

Examining the Readiness of Eswatini's Property Valuation Profession to open data access and sharing

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Abstract:

Purpose: this study investigates the readiness of property valuers in Eswatini to voluntarily share valuation field data for the potential development of a centralized database.

Design/Methodology/Approach: Guided by a pragmatist research philosophy, the study employed a mixed-method survey design. A census approach targeted all 28 practicing property valuers in Eswatini. Self-administered questionnaires included Likert-scale, open-ended, and dichotomous questions. Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics, while qualitative data were processed using framework analysis.

Findings: the results reveal that 91% of the respondents are willing to share field data voluntarily. Their participation is moderated by concerns about data confidentiality, absence of standardized data collection protocols, and lack of legal clarity. Valuers expressed a preference for regulated systems managed by a professional or government entity. Despite these concerns, majority of the valuers reported to adhere to international standards such as Royal Institutions Chartered Surveyors (RICS) and International Valuation Standards (IVS).

Originality: this study offers the first empirical insight into the willingness of Eswatini's valuation professionals to engage in collaborative data sharing. It provides a context specific foundation for shaping policy and improving transparency and consistency in the property valuation sector.

Keywords: Centralised database, Valuer's voluntary participatory, field data, legal framework, and data sharing barriers.

Introduction

"If data is truly "the new oil," it is nowhere more prevalent than in the built environment sector" (Hughes, 2020). Despite decades of data accumulation across institutions, Oladokun and Mooya (2024) pointed out that the property valuation profession still grapples with the

lack of accessibility to accurate and current data. Globally, the challenge of data gaps in valuation has been extensively documented (Ajibola and Oloyede, 2010). Similar concerns have been raised in Nigeria, Zambia, and even the United Kingdom (UK), where valuers faced difficulties in accessing structured, compatible transaction records (Mulenga, 2019; Chi et al., 2021; Hossain et al., 2023).

The development of transparent and efficient valuation systems has gained growing attention (Topraklı, 2025). Studies have demonstrated that the reliability of property valuation data is strongly linked to the existence of institutional mechanisms for data verification and sharing (Olapade & Olaleye, 2017; Baffour Awuah et al., 2017). According to Magagula (2025), the property valuation in Eswatini faces persistent challenges related to data inconsistency, limited market transparency, and restricted access to verified transaction records. As such, some valuers rely on individually maintained data sets and informal professional networks to obtain comparable sales evidence, as no standardized or centralized property information system currently exists. Government agencies and local authorities maintain fragmented valuation records, often in paper format, which further complicates data verification and sharing across institutions.

Whilst the idea of a centralised property valuation database has been widely proposed as a solution (Olapade & Olaleye, 2019; RICS, 2022), its success hinges on the willingness of practitioners to share their field data, which they routinely collect during valuation inspections. However, professional conservatism, confidentiality concerns, and a lack of legal frameworks often deter such collaborations (Chan & Abidoye, 2019). In Eswatini, this gap remains largely unexplored. This study aims to investigate common field data collection practices and the specific property factors considered by valuers during valuation in Eswatini, with a particular focus on assessing the willingness of valuers to share such data within a potential centralized valuation database.

Literature Review

Open data access has increasingly been recognized as fundamental to transparency, accountability, and reliability in property valuation. Ajibola and Ogungbemi (2011) argue that unrestricted access to valuation data fosters market efficiency and sound investment decisions by reducing informational asymmetries. Similarly, Davis et al. (2012) link open data systems to evidence-based policymaking and improved regulatory oversight. While these studies affirm the economic and governance benefits of data openness, they tend to assume that data quality and institutional integrity are already in place: an assumption that may not hold in emerging property markets where data ecosystems remain fragmented.

At the global level, frameworks such as the International Valuation Standards (IVS) and the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) Red Book have set out robust principles for consistency, transparency, and ethical conduct in valuation (RICS, 2022). These instruments stress standardization of documentation, digital traceability, and methodological comparability. Ajibola and Oloyede (2010) found that adherence to such standards enhances stakeholder confidence and improves the credibility of valuation outputs. Nonetheless, critics point out that these frameworks often reflect Eurocentric institutional realities and may be

less adaptable to markets with weak data governance and low digitization levels (Veuger, 2020; Konashevych, 2020). Thus, while international standards provide a normative benchmark, their practical translation into developing-country contexts remains uneven. Technological innovations (especially GIS, blockchain, big data analytics, and automated valuation models (AVMs)) have been widely promoted as enablers of transparency and precision in valuation practice (Grybauskas et al., 2021; Cheruiyot and Gamede, 2024; Seketeme & Munshifwa, 2025). Empirical evidence suggests that such tools can reduce valuation bias and improve market analytics. Yet, their deployment is frequently constrained by inadequate infrastructure, limited digital skills, and regulatory uncertainty. The technology–practice gap is particularly evident in Sub-Saharan Africa, where digitization efforts have not always been matched by institutional reform or professional capacity-building.

Persistent challenges around data fragmentation, ownership, and professional trust continue to hinder open data environments. Awuah et al. (2017) and Cheloti and Mooya (2022) associate valuation inaccuracies and market volatility with professionals' reluctance to share transaction data. These studies converge on the view that competition and mistrust discourage collaboration, but they differ on whether these are primarily structural (institutional weakness) or behavioural (professional culture) problems. Wang and Xiao (2024) further highlight the role of perceived data control and anonymity in shaping willingness to share, while Olapade and Olaleye (2019) observe that practitioners prefer controlled data assemblage: a semi-open model that balances transparency with competitive protection. This preference raises questions about whether "openness" should always be interpreted as full public accessibility or rather as structured sharing within trusted professional networks. In African contexts, barriers to open valuation data include confidentiality fears, high digital adoption costs, and weak enforcement of information governance laws (Olapade & Olaleye, 2019). Countries such as Eswatini and Botswana illustrate these systemic constraints: regulatory inconsistency, poor digital readiness, and lack of centralized property databases undermine compliance and the comparability of valuation outcomes (Fassnacht et al., 2024; Oladokun & Mooya, 2024). These conditions produce what Oladokun and Mooya (2024) term "data enclaves," where information remains siloed within institutions, limiting collective learning and transparency.

Recent African scholarship calls for harmonized data governance frameworks, targeted investment in digital infrastructure, and professional upskilling to support collaborative data environments (Oladokun & Mooya, 2024; Seketeme & Munshifwa, 2025). However, the discourse remains largely prescriptive; empirical studies quantifying the outcomes of data-sharing initiatives in African property markets are still scarce. Awuah et al. (2017) and Ackermann et al. (2021) caution that while incentives and policy reforms are essential, they are insufficient without cultural shifts that build trust, reciprocity, and ethical accountability among valuers. Busby et al. (2020) similarly argue that entrenched reliance on private data sources reflects not only market immaturity but also the absence of credible institutional custodianship.

Overall, the literature points to a consensus that open data is indispensable for valuation transparency, yet there is less agreement on the mechanisms for achieving it in developing

contexts. The critical challenge lies in aligning technological capability, institutional governance, and professional norms to create an enabling environment for reliable and transparent valuation data systems.

Methodology

To explore the willingness of Eswatini's property valuers toward centralised data sharing, a descriptive survey design was utilized. The survey method maximized coverage and convenience by reaching all eligible participants regardless of location. A self-administered semi-structured electronic questionnaire was used to collect data. A semi structured survey provided both measurable findings and professional insights (Khan et al., 2024).

It is acknowledged that, in very small populations, in-depth qualitative interviews can sometimes uncover a greater diversity of views and richer narrative detail. Although the study was based on a small population of just 28 valuers, which justifies the collection of data through interviews the choice of a semi-structured survey over interviews was deliberate and context driven. According to Evans and Mathur (2018), online surveys are flexible as such, it was adopted in this study since it allowed participants from diverse geographic locations to respond conveniently and candidly and minimizing logistical barriers. Furthermore, survey's anonymity and flexibility encouraged open participation, whereas structured interviews may have introduced bias or suppressed some perspectives (Bailer, 2014).

Future research can further deepen these findings through follow-up interviews or focus groups, but for this foundational investigation (where sector-wide buy-in, transparency, and logistical practicality were paramount) the survey approach was justified as the best-fit method for Eswatini's professional landscape.

The small population size presents clear statistical challenges. Even though census-style surveying allows for maximum inclusion, the confidence intervals around estimates remain relatively wide hence quantitative generalizability is limited. While this may affect the precision of proportions, surveying everyone offered the best achievable coverage for Eswatini's national context.

Qualitative responses were used mainly to illustrate and contextualize statistical findings, and were not subjected to a formal, systematic qualitative analysis (such as coding or theme development), nor was there an explicit process of methodological triangulation. As a result, the insights from these narrative responses enhanced interpretation of the quantitative data but were not analysed or reported as full qualitative results.

Ethical considerations were strictly adhered to. Ethical clearance was obtained from the University of Pretoria prior to data collection. Participants provided informed consent, and data protection, confidentiality, anonymity, and voluntary participation were maintained in line with European Commission (2021) guidelines.

Results and Discussion

Questionnaires were distributed to all 28 registered practicing valuers in Eswatini. A total of 25 completed questionnaires were returned, yielding an 89% response rate. Two questionnaires were excluded due to incompleteness, leaving 23 valid responses and a usable response rate of 82% (Table 1).

Table 1: Survey response rate

| Response type | Frequency | Percent % |
|---------------------|-----------|-----------|
| Response rate | 25 | 89 |
| Valid response rate | 23 | 82 |
| Target population | 28 | 100 |

Source: Research findings

This high response rate demonstrates strong engagement from the valuation community and suggests broad professional interest in standardized data sharing. The exclusion of two invalid responses ensured the integrity of the data, allowing for meaningful conclusions. This robust participation also highlights the profession's collective interest in addressing issues of standardization and information sharing.

Notably, more than one-third of respondents were candidate valuers, defined as professionals undertaking the structured pathway toward full registration as property valuers. This pathway typically involves 3-5 years of supervised practical experience, providing exposure to valuation procedures, data collection, and professional standards. While candidate valuers may have less practical experience than fully qualified valuers, they possess sufficient knowledge to provide relevant insights into willingness to share field data, adherence to standards, and perceptions of centralised database implementation. The inclusion of candidate valuers is acknowledged as a potential limitation, discussed further in the limitations section.

Willingness of Valuers to Voluntarily Share Field Data

To evaluate the feasibility of establishing a centralised valuation database in Eswatini, a total of 91% of respondents expressed willingness to contribute field data towards a centralised system. Non-firm owners demonstrated higher willingness to share data (100%) compared with private firm owners (75%), suggesting that autonomy and organizational control may influence professional openness to centralised data systems. This pattern aligns with prior research highlighting confidentiality concerns in privately owned firms. Table 2 presents a breakdown of the relevant findings in the survey responses.

Table 2: Willingness to Voluntarily Share Valuation Field Data

| Respondent Category | Yes | No | Total | % Willing |
|-------------------------------|-----|----|-------|-----------|
| Private Firm Owners | 6 | 2 | 8 | 75% |
| Other Valuation Practitioners | 15 | 0 | 15 | 100% |
| Overall | 21 | 2 | 23 | 91% |

Source: Research findings

To examine whether willingness varied by professional characteristics, inferential tests were conducted. Chi-square tests of independence were applied to categorical variables (firm ownership and sector of employment), while Spearman's rank correlation was used to assess the relationship with professional experience, as normality assumptions for parametric tests were not met.

The results showed a significant association between firm ownership and willingness to share ($\chi^2 (1, N=23) = 4.50, p = 0.034$), indicating that non-firm owners are more willing to contribute to a centralized database than private firm owners. No significant association was observed between sector of employment and willingness to share ($\chi^2 (2, N=23) = 1.20, p = 0.548$), suggesting that professional affiliation does not influence willingness. A weak positive correlation was observed between professional experience and willingness to share ($\rho = 0.36, p = 0.089$), indicating that more experienced valuers may be slightly more supportive of structured collaboration, although this relationship was not statistically significant. Table 3 summarizes these inferential findings.

Table 3: Inferential Analysis of Willingness to Share Field Data

| Variable | Test | Statistic | df | p-value | Interpretation |
|--------------------|----------------|-----------|----|---------|---|
| Firm Ownership | Chi-square | 4.50 | 1 | 0.034 | Significant association; non-firm owners more willing |
| Sector | Chi-square | 1.20 | 2 | 0.548 | Not significant |
| Experience (Years) | Spearman's rho | 0.36 | - | 0.089 | Weak, non-significant positive correlation |

Source: Research findings

These results indicate that ownership status influences willingness, with non-firm owners more open to contributing data. The weak positive correlation with experience suggests that professional maturity may slightly influence readiness for structured collaboration, though not statistically significant.

The strong overall willingness (91%) among Eswatini's valuation practitioners aligns with Awuah et al. (2017), who emphasize valuers' recognition of field data's role in enhancing valuation accuracy and market transparency. However, the hesitance observed among some private firm owners reflects concerns documented by Olapade and Olaleye (2019), who note that valuers favour data-sharing arrangements where control and confidentiality are preserved. The weak positive correlation between experience and willingness also supports Ackermann et al. (2021), who argue that willingness to share data is context-dependent and influenced by professional maturity, trust, and institutional legitimacy.

Qualitative responses revealed that voluntary participation would be sustainable only under regulated frameworks with legal safeguards, institutional trust, and professional oversight, highlighting the importance of contextual factors beyond individual characteristics.

The integration of quantitative and qualitative findings revealed a high level of complementarity. While 91% of respondents expressed willingness to share field data, qualitative responses highlighted important conditions. These included legal safeguards, institutional trust, and professional oversight. Respondents emphasized that voluntary participation would be sustainable only under a regulated framework managed by a neutral authority. This convergence between statistical trends and narrative explanations reinforces

the robustness of the mixed-method design and illustrates how professional characteristics and contextual factors interact to shape Eswatini's readiness for data sharing.

Willingness to Abide to a Data Collection Standard

Respondents were asked if they are willing to abide by a commonly agreed data collection standard for the sake of conformity, consistency and data quality, and all 23 respondents (100%) expressed their willingness to conform to standardized procedures aimed at improving conformity, consistency, and the overall quality of valuation data. The unanimous willingness (100%) of valuers in Eswatini to adopt a standard field data collection approach reflects a highly supportive professional environment for improving valuation quality. Table 4 presents a breakdown of the relevant findings in the survey responses

Table 4: Willingness to abide to a data collection standard

| Response | Frequency | Percent (%) |
|----------|-----------|-------------|
| Yes | 23 | 100 |
| No | 0 | 0 |
| Total | 100 | 100 |

Source: Research findings

This finding aligns strongly with the literature by Ajibola and Ogungbemi (2021) and Mooya (2022), who advocate for unified standards as means to enhance consistency, transparency, and reliability in valuation practice. Unlike earlier concerns in Sub-Saharan Africa where standardisation was often met with resistance, the Eswatini context demonstrates a shift in professional mindset, valuers recognise that common standards are not restrictive, but rather enablers of accuracy and trust.

Preferred Entity to Manage the Centralized Database

Respondents were asked to indicate their preferred entity to manage a centralized valuation database. Most respondents (87%) preferred that the centralised valuation database be managed by a regulatory authority, while only two respondents (9%) favoured a private vendor, and one respondent (4%) suggested management by a fellow valuer. This distribution indicates a strong professional preference for institutional oversight, reflecting concerns about potential conflicts of interest, data manipulation, or lack of long-term sustainability under private or individual management. Table 5 presents a breakdown of the relevant findings in the survey responses.

Table 5: Preferred entity to manage the centralized database

| Entity | Frequency | Percent (%) |
|------------------------|-----------|-------------|
| A private vendor | 2 | 9 |
| A regulatory authority | 20 | 87 |
| One of the valuers | 1 | 4 |
| Total | 23 | 100 |

Source: Research findings

These preferences mirror Ackermann et al. (2021) and Williamson et al. (2020), who argue that institutional legitimacy is crucial for long term success of valuation reforms. In the Eswatini context where professional oversight remains underdeveloped, the establishment of a robust

regulatory framework could help consolidate efforts and minimise mistrust between stakeholders. In contrast, the minimal support for private or individual management implies concerns over potential conflicts of interest, data manipulation, or lack of long-term sustainability in a non-regulated environment. The findings reinforce the importance of placing such an initiative under an independent, authoritative institution preferably one with statutory or government backing if voluntary participation and trust among valuers is to be achieved.

Readiness of the Valuation Profession in Eswatini

To assess the readiness of the valuation profession in Eswatini for the creation of a centralized property data sharing platform, respondents were asked whether they are registered with the Eswatini Data Protection Authority (EDPA). Registration with the EDPA is a critical compliance step to ensure that any handling of personal or property related data aligns with national data protection laws. The findings reveal that only five respondents (22%) were registered with the Eswatini Data Protection Authority (EDPA), primarily due to a lack of awareness of its existence. This low registration rate indicates a critical gap in legal compliance within the valuation profession, which could hinder the lawful management of sensitive property and client data in a centralized database. It also suggests that professional readiness for data governance is uneven, highlighting the need for awareness campaigns, mandatory registration, and capacity-building initiatives to ensure that data-sharing practices align with national legal requirements. Table 6 presents a breakdown of the relevant findings in the survey responses.

Table 6: Readiness of the valuation profession in Eswatini

| Response | Frequency | Percent (%) |
|----------|-----------|-------------|
| Yes | 5 | 22 |
| No | 18 | 78 |
| Total | 23 | 100 |

Source: Research findings

A Spearman's rho correlation analysis was conducted to explore associations between selected variables. Results showed a weak positive correlation ($\rho = 0.36$) between professional experience and willingness to share data, suggesting that more experienced valuers tend to favour structured collaboration. No significant relationship was observed between organisational type and willingness to share, indicating broadly shared professional attitudes across sectors.

The findings revealed a critical gap in legal compliance within Eswatini's valuation profession, as many practitioners operate without registration or awareness of the data protection authority, risking confidentiality and professional standards (Data Protection Act, 2022). This supports Cheloti and Mooya (2022), who link sectoral unpreparedness to poor infrastructure, financial limitations, and weak regulation. As centralised data systems require handling sensitive information, compliance is essential. The study calls for mandatory registration, legal literacy and capacity building initiatives to ensure lawful and effective implementation of valuation data reforms.

Data Confidentiality for Clients

Respondents were asked on how they ensure confidentiality for their clients. The following graphs indicates the various ways in which confidentiality is ensured in the valuation industry. As shown in Figure 1, valuers predominantly ensured client confidentiality through legal clauses in service agreements (61%), while fewer relied on physical safeguards (26%) or digital encryption (9%). Only 17% reported conducting formal staff training. These findings suggest that while legal protections are well-recognized, there is limited adoption of practical and technical measures to safeguard data. The low use of encryption and minimal staff training indicate potential vulnerabilities in data security practices, highlighting the need for capacity building and the implementation of multi-layered confidentiality protocols in line with international standards such as GDPR and ISO 27001.

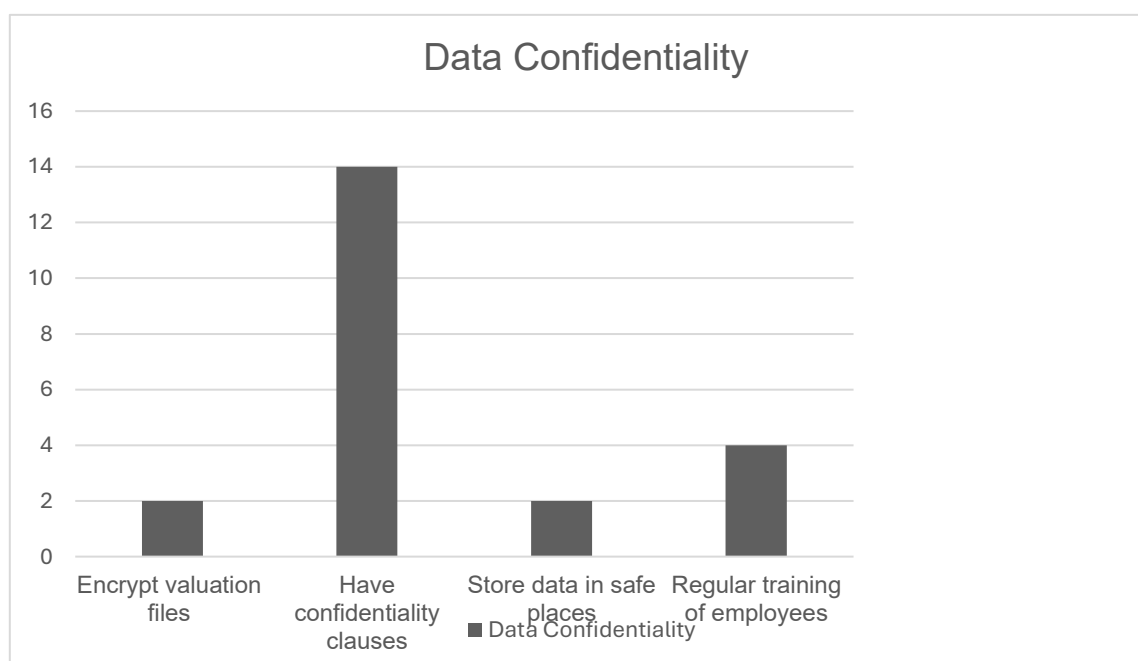


Figure 1: Data confidentiality of clients
Source: Research findings

The lack of encryption and minimal staff sensitization suggest that many valuers may not yet fully appreciate the complexity of secure data handling. As Cheloti and Mooya (2022) argue, building a culture of confidentiality requires more than legal clauses, it requires procedural enforcement and technical literacy

Restrictions to Govern Sharing of Field Data Within the Centralised Database

When respondents were asked what restrictions should govern the sharing of data within the centralized valuation database, majority of respondents (56.5%) supported restricting database access to registered or vetted valuers. A further 30.4% emphasized safeguarding client confidentiality. Others proposed additional mechanisms such as access by paid subscription or time limited data visibility. Table 7 presents a breakdown of the relevant findings in the survey responses.

Table 7: Restrictions to govern sharing of field data within the centralised database

| Restriction | Frequency | Percent |
|--|-----------|---------|
| Property owners' rights to data confidentiality must be protected | 7 | 30.4% |
| Data should be accessed by professional valuers and stakeholders in the same industry, who have been pre-vetted and occasionally re-vetted | 13 | 56.5% |
| Paid subscriptions | 1 | 4.3% |
| No response | 2 | 8.8% |

Source: Research findings

Ethical concerns about privacy and data confidentiality were also raised. These views align with Ackermann (2021) and Olapade and Olaleye (2019), who found valuers prefer controlled data sharing. A small group proposed paid access, raising equity concerns, while others showed uncertainty, echoing limited awareness about data governance. This supposed legal frameworks like Eswatini's Data Protection Act (2033) and the GDPR, which stresses confidentiality, limited access, and purpose specific use (Wiebe & Dietrich, 2017).

Valuer's Data Accessibility

When respondents were asked what restrictions should govern the sharing of data within the centralized valuation database, the majority (56.5%) favored restricting access to registered or pre-vetted valuers, while 30.4% emphasized the protection of client confidentiality. Smaller proportions suggested mechanisms such as paid subscriptions or time-limited access. These findings indicate that Eswatini valuers prioritize professional oversight and ethical control over data sharing, reflecting concerns about misuse, unauthorized access, and preservation of professional authority. Table 8 presents a breakdown of the relevant findings in the survey responses.

Table 8: Valuer's data accessibility

| Response | Frequency | Percent (%) |
|-----------------------------------|-----------|-------------|
| Yes (Valuers only) | 15 | 65 |
| No (Broader institutional access) | 8 | 35 |
| Total | 23 | 100 |

Source: Research findings

This division underscores a fundamental tension between protecting professional autonomy and enabling broader institutional collaboration. Ajibola and Oloyede (2010) highlight that without proper role delineation; data democratization may dilute valuation authority. In contrast, Ackermann et al. (2021) argue for multi stakeholder access models supported by encryption and audit trails. Eswatini's valuers appear cautiously progressive, acknowledging potential benefits of shared access while also protecting their domain expertise.

Data Shared to Third Parties

When asked whether data from the centralized valuation database should be shared with third parties, an overwhelming 78% of valuers supported sharing, provided that clear protocols and ethical safeguards are in place. Respondents emphasized anonymization, purpose-limited use, and institutional verification as prerequisites. This indicates that while

valuers are open to broader data use, they prioritize control, privacy, and professional accountability. Table 9 presents a breakdown of the relevant findings in the survey responses.

