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Major Inhibitors to Female Formal Labour Force Participation in Selected Towns of Awka South Local Government Area, Anambra State, Nigeria

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Abstract. The long tradition of relegating women to household chores and nurturing of children has resulted in the low rate of women participation in the labour force of most developing countries, yet women have often been referred to as the bedrock of families and are also as certified as the male counterparts. This paper therefore sought to find out the major factors that hinder women from actively participating in the formal labour market in Awka South Local Government Area of Anambra state, Nigeria. This study is based on the neoclassical work/leisure trade-off model and Becker's human capital theory, and adopted the non-probability sampling technique. Simple statistics approach using tables, chart, frequencies, percentages and bar charts were used to analyze the responses of the respondents gathered through a well-structured questionnaire with the response options are agreed (A), strongly agreed (SA), disagree (D), strongly disagree (SD) and not sure (NS). The major inhibiting factors were found to be job mismatch, unattractive wage, an adequate source of income, career satisfaction and not being the head of the family. This conclusion was arrived at based on the percentage of the strongly agreed option and further confirmed with the result of the One-Sample t-test. The major recommendation, drawn from both the questionnaire responses and in-depth interview, is that the government should create employment agencies where employers could reach out to their prospective employees and the unemployed can locate the suitable jobs for themselves.

Key words: Awka, employees, female, formal, labour force participation, labour market, Nigeria

1. Introduction

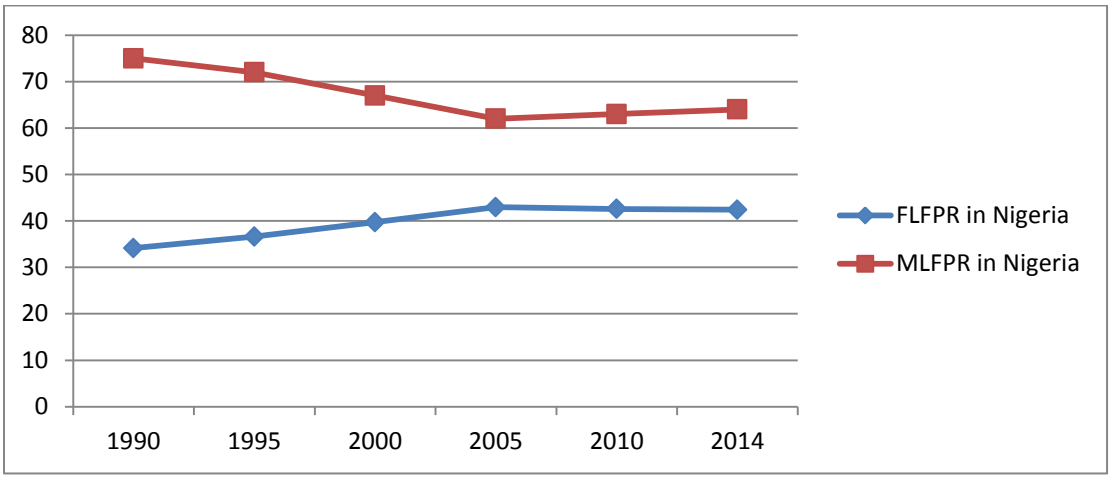
Patriarchy - domination of men over women - is seen as the main cause of gender disparity and inequality in Nigeria (Ukpong and Ime, 2013). Thus, women and gender balance advocacies have been agitating for the expansion of women's involvement in political, social, economic and particularly employment opportunities in Nigeria especially in the formal labour force on which the data used in this work is based. The prevailing division of labour between sexes has made men and women assuming unequal position in terms of employment, power, prestige, status and wealth. The Nigerian society has a strong patriarchal structure that maintained the gender division of labour right from the household to the labour force. This structure directly restricts women's availability for work and indirectly conditions the term of employment for those who enter formal employment (Ukpong and Ime, 2013).

In some cultures, women are not allowed to engage in gainful employment; they are rather expected to stay back in the home and engage mainly in the household chores and child-rearing, In the words of Odeh (2014), women have the biological and social tasks of bearing, nurturing, and providing initial education for children and ensuring the well-being of the

family and that of the entire society. This means that women participation in the process of development cannot be ignored if the desired results must be achieved. The patriarchal tradition is beginning to fade, as the world now clamors for women empowerment because it women have not been able to get recognition for their contributions to the national economy as the reward system seems to favour men to the disadvantage of women, hence, the description of women as the *invisible majority* by Lundy and Beverly, (1994). Ezeaku and Ezeaku (2009) further argues that in spite of the fact that the women population is greater than that of men, women do not have a substantial share of positions in the various places of work, especially in the professional occupations.

Amnesty International (2006) cited in Odeh (2014) observe that Nigerian women make up to 50% of the Nigerian population. Despite this, women have not been given their rightful share of involvement in the formal labour market (which Kay (2011) defines as interaction between labour demand and labour supply that occur within the purview of state regulation while defining formal employment as employment originating from a business or firm that is registered with the state). The long history of discrimination against women in the labour force around the world, especially in Africa of which Nigeria is not an exception has been shown in the very large gap between the number of men and women that participate in the Nigeria's labour force as shown on Figure 1.1.

Figure 1.1 Male and Female Labour Force Participation Rate in Nigeria (1990 - 2014)



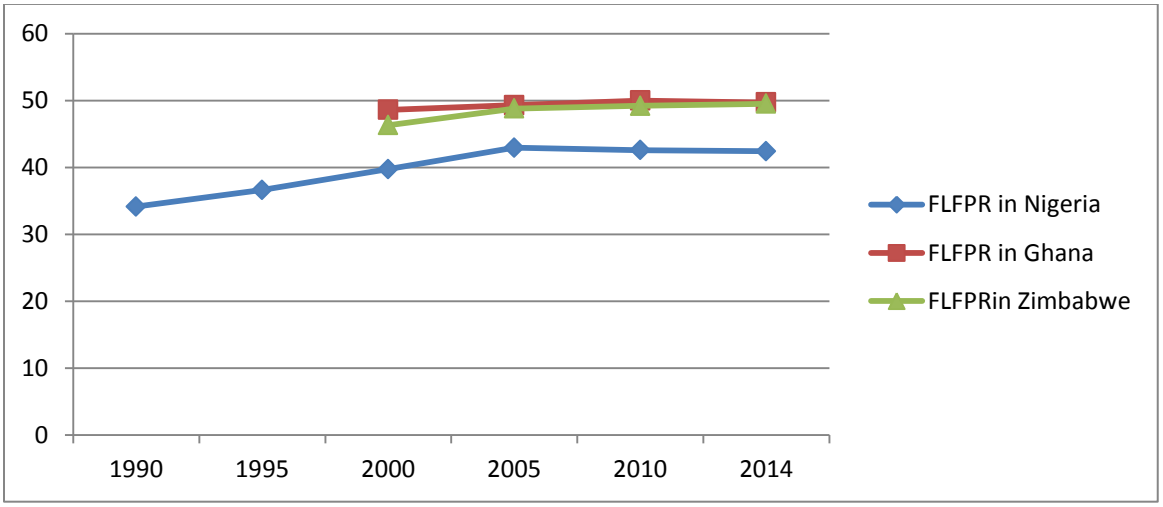
Source : www.indexmundi.com/nigeria/labourforce: accessed on 03/02/2016.

This gap in gender participation in the labour force as noted above may be as a result of some formal barriers which, according to Olukemi, (2008), may include lack of education and technical trainings, labour laws, and trading customs while the informal barriers include customs and religious practices, difficulties in combining domestic and labour market activities, management and workers' attitudes, etc. Few Nigerian women are engaged in top management cadre of formal sector establishments simply because majority of them lack the educational qualifications necessary for such positions. For instance, Ojo, (1997) asserts that only about 6.2% of those who were employed as either general managers or managing directors in 1986 were women while 32.6% of those who participated in the 1995/1996 National Youth Service Corps Program were females. This assertion was supported by Yahaya (2006) when he stated that stereotype and gender discrimination could be responsible for unequal and low representation of women in public and private establishments in Nigeria. The Federal Office of Statistics (1997) indicated that in 1992, only 45,881 females against 145,448 males were in the service of federal ministries in Nigeria. In 1993,

the federal civil service employed only 47,426 females as against 149,645 males while on the average, according the National Bureau of Statistics (2014), more than two thirds (64.5%) of senior positions were occupied by men compared to 35.5% occupied by women for the years 2010 to 2013. Similarly, the pattern was the same at the junior level as well as by cadre. In 1992/1993 academic session, 80 female professors as against 1,315 male professors were in Nigerian Universities.

From Figure 1.1, the wide margin of the formal labour participation rate between the two gender groups in Nigeria from the year 1990 to 2014 is evident. Although the labour participation rate of women shows a very slow upward movement, the labour participation for men is far higher even at its lowest recorded rate of 62% between 2004 and 2006, while the highest value for that of women was 42.95% in 2004 which was more than 20% lower than the lowest rate of men's participation in the labour force. It is clear that there is an increasing trend in female formal labour force participation rate but yet the increase has not been good enough to close the gap that exists unlike in other countries like Ghana and Zimbabwe.

Figure 1.2 A Comparison of Female Formal Labour Participation Rate between Nigeria, Zimbabwe and Ghana (2000 - 2004)



Source: www.data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.TLF.TOTL.FE.ZS accessed on 3/2/2016

A cross-country comparison of the female labour force participation rate, as shown in Figure 1.2, shows that the rate of female formal labour force participation in Nigeria is poor compared with that of Zimbabwe and even Ghana. That of Ghana increased from 48.6 percent in 2000 to 50.0 percent through 2009 to 2011 and then reduced to 49.7 in 2014. But that of Zimbