparison group; therefore, the causal conclusions cannot be made. Future studies can resolve these limitations by conducting longitudinal studies, randomized control trials, and qualitative interviews to examine the effects of training programs in the long term and the experiences that participants of the programs endure more fully.

## **7. Conclusion**

This paper, therefore, sought to explore how associations of Omani women have contributed to helping women in their job-hunting activities by teaching them soft skills. These findings produce a strong argument that these programs can do much more than just help develop important skills like communication, leadership, and problem-solving skills; but also, in developing self-confidence and readiness for a career. The increased results that are statistically significant in various areas confirm that soft skills are not marginal but are part of the core in the empowerment of women in the workforce. In addition to the figures, testimonies by participants disclosed an underlying desire to be empowered as a whole person: to get the kind of training that not only involves learning technical skills, but the development of a sense of identity, strength, and desire. According to the qualitative results, women's associations are regarded as service providers, but also as institutions that can transform and create the future, as well as break norms. This study is consistent with the Oman Vision 2040 in that it identifies the strategic focus that should be placed on soft skills development as the route towards gender equity, economic diversification, and social inclusion. A series of future programs should become flexible to educational backgrounds; combined with job placement instruments and enhanced with emotional and leadership development parts to have the most significant influence. Finally, women's empowerment is not only about personal growth using soft skills; it is a national agenda. Omani women's associations empower women, provide them with the skills needed to survive in the competitive and dynamic economy, a field that has worked in shaping an inclusive, innovative, resilient society.

## **Statements and Declarations**

### **Funding**

This research did not benefit from any grant offered by public, commercial, or private organizations during this period.

### **Competing Interests**

The authors state that there are no financial conflicts of interest or personal connections that could have affected the work shown in this study.

### **Ethical Approval**

The research in this study was approved by the Omani Women Association – Rustaq Branch, Oman, on

12 March 2025. The research committee's ethical requirements and the Helsinki Declaration were followed in all actions taken in the study.

### Informed Consent

The participants in the study all provided their informed consent.

### Author Contributions

The author contributed to developing the study design, preparing the materials, collecting data, analyzing it, writing the first draft, and writing the final document. The author reviewed and approved the final manuscript.

### Data Availability

The data that was analyzed in this study is available from the corresponding author upon request.

### References

1. Nassriya Z.A., "Vision 2040 seeks to empower women economically, professionally", Oman Observer, 2022. <https://www.omanobserver.om/article/1126951/oman/community/vision-2040-seeks-to-empower-women-economically-professionally>
2. OV, "Oman Vision 2024", Oman2024.om, 2024. [https://www.oman2040.om/uploads/publication/20231105221146-2023-11-05publication221143\\_.pdf](https://www.oman2040.om/uploads/publication/20231105221146-2023-11-05publication221143_.pdf)
3. Admin, *Career Opportunities for Women in Oman*, in *InGulf*. 2025.
4. Adhrb, *Is the Oman Vision 2040 compatible with human rights?*, in *Americans for Democracy & Human Rights in Bahrain*. 2024.
5. Wasfi M., "Career Opportunities for Women in Oman (2025) - Career Guide", Qureos Career Guide, 2025. <https://www.qureos.com/career-guide/career-opportunities-for-women-in-oman>
6. Balushi A.A., "Career Opportunities for Women in Oman (2025) - Career Guide", Qureos Career Guide, 2025. <https://www.qureos.com/career-guide/career-opportunities-for-women-in-oman>
7. AS, *The Role of Women in Oman: Progress and Influence – Amazing Salalah*. 2025.
8. Balushi A.A., "Omani women are driving force behind entrepreneurship and economic growth", Oman Observer, 2024. <https://www.omanobserver.om/article/1160740/oman/omani-women-are-driving-force-behind-entrepreneurship-and-economic-growth>
9. TE, "Oman", World Bank Gender Data Portal, 2025. <https://genderdata.worldbank.org/en/economies/oman>
10. WB, "Oman", World Bank Gender Data Portal, 2024. <https://genderdata.worldbank.org/en/economies/oman>
11. Sehar S., *Best Careers for Women in Oman in 2025*. 2025.
12. Bitwize, "Omani women are a force for change in society", Times of Oman, 2024. <https://timesofoman.com/article/144576-omani-women-are-a-force-for-change-in-society>
13. Busadi R.A., "Women are integral to Oman vision: now to bring them in", AGBI, 2023. <https://www.agbi.com/opinion/employment/2023/12/rumaitha-al-busaidi-oman-women-workforce/>

14. UN, "Oman's CEDAW review: Committee members focus on women's participation and the situation of migrant domestic workers", ohchr.org, 2024. <https://www.ohchr.org/fr/news/2024/02/experts-committee-elimination-discrimination-against-women-commend-oman-promoting?sub-site=HRC>
15. Khalifa O., *Soft Skills for Today's Job Market and Employability*. 2024: Othman Khalifa.
16. Mohamed Elshaiekh N., Mohammed Alrashdi S., Maher Shehata A.Eid Bait bin Saleem N., "Enhancing Educational Systems on Creating Job Opportunities by Promoting Knowledge-Based Economy in the Sultanate of Oman", Qubahan Academic Journal, 2025. 4,(4): p. 456-476. <https://journal.qubahan.com/index.php/qaj/article/view/1228>
17. Ben Hassen T., "The GCC Economies in the Wake of COVID-19: Toward Post-Oil Sustainable Knowledge-Based Economies?", 2022. 14,(18): p. 11251. <https://www.mdpi.com/2071-1050/14/18/11251>
18. Ulfah M., "THE IMPACT OF LIFE SKILLS AND SELF-CONFIDENCE EDUCATION ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF INDEPENDENT AND WORK-READY HUMAN RESOURCES", Journal of Social Community, 2023. 8,(2): p. 270-278
19. Lam C.J., *Peer Mentoring Programs: Do the Mentors Benefit Too? An Exploration of Peer Mentoring and Future Job Search from the Peer Mentors Perspective*. 2021, Saint Peter's University.
20. Rajagopal N.K., Ba Zambour M.K.A.Al Kaaf N.M.A., "Exploring Work–Life Balance among Female Staff Members (Teaching and Non-Teaching) in Higher Educational Institutions of Oman: A Study", 2024. 12,(9): p. 230. <https://www.mdpi.com/2227-7099/12/9/230>
21. Mansour S., "Spatial Patterns of Female Labor Force Participation in Oman: A GIS-Based Modeling", The Professional Geographer, 2018. 70,(4): p. 593-608. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00330124.2018.1443480>
22. Hammami S.M., Alhousary T.M., Kahwaji A.T.Jamil S.A., "The status quo of omani female entrepreneurs: a story of multidimensional success factors", Quality & Quantity, 2022. 56,(4): p. 2063-2089. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11135-021-01208-5>
23. IIE, "Investing in Women Throughout the Years", IIE, 2024. <https://www.iie.org/blog/celebrating-womens-history-month-2024/>
24. Oqbah A.S.S.B.Goli B.R., "Empowering Careers through the Fusion of Vocational and Soft Skills",
25. Andersson M., Boateng K.Abos P., *Validity and Reliability: The extent to which your research findings are accurate and consistent*. 2024.
26. Soori H., *Study Guide: Pilot, Pre-test, Quality Assurance, Quality Control, and Protocol Modifications*, in *Errors in Medical Science Investigations*. 2024, Springer. p. 193-204.
27. Palinkas L.A., Horwitz S.M., Green C.A., Wisdom J.P., Duan N., Hoagwood K.J.A., health p.i.m.research m.h.s., "Purposeful sampling for qualitative data collection and analysis in mixed method implementation research", 2015. 42: p. 533-544
28. Wright K.B.J.J.o.c.-m.c., "Researching Internet-based populations: Advantages and disadvantages of online survey research, online questionnaire authoring software packages, and web survey services", 2005. 10,(3): p. JCMC1034
29. Evans J.R.Mathur A.J.I.r., "The value of online surveys", 2005. 15,(2): p. 195-219
30. Creswell J.W.Plano Clark V.J.H.o.m.m.r.d., "Revisiting mixed methods research designs twenty years later", 2023. 1,(1): p. 21-36
31. Braun V., Clarke V.J.Q.r.i.s., exercisehealth, "To saturate or not to saturate? Questioning data saturation as a useful concept for thematic analysis and sample-size rationales", 2021. 13,(2): p. 201-216

32. Tavakol M.Dennick R.J.I.j.o.m.e., "Making sense of Cronbach's alpha", 2011. 2: p. 53
33. Braun V.and Clarke V., "Using thematic analysis in psychology", *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 2006. 3,(2): p. 77-101.<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>
34. Martin S., Kapungu C., Goelz M.Fritz K., "Investigating Soft Skills Program Features with a Gender Lens", 2019,
35. Islam M.Mostafiz F., "Impact of Soft Skills Training on Rural Women's Development in Bangladesh: A Mixed Method Approach", 2024. 5: p. 1-21
36. Ubfal D., Arráiz I., Beuermann D.W., Frese M., Maffioli A.Verch D., "The impact of soft-skills training for entrepreneurs in Jamaica", *World Development*, 2022. 152: p. 105787.<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X21004022>
37. Hassan M.U., Iqbal Z., Shakir K.J.I.J.o.B.F.Intelligence M., "Impact of ICT training and education on women's employability and entrepreneurial skills: achieving the sustainable development goals", 2020. 6,(2): p. 157-166
38. Kramarenko T., *Mastering soft skills as the key to professional success for future specialists in agricultural business*. 2024, Дніпровський державний аграрно-економічний університет.
39. Tongia S., Jain D.C.J.E.A.T.Practice, "The relevance of soft skills in career success", 2024. 30,(1): p. 1809-1812
40. Sipii V., Deshchenko O., Honcharova N., Hrytsenko A., Hrytsiuk O.J.C.Diversidade, "Analysis of the prospects for the development of soft skills in future education: trends and risks", 2024. 16,(44): p. 107-128
41. Zhao H., Seibert S.E.Hills G.E.J.J.o.a.p., "The mediating role of self-efficacy in the development of entrepreneurial intentions", 2005. 90,(6): p. 1265
42. Bandura A.Wessels S., *Self-efficacy*. 1997: Cambridge University Press Cambridge.
43. Cherniss C., Goleman D., Emmerling R., Cowan K.Adler M.J.N.B., NJ: Consortium for Research on Emotional Intelligence in Organizations, Rutgers University, "Bringing emotional intelligence to the workplace", 1998: p. 1-34
44. Lata K.Dahiya S.J.I.J.I.S.R.T., "The role of education and skill building programs in empowering women: a comprehensive review", 2024. 9,(3): p. 895-903
45. Singh S., Prowse M., White H., Warsame A., Waddington H.S., Vijayamma R., Umezawa H., Tolin L., Reumann A.Puri J., "Effectiveness of life skills training interventions for the empowerment of women in developing countries: a systematic review", 2022,