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## Effect of Women Entrepreneurship on Poverty Reduction in Awka, Anambra State

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### Abstract

*In Nigeria, the incidence of poverty among Nigerian women has been progressively increasing. Despite efforts made at enhancing the potential contributions of women entrepreneur through entrepreneurial networking, entrepreneurial ventures, and women entrepreneurial skill towards poverty rates reduction, poverty rate among women is still on the rise especially in the south-east region of Nigeria. The research design adopted for this study is the descriptive research design; while structured questionnaire was administered to raise data meant for empirical analysis. Findings from the study showed that women entrepreneurial skill has a positive and significant effect on poverty reduction in Anambra state. In addition, women owned entrepreneurial ventures has a positive and significant effect on poverty reduction in Anambra state. However, women entrepreneurial networking was discovered to have an insignificant effect on poverty reduction in Anambra state. Based on these findings, the study recommends that women entrepreneurs should join women entrepreneurs' associations and cooperative societies that would enhance and expand their network links. Strong networking will grow women small and medium entrepreneurs socially mentally and economically hence success and sustainability. Anambra state government should further expand and sustain an enabling environment by providing infrastructures and adequate assistance that would make infant and extant women entrepreneurs access required inputs and other incentives to create new or more business ventures. This would enhance their business success and improve their standard of living.*

**Keywords:** Poverty reduction, Women entrepreneur, Networking, entrepreneurial skill and Entrepreneurial ventures

## INTRODUCTION

Over the years, women entrepreneurs have been seen to make substantial contribution to national economies through their participation in start-ups and their growth in small and medium businesses. Their interests and activities in the poverty reduction especially in the area of women entrepreneurship have received outstanding interest of researchers. Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) 2015 confirm that women participate in a wide range of entrepreneurial activities across the 37 GEM and their activities in different countries have paid off in form of many newly-established enterprises for job and wealth creation (Reynolds, 2012).

Women entrepreneurs are simply women that participate in total entrepreneurial activities, who take the risks involved in effective utilization of human and material resources in a unique way so as to take advantage of the opportunity identified in their immediate environment through production of goods and services.

Women's industrious undertakings empower them economically and enable them to contribute more to overall development. They venture either in small or medium scale production activities, or in the informal or formal sectors and their activities are not only a means of winning bread but more importantly a way creating sustainable development (United Nations Industrial Development

Organization, UNIDO, 2014). Moore (2010) defines a women entrepreneur as the female head of a business who takes the initiative of launching a new venture, using entrepreneurial skill to create new business opportunities, networks with other fellow business women, accepting the associated risks and the financial, administrative and social responsibilities and who is effectively in charge of its day-to-day activities.

However, in recent times, women are regarded as the world's poor because the majority of the 1.5 billion people living on 1dollar a day or less are women and earn an average slightly more than 50% of what men earn (UNDP, 2016). Women poverty is understood in different ways such as a situation of deprivation, inability to measure up to certain expectations related to basic needs and inability to create resources for recreation and holidays.

Nigeria is a country that is endowed with vast resources both human and material, represents one of the many paradoxes of development in which case the nation is rich but her people are poor and this has been described as 'poverty in the midst of plenty' by the World Bank (World Bank, 2016).

Also, Nigerian women are affected with poverty and have long duration in poverty because they often have too many children spaced too closed together to the detriment of their health and productivity (Ijaiya, 2015). The incidence of poverty among Nigerian women has been progressively increasing. It has increased from 29.8% in year 2000 to 51.9% in year 2016 and in the past two decades women have constantly been put under the pressure of retrenchment, belt tightening policies to boost the deteriorating economic activities more than men and has forced them to share the preserved role of the provider with men or in some cases assume the entire responsibility (Adejobi, 2016). The core source of the entire gender differential in poverty is that women relative to men are more vulnerable because of the socio-cultural framework of human society. The socio-cultural beliefs are the limiting factors, which limit the opportunities and capabilities of women, and make them resource less and powerless individuals (Ijaiya, 2015).

Nigeria women constitute more than 50% of the Nigerian population and out of this; only about 35% of them are involved in entrepreneurship which can be under the form of micro, small, medium and large enterprises (Odoemene, 2013).

Concerted efforts were made to enable women entrepreneurs make better economic choices and to transform their businesses into competitive enterprises, generating income and employment through improved production so as to reduce the poverty rates. However, despite efforts made at enhancing the potential contributions of women entrepreneur through entrepreneurial networking, entrepreneurial ventures, and women entrepreneurial skill towards poverty rates reduction, poverty rate among women is still on the rise especially in the south-east region of Nigeria. This is a problem the study seeks to investigate and to find out why.

The study thus provided answers to the following questions:

- i. What effect does women entrepreneurial skill has on poverty reduction in Awka, Anambra state
- ii. How has women owned entrepreneurial ventures affected poverty reduction in Awka, Anambra state
- iii. To what extent has women entrepreneurial (business) networking affected poverty reduction in Awka, Anambra state

In line with the questions raised, the following hypotheses were formulated and tested:

**H<sub>01</sub>:** Women entrepreneurial skill has no significant effect on poverty reduction in Anambra state

**H<sub>02</sub>:** Women owned entrepreneurial ventures has no significant effect on poverty reduction in Anambra state

**H<sub>03</sub>:** Women entrepreneurial (business) networking has no significant effect on poverty reduction in Anambra state

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Conceptual Framework

**Concept of Women Entrepreneurship:** By their nature, women entrepreneurship constitutes the most viable and veritable vehicle for self-sustaining industrial development. They possess common capability to grow an indigenous enterprise culture more than any other strategy. Women entrepreneurs often have a special personality. They value autonomy and independence. They possess energy and a high need for achievement. Women entrepreneurs often have a strong internal locus of control. They perceive change as opportunity and are willing to take careful risks (Udechukwu, 2014).

Women entrepreneur are seen as the female head of a business who takes the initiative of launching a new venture, using entrepreneurial skill to create new business opportunities, networks with other fellow business women, accepting the associated risks and the financial, administrative and social responsibilities and who is effectively in charge of its day-to-day activities.

Pareek (2012) define women entrepreneur as a female who plays a captivating part by repeatedly interacting and keenly adjusting herself with financial, socio-economic, and support spheres in society. Globally the impact of women entrepreneurs is gaining recognition intensely; worldwide, as the number of female business owners continues to increase steadily as women entrepreneurs and are making positive impact in the global economy. For instance, women produce over 80 percent of the food for sub Saharan Africa, 50-60 percent for Asia, 26 percent for the Caribbean, 34 percent for North Africa and the Middle East, and more than 30 percent for Latin America (Ali and Ali, 2013). Women entrepreneurs around the world are major contributors to the economy, as they are making a difference in the socio-economic arena. They contribute numerous ideas and a great deal of energy and capital resources to their communities and generate jobs as well as create additional work for suppliers and other spin-off business linkages.

Women entrepreneurs are simply women that participate in total entrepreneurial activities, who take the risks involved in effective utilization of human and material resources in a unique way so as to take advantage of the opportunity identified in their immediate environment through production of goods and services. A woman entrepreneur is the person who accepts challenging role to meet her personal needs and become economically independent. With the advent of media, women are aware of their own traits, rights and also the work situations. Presently, across the world women are found indulged in every line of business from provision of service to product. A strong desire to do something positive is an inbuilt quality of entrepreneurial women, which is capable of contributing values to both family and social life.

**Concept of Poverty:** Sumner (2013) defined poverty as the inability to fulfil the basic requirements to attain a decent life and therefore obtain adequate nutrition, housing and clothing. Salami, (2013) defined poverty as lack of access to resources, concern for human rights and environmental challenges; and exposure to violence, injustice, powerlessness and uncertainty in the face of unexpected situations like sicknesses, accidents and natural disasters. Asikhia (2010) defined poverty as the condition that limits individual's ability to provide for himself and his loved ones, noting that this condition manifests in the lack of food, clothing, shelter, etc. This implies that poverty is largely a state of deprivation, lacking and denial of basic necessities of life. Majority of people in Nigeria are poor and unable to satisfy these basic necessities of life. As opined by Sachs, (2015), it is useful to distinguish between three degrees of poverty: extreme (or absolute) poverty, moderate poverty, and relative poverty. Extreme poverty means that households cannot meet basic needs for survival. They are chronically hungry; unable to access healthcare, lack the amenities of safe drinking water and sanitation, cannot afford education for some or all of the children, and perhaps lacks rudimentary shelter and basic articles of clothing. He further expands that unlike moderate and relative poverty, extreme poverty occurs only in the developing world. Moderate poverty he defines as generally construed as a household income level below a given proportion of national income. The relatively poor, in high income countries, lack access to cultural goods, entertainment, and recreation and to quality healthcare, education and other prerequisites for upward social mobility. Thus, while an individual may have more than enough income to sustain life, if it is very low compared to the rest of the community, the individual may be viewed as being in poverty. As the society grows richer, so the income level defining poverty rises. One may see poverty from the angle of permanence and transience. In the opinion of Aliyu (2013), several types of poverty may be distinguished depending on such factors as time or duration. If the poverty is widespread, the occurrence itself is of limited duration and distribution. If it involves relatively permanent insufficiency of means to secure basic needs, the condition may be so general as to describe the average level of life in the society or it may be concentrated in relatively large groups in an otherwise prosperous society.

### **Theoretical Framework**

**Vroom theory of expectancy:** In his theory of expectancy, Vroom (1964) proposed that a person's behaviour is motivated by the expectation that her behaviour will lead to certain outcomes, together with the values she places on those outcomes. He situated his theory on the notion that behaviour is a function of interaction of personality and the environment. Vroom's theory built on the concepts of valence, instrumentality and expectancy. Applying this to women entrepreneurs, it is expected that the level at which women will engage in entrepreneurial innovative behaviour is dependent on how well they desire growth (valence), their perceived probability that their efforts will lead to achievement of their goal (their enterprise growth) and that their innovativeness will have a positive effect on their enterprise.

**Schumpeterian theory of entrepreneurship:** Joseph Alois Schumpeter's theory of entrepreneurship began in 1911. He stated that the entrepreneur is able to break the static equilibrium of traditional societies characterised by circular stagnation through carrying out new combinations of activities referred to as innovations. Thus, innovations consist of the introduction of new products, the introduction of new method of production, the opening of a new market, the conquest of a new source of supply of raw materials or semi-manufactured goods and carrying out of a new organisation of any industry (Olu-Aderounmu, 2012). According to Schumpeter (1934), since economic progress comes from innovations, the innovator who is a monopolist at this point in beginning a new idea should be protected from exploitation by people who would take over his/her ideas by imitation and produce counterfeit products to sell at lower prices hence knocking him/her out of business.

Schumpeter assigns the role of innovation to the entrepreneur who is motivated by; (a) the desire to establish a private commercial kingdom; (b) the atavistic will to conquer and prove his superiority; and (c) the job of creating, of exercising one's energy and ingenuity. Schumpeter's innovation represents not only the first dynamic concept of the entrepreneurial function, but he was the first major writer to put the human agent at the centre of the process of economic development. Schumpeter's theory of entrepreneurship is relevant to the study because the woman entrepreneur in Lagos will take advantage of the market conditions and the environment to come up with new ideas, creativity and innovation to make new products. The products created will then be sold to the society and customers to create wealth and profits hence economic development.

**Feminist Theory:** The argument of this theory rest on the fact that the factors that would affect business performance of women owned enterprises would be significantly different from male owned enterprises. This argument is anchored on liberal and social feminist theories. Liberal feminist theory is rooted in liberal political philosophy that encompasses basic beliefs in the equality of all beings, and in human beings as essentially rational, self-interest-seeking agents. The liberal feminist theory attributes gender-based differences to the variations in power, opportunity accorded men, and women in society, that is, the structural positions women and men occupy in society (Beasley, 1999). Thus, differences in the achievements of men and women are ascribed to the inability of women to realise their full potential because they are denied equal access to opportunities in the labour markets and to resources. This in turn has hindered women from acquiring the skills and capabilities necessary to compete on an equal basis with men. According to the liberal feminist theory, once equal access to resources is ensured, gender differences in performance seemingly disappear (Carter et al., 1997).

In contrast to the liberal feminist theory, the social feminist theory, which emanates from the social learning theory and psychoanalysis, holds that differences between men and women exist from their earliest moments in life and result in fundamentally different ways of viewing the world. These differences are seen in the way women and men construct and interpret reality and how these influence the formation of their values and intentions (Carter et al., 1997). Men and women are inherently different because of differences in their socialization, training and experiences encountered prior to entry into particular work positions. Differences in nurturing result in different self-perceptions, motivations and belief structures. Consequently, women adopt different approaches to work that may, or may not be as equally effective as those adopted by men (Fischer, 1993).

### **Empirical Review**

Misango and Ongiti (2013) examined the economic role of women entrepreneurs in poverty reduction in Kenya using the case of women entrepreneurs at the Maasai market within Nairobi City's Central Business District using independent sample t-test. From the target population of 664, 15% were sampled for the study, through stratified and purposive sampling techniques. Quantitative and qualitative data were collected by use of questionnaires and interviews, hence analyzed concurrently. The study showed that the economic activities carried out by the respondents were similar in nature and included selling of African artefacts, clothing and ornaments. Most respondents (95%) used readily available raw materials to make their products for sale. The study also revealed that majority of the respondents (83%) agreed that the businesses had made them improve their economic status. The businesses contributed to the promotion of tourism, employment and export trade. The study concludes that women entrepreneurs play a major role in poverty reduction in Kenya.

Using one sample t-test, Allen (2008) investigated the contribution of women to economic development in Africa. Findings from the researcher's study showed that social capital (networks) creates opportunity for entrepreneurial activity which leads to performance.

Fajimi and Omonona (2011) examined the impact of women participation in agro-allied small and medium scale enterprises (SMEs) on poverty alleviation in Oyo State, Nigeria. Data were collected using the multistage sampling technique from 119 respondents in the study area made up of 59 participants and 60 non-participants. Data generated were analyzed using descriptive statistics, FGT - weighted poverty measures and Probit regression analysis. Results from the study showed that the non-participants have the highest poverty level (51%), while the participants have poverty level of (17%) and the non-participants contribute greatly to whole group poverty. The estimated probit regression analysis showed that marital status, household size and women status in the family are poverty enhancing while educational status, participation in Small and Medium Enterprises, income and monogamous family type are poverty reducing. Hence participation in agro-allied Small and Medium Enterprises is antidote to reducing poverty among women. However, neither of the studies identified any government programmes and incentives to encourage women entrepreneurs' development.

Adofu and Ocheja (2013) assessed the impact of women entrepreneurship skill acquisition on poverty in Kogi State of Nigeria. The study made use of primary data collected with the aid of a well-structured questionnaire which were administered by well-trained enumerator to beneficiaries of entrepreneurship acquisition skills randomly sampled from six Local Government Area of the state. The data collected through the questionnaire was analysed using descriptive statistics like frequencies and percentages. The result shows that 65% of the respondents accepted that lack of entrepreneurship skills among women is responsible for the high rate of poverty in Nigeria. The result also revealed that at least 60% of the women that benefitted from the skill acquisition programme can now afford the basic necessity of life. The study therefore recommended that since most of the people that benefitted from the programme could afford the basic necessity of life, the government should begin to think of the way of developing the programme to the status of poverty eradication programme. While this study recommended involvement of government in poverty eradication in the study area, the study never measured impact of any government existing programme or incentive on poverty eradication in the state.

Akpanobong and Usoro (2010) found that women entrepreneurs contributed significantly to poverty alleviation and sustainable development. The indicators of poverty alleviation and sustainable development were not given in the study for verification by the reader. The current

study has provided the indicators of poverty reduction for the reader. For example, under the employment creation variable, the indicators included the number of people employed in trading, provision of services and agricultural activities.

Using probit regression method of analysis, Onwurafor and Enwelu (2013) discovered that rural women were involved and participated in agro-food processing activities. However, the study focused more on the training of women entrepreneurs. This study focused fully on participation of women entrepreneurs in entrepreneurial activities including job creation and its effect on poverty reduction.

Okey (2010) did a study on the role of the government in assisting female entrepreneurs towards achieving wealth generation. He worked on a sample of 400 respondents of female entrepreneur’s resident in Edo State. He uses a structure questionnaire consisting of Likert Scale Statement of Strongly Agreed, Agree, Strongly Disagree, Disagree and Undecided to elicit responses. He uses sample percentage to analyze their responses. He found out that: Although the government has assisted organizations to assist female entrepreneurs in terms of mentorship and training programmes. The government needs to be more pro-actively involved in the promotion and advertisement of these programmes as well as sponsoring training programmes for women.

**METHODOLOGY**

The study employed the descriptive survey design whose purpose according to Ezeani (2014) is to collect detailed and factual information that describes an existing phenomenon. The target population of the study was registered female entrepreneurs in Awka Metropolis both in the sales, marketing and service industries. A total population of 457 female entrepreneurs who were registered with the Association of Small and Medium Enterprises in Awka metropolis served the population of the study.

Stratified sampling was primarily used to ensure that different groups of the population are adequately represented in the sample so as to increase the population’s level of accuracy when estimating the parameters. The stratum is made up of four categories of women entrepreneurial businesses and they are: hair dressing, tailoring, food sellers and market place stall owners operating within Awka metropolis. The strata are formed based on members' that shared different attributes or characteristics. A sample from each stratum is taken in a number that is proportional to the stratum's size when compared to the population. These subsets of the strata are then pooled to form the sample. The above reasons formed the basis for the use of stratified sampling for this study.

**Table 1: Population Selected Women Entrepreneurial Business**

S/N	Categories of Entrepreneurial Business	Population
1	Hair dressing	122
2	Tailoring	109
3	Food sellers	111
4	Market place stall owners	115
<b>Total</b>		<b>457</b>

Source: Anambra State Ministry of Trade, Chambers and Commerce, 2018

Smith (1984) sample technique was used to estimate a sample size out of the study population. The Smith (1984) formula is given by:

$$n = \frac{N}{3 + Ne^2}$$

Where:

- N = Population size
- 3 = Constant
- e = Margin of error (5%)

$$n = \frac{N}{3 + Ne^2}$$

Substituting into the formula we have:

$$n = \frac{457}{3 + 457(0.05)^2}$$

$$n = \frac{457}{3 + 457(0.0025)}$$

$$n = \frac{457}{4.1425}$$

$$n = 110$$

Proportional allocation formula was applied to each stratum to ensure even-spread as captured in Table 2. The proportionate formula used is given as:

$$nh = \frac{nNh}{N}$$

Where;

- nh = number allocated each class strata
- n = Total sample
- Nh = Total population of each strata
- N = Total population

**Table 2: Selected Women Entrepreneurial Business**

S/N	Categories of Entrepreneurial Business	Population	Sample
1	Hair dressing	122	$\frac{122 * 110}{457} = 29$
2	Tailoring	109	$\frac{109 * 110}{457} = 26$
3	Food sellers	111	$\frac{111 * 110}{457} = 27$
4	Market place stall owners	115	$\frac{115 * 110}{457} = 28$
	<b>Total</b>	<b>457</b>	<b>110</b>

Source: Anambra State Ministry of Trade, Chambers and Commerce, 2018

**Instrument of Data Collection:** Questionnaire was the instrument used in data collection and were then self-administered by the researcher to ensure high level of accuracy. The questionnaire was made up of two sections. Section 'A' handled the biography of the respondents while section 'B' handled the variables of the study. Likert-5 point Scale of strongly agree to strongly disagree. The respondents were required to read each question carefully and indicate their agreement or disagreement with the statement using various scaling units.

**Method of Analysis:** Both descriptive and inferential statistics was used to analyze the data collected from the field. The independent T- test statistical tool was used to test the hypotheses that were generated from the research questions of this study.

The independent sample t-test is given by:

$$t = \frac{\bar{X}_1 - \bar{X}_2}{\sqrt{\frac{S_1^2}{n_1} + \frac{S_2^2}{n_2}}}$$

Where;

- $\bar{X}$  = Mean
- $S_1^2$  &  $S_2^2$  = Variance
- n = Sample

The justification for the use of independent sample t-test is because it measures the relationships existing between two group of variables. It is simple to compute without errors and helps to illustrate the directional outcome and strength of the variable. It further shows a precise quantitative measurement of the degree of relationship between dependent and independent variables.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

**Statistical Test of Hypothesis**

In line with the statistical research, the three hypotheses formulated in this study were approached with the aid of Independent Sample T- Test. The level of significance for the study is 5% (for a two-tailed test); while the conclusion would however be taken based on the probability values.

**Decision Rule**

- i. If the probability (Sig) > 0.05 we accept the null hypothesis and reject the alternative hypothesis.
- ii. If the probability (Sig) < 0.05 we accept the alternative hypothesis and reject the null hypothesis.

**Hypotheses One: H01:** Women entrepreneurial skill has no significant effect on poverty reduction in Anambra state.

**Table 3: Independent Sample T-Test for Women entrepreneurial skill and poverty reduction in Anambra state.**

Independent Samples Test					
Variable	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances			t-test for Equality of Means	
		F-test	Sig.	T-test	Sig. (2-tailed)
Women entrepreneurial skill	Equal variances assumed	32.14	0	4.85	0.0001
	Equal variances not assumed			7.106	0.0000

Source: Authors Computation, 2018 (SPSS, 24)

From the independent sample T-Test result in Table 3, the calculated t-value for the relationship between women entrepreneurial skill and poverty reduction in Anambra state is 4.85 and the p-value computed is 0.0001 at 95% confidence levels. Since the p-value is less than 0.05 used as the level of significance, we reject the null hypothesis (H01) and conclude that women entrepreneurial skill has a significant effect on poverty reduction in Anambra state.