Table 9: Data shared to third parties

| Response | Frequency | Percent (%) |
|----------|-----------|-------------|
| Yes | 18 | 78 |
| No | 5 | 22 |
| Total | 23 | 100 |

Source: Research findings

These concerns align with global best practices in ethical data governance, as outlined in the RICS (2021) data ethics charter and the EU's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). The findings demonstrate that valuers in Eswatini are not averse to external engagement, but require assurance around data ownership, usage rights, and privacy to prevent misuse or commodification. Those who opposed third-party sharing raised concerns about potential data misuse, commercialisation of professional work without consent, and weakening the valuers' role in interpreting data (Ajibola & Oloyede, 2010). These concerns underline the importance of a robust legal framework and a trusted data governance model before implementing third-party access.

Data Quality and Credibility

To assess how data quality and credibility could be improved, respondents suggested several measures. The most frequently cited strategies included validation mechanisms (22%), accreditation or licensing systems (13%), regulatory oversight (13%), and source referencing (13%). Others advocated for secure electronic portals and peer review systems. These findings suggest that valuers recognize the importance of formal checks, professional accountability, and technological safeguards in ensuring reliable data.

The findings emphasise the need for validation, regulation, and standardisation to ensure high quality shared valuation data, mirroring international best practices (IVSC, 2021; RICS, 2022). A subset of respondents favoured a secure, members only electronic system, underscoring controlled access and data confidentiality, concerns also noted by Ackermann et al. (2021) and Olapade and Olaleye (2019). Overall, the results advocate institutional reforms that strengthen standardized procedures, regulatory oversight, and technological infrastructure to enhance data quality in the valuation sector.

Measures to Ensure Reliable Field Data

Respondents were asked to suggest measures to ensure that field data remains current and reliable in a centralized database. Valuers recommended a combination of temporal and procedural interventions. Over half (56%) emphasized the importance of regular data updates, ideally on a quarterly or biannual basis, while others suggested automated validation tools, mandatory submission portals, and audit trails. These findings indicate a strong awareness among practitioners of the need for systematic data maintenance, accountability, and verification mechanisms. Others suggested the use of automated validation tools, mandatory submission portals, and audit trails. Table 10 presents a breakdown of the relevant findings in the survey responses.

Table 10: Measures to Reliable Field Data

| Measure | Description | Frequency | Percent (%) |
|---|---|-----------|-------------|
| Regular Updates | Database updates quarterly or bi-annually | 13 | 56% |
| Open Access portal for valuers | Allow qualified valuers to submit real time updates directly | 2 | 8.7% |
| Strict Vetting and Verification Process | Mandatory support documents; senior office review | 2 | 8.7% |
| Automated Validation Tools | Use of software to detect data inconsistencies and errors | 2 | 8.7% |
| Audit Trails | Track changes made in the database to promote transparency and accountability | 1 | 4.3% |

Source: Research findings

The findings reflect strong awareness of the need for current, reliable data, an approach supported by IVS (2021) and the RICS (2022). Additional suggestions like vetting, audit trails, and access controls align with Ackermann et al. (2021) and Wiesel and Dietrich (2017), who emphasize data integrity and accountability. While fewer respondents mentioned advanced digital tools, this may indicate limited digital capacity in Eswatini.

Key considerations for a successful centralized property valuation

Figure 2 illustrates respondents' future considerations for data sharing and centralization. The most frequently cited preconditions were workshops and professional training (31%), followed by stakeholder involvement (22%), subscriptions (17%), monitoring (17%), and online accessibility (13%). These findings suggest that valuers view capacity building and knowledge dissemination as critical to the successful adoption of a centralized database. The emphasis on stakeholder involvement highlights the importance of collaborative governance and broad professional engagement; while monitoring and subscription mechanisms reflect concerns for sustainability, accountability, and controlled access. Collectively, these considerations offer valuable insights into the functional, ethical, and logical aspects that should guide the development of a national data repository in Eswatini.

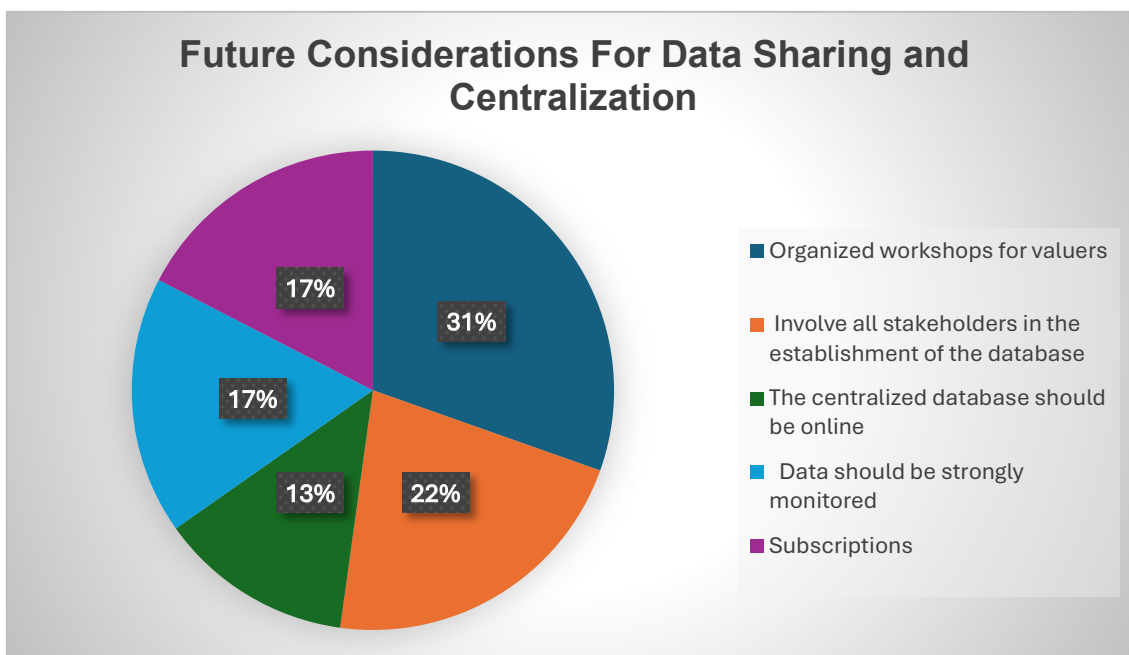


Figure 2: Future considerations for data sharing and centralization
Source: Research findings

The emphasis on workshops reflects awareness of capacity building, echoing Ackermann et al. (2021), who stress training and institutional alignment. Calls for stakeholder inclusion support Cheloti & Mooya (2022) on collaborative governance. Concerns about monitoring and subscriptions reflect global priorities on secure, sustainable access (Wiebe & Dietrich, 2017), while support for online systems aligns with Kolankov (2023) on digital valuation trends. Overall, Eswatini's approach appears contextually informed and open to ethical, modern, and participatory reform.

Furthermore, a centralised property database requires a robust legal and regulatory framework to ensure its effective establishment and operation. Key legal conditions include clear legislation mandating the collection, storage, and sharing of property data; defined ownership and access rights; privacy and data protection provisions; and mechanisms for dispute resolution. Additionally, the legal framework should specify the roles and responsibilities of government agencies, local authorities, and other stakeholders to promote accountability and compliance. Ensuring these legal conditions are in place helps to facilitate transparency, standardisation, and the long-term sustainability of a centralised property valuation system.

Security Measures to Safeguard Centralised Valuation Database

Respondents were asked to propose security measures to safeguard a centralized valuation database. As shown in Table 11, the most frequently recommended measure was restricted access to authorized users (43.6%), followed by pre-approvals for access (13%), subscription-based models (13%), encryption (8.7%), and staff training (8.7%). These findings indicate that valuers prioritize controlled and accountable access to ensure data integrity and confidentiality.

Table 11: The security measures to safeguard centralized valuation database

| Theme | Frequency | Percent (%) |
|---|-----------|-------------|
| No data shared without pre-approval | 5 | 21.7% |
| Subscription to database (citing author of information) | 3 | 13% |
| Controlled access through authorized and authentication | 10 | 43.6% |
| Encryption of the data | 2 | 8.7% |
| None | 3 | 13% |
| Total | 23 | 100% |

Source: Research findings

The findings reveal a strong preference for layered security protocols to safeguard valuation data, emphasizing the need for multi-tiered security framework with access controls, audit trails and subscription models to ensure transparency, accountability and ethical reuse. This aligns with Ackermann et al. (2021), who stress governance as key to professional support, and with Olapade & Olaleye (2019) on protecting data ownership. Cheloti and Mooya (2022) also advocate for audit trails and valuation reforms. The low mention of encryption suggests a gap in awareness of technical safeguards like those outlined in GDPR or ISO 27001.

Other Recommendations

To supplement structured responses, participants were asked an open-ended question: “What other matters would you like to contribute?” Thematic analysis revealed that 52% of respondents provided meaningful insights, highlighting a collective awareness of institutional and practical challenges in Eswatini’s valuation sector. Key themes included legal alignment, stakeholder collaboration, professional ethics, ongoing training, and controlled data access, each cited by 8.7% to 13% of respondents.

These findings suggest that valuers recognize the broader governance, ethical, and capacity-related factors that underpin the success of a centralized database. The emphasis on legal alignment and professional ethics reflects concern for compliance and integrity, while calls for training and controlled access indicate an understanding of practical implementation challenges. Overall, the open-ended responses provide a nuanced perspective that complements quantitative findings, reinforcing the importance of regulatory oversight, stakeholder engagement, and professional development in establishing a trusted and effective data-sharing system. Table 12 presents a breakdown of the relevant findings in the survey responses.