**Hypotheses Two: H02:** Women owned entrepreneurial ventures has no significant effect on reduction in Anambra state.

**Table 4: Independent Sample T-Test for Women owned entrepreneurial ventures and poverty reduction in Anambra state.**

Independent Samples Test					
Variable	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances			t-test for Equality of Means	
Women owned entrepreneurial ventures		F-test	Sig.	T-test	Sig. (2-tailed)
	Equal variances assumed	16.89	0.000	3.174	0.0024
	Equal variances not assumed			7.106	0.0010

Source: Authors Computation, 2018 (SPSS, 24)

The Independent Sample T- Test result in Table 4 revealed that the calculated t-value for Women owned entrepreneurial ventures and poverty reduction in Anambra state is 3.174; with an associated p-value of 0.0024. Since  $p < 0.05$ , we reject the null hypothesis (H02) and accept the alternative hypothesis and conclude that women owned entrepreneurial ventures has a significant effect on poverty reduction in Anambra state.

**Hypotheses Three: H03:** Women entrepreneurial (business) networking has no significant effect on poverty reduction in Anambra state.

**Table 5: Independent Sample T-Test for Women entrepreneurial networking and poverty reduction in Anambra state**

Independent Samples Test					
Variable	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances			t-test for Equality of Means	
Women entrepreneurial networking		F-test	Sig.	T-test	Sig. (2-tailed)
	Equal variances assumed	5.87	0.049	1.911	0.1987
	Equal variances not assumed			1.124	0.4045

Source: Authors Computation, 2018 (SPSS, 24)

Lastly, the findings from the results of the independent sample T-Test in Table 5 for the relationship between women entrepreneurial networking and reduction in Anambra state gave a t-calculated value of 1.911; and with an associated p-value of 0.1987. Since the p-value of 0.1987 is greater than 0.05, the study accepts third null hypothesis and thus concludes that women entrepreneurial networking has no significant effect on poverty reduction in Anambra state.

**Discussion of findings**

Findings from the study showed that women entrepreneurial skill has a positive and significant effect on poverty reduction in Anambra state. The implication of this result is that experiences acquired in the course of business operations had created more avenues for income earnings and acquisition of basic necessities of life among various women in Anambra state. The study is in agreement with Adofu and Ocheja (2013) whose findings suggest that lack of entrepreneurship skills among women is responsible for the high rate of poverty in Nigeria. Their result also revealed that at least 60% of the women that benefitted from various skill acquisition programme in Nigeria can now afford the basic necessity of life.

In addition, women owned entrepreneurial ventures has a positive and significant effect on poverty reduction in Anambra state. This implies that women which engage in one nature of business or the other have been able to earn a living out of it. This is in agreement with Fajimi and Omonona (2011) whose findings showed that participation in agro-allied Small and Medium Enterprises is antidote to reducing poverty among women. Furthermore, the study of Misango

and Ongiti (2013) also revealed that women owned businesses venture had made them improve their economic status as well as the promotion of tourism, employment and export trade. However, women entrepreneurial networking was discovered to have an insignificant effect on poverty reduction in Anambra state. The implication of this findings is that most women which engage in various entrepreneurial activities do not interact among themselves and often compete among themselves to make ends meet. This further highlights the individualistic and competitive nature of female businesses found in Anambra state. The findings from this study contradicts the results of Allen (2008) which revealed that networking enhances resource mobilization at lower costs, creates opportunity for women entrepreneurial activity which leads to economic empowerment and performance.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Women entrepreneurs have potentials to create employment opportunities, create wealth for Anambra state and generally grow the economy. The findings showed that women entrepreneurs have contributed significantly to poverty reduction in Anambra state due to entrepreneurial skills acquired over the years and entrepreneurial ventures. Therefore, if the economic status of Anambra State women is improved through entrepreneurial development, the socio-economic well-being will be attained and poverty will be eradicated.

Based on the findings from this study, the following recommendations were made:

- i. There is need for further enlightenment campaign to create awareness on the existing vocational and skills acquisition centres to increase women participants with a view to escaping poverty.
- ii. Anambra state government should further expand and sustain an enabling environment by providing infrastructures and adequate assistance that would make infant and extant women entrepreneurs access required inputs and other incentives to create new or more business ventures, enhance their business success and improve their standard of living.
- iii. Women entrepreneurs are encouraged to join women entrepreneurs' associations and cooperative societies that would enhance and expand their network links. Increased networks also give women a chance of awareness and exposure to good role models. Strong networking will grow women small and medium entrepreneurs socially mentally and economically hence success and sustainability. This would also afford them access to some government and donor agencies assistance and support to their entrepreneurial activities.

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