Table 12: Data shared to third parties

| Theme | Response(s) | Frequency | % of Respondents |
|--|---|-----------|------------------|
| Urgency and Importance Of the Database | - The database is very important and should be established as soon as possible. | 1 | 4.3% |
| Stakeholder Collaboration | - Collaborate with banks, municipalities, conveyancers to improve database | 2 | 8.7% |
| Legal and International Compliance | - The database should comply with local and international laws | 2 | 8.7% |

| | | | |
|------------------------------------|--|----|------|
| Capacity Building and Training | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Valuers need training to meet universal standards - Refresher courses and regular professional meetings | 2 | 8.7% |
| Controlled Access and Monetisation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - If shared with third parties, data should come at a cost - As some sort of restriction, data should be shared at a cost | 2 | 8.7% |
| Professional Collaboration | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Improve working relationships among valuers - Encourage information – sharing and openness about challenges - Standard pricing | 3 | 13% |
| No Response / Discard | - | 11 | 47% |
| Total | - | 23 | 100% |

Source: Research findings

The findings reflect strong professional readiness for valuation reform in Eswatini. However, current regulatory bodies like CIC and AESAP lack the mandate to govern data, enforce standards, or support modern practices, highlighting the need for a dedicated regulatory framework. These results align with Cheloti and Mooya (2022) and Ackermann et al. (2021), who stress interagency collaboration and institutional alignment. Respondents' support for training, international standards, controlled access and monetization aligns with Olapade & Olaleye (2019) on valuers' review of data as intellectual property. Emphasis on ethics and collaboration also reflect literature linking professional trust with reform success.

The combination of descriptive statistics, Chi-square tests, and Spearman's correlation strengthens the analytical rigor of the study. Quantitative and qualitative data converge to demonstrate that Eswatini's valuation profession is broadly willing to engage in data sharing and standardization, provided legal safeguards, institutional oversight, and procedural controls are in place. These findings confirm and extend insights from Awuah et al. (2017), Ackermann et al. (2021), Olapade & Olaleye (2019), and Mooya (2022).

Limitations

This study provides novel insights into Eswatini's property valuation profession, but several limitations should be noted. The small census population ($n = 28$) limits generalizability beyond the national context and reduces statistical power, potentially obscuring subtle effects. Non-response and self-report bias may also affect the findings, particularly regarding professional practices and willingness to share data.

The qualitative sample was small, limiting the diversity of perspectives and depth of emergent themes. Additionally, candidate valuers limited practical experience may have influenced some responses on field data collection and professional judgments.

Future research could use larger, more diverse samples, longitudinal designs, and include clients or third-party perspectives, enhancing the robustness and applicability of the findings. Despite these limitations, the study offers valuable insights for policy, professional practice, and the development of a centralized property data system in Eswatini. Future research could address these issues through larger samples, longitudinal designs, and inclusion of client or third-party perspectives.

Implications of the Study

The study highlights important implications for both theory and practice.

For policymakers, it underscores the need for clear legal frameworks supporting data sharing, privacy protection, and standardized property records to improve transparency and accuracy in valuation. For practitioners, it emphasizes coordinated processes, capacity building, and adoption of consistent valuation methodologies to enhance reliability and efficiency.

Theoretically, the findings bridge gaps in the literature by linking centralization principles, legal requirements, and practical measures, demonstrating how systematic property data management can strengthen both decision-making and market fairness.

Conclusion

This study examined the willingness of property valuers in Eswatini to engage in centralized field data sharing, their field data collection practices, the barriers limiting data sharing, and the legal framework governing data governance. Overall, the findings confirm that the profession is largely supportive of a centralised data repository. A total of 91% of valuers expressed a willingness to voluntarily share data, including 75% of company owners, who are key custodians of field data, highlighting strong foundational support. However, this willingness is conditional, with respondents emphasizing the need for legal safeguards to protect client confidentiality and the importance of participation incentives. Valuers overwhelmingly supported regulatory oversight of the database to ensure neutrality and accountability, and most preferred that access be limited to qualified valuers, although a significant minority supported broader access under strict regulatory conditions.

Despite this readiness, several barriers were identified. Institutional challenges included limited access to reliable property information, inconsistent third-party data, and client reluctance. Technical limitations were also evident, as only a minority of firms employed security measures such as encryption, secure storage, or staff training on data handling. Although some of the respondents supported third party access in principle, concerns over data misuse and the erosion of valuer interpretive authority highlight the need for a clear governance framework. The fragmented structure of the valuation industry dominated by small, independent firms, was seen to hinder standardization efforts, emphasizing the need for professional training, continuous dialogue, and digital capacity building.

This study makes several contributions to academic research, policy, and professional practise. It provides the first known empirical evidence on valuers' willingness to share data in Eswatini, identifies critical gaps in regulatory compliance and operational consistencies, and lays the foundation for involuntary, legal anchored, and professionally governed data

sharing framework. Although context specific, the findings offer comparative insight for other emerging markets facing similar data governance challenges. Given the strong professional support, it is recommended that the upcoming property valuation bill include a mandatory requirement for valuers to periodically submit standardised field data to a national repository. The platform should be developed by a technically qualified IT firm with experience in building secure and scalable systems, ensuring it addresses the legal, technical, and institutional barriers identified. Moreover, full enforcement of the Data Protection Act, registration with the EDPA, and practitioner training must be prioritized to ensure lawful and ethical data handling. Future research should exam incomparable models from other countries, explore the perspectives of clients and third-party users, assess digital readiness, and pilot a regional rollout to evaluate real word viability. By leveraging the willingness of valuers and addressing foundational barriers, opportunity to align this property sector with international best practise and unlock its potential as a driver for economic development.

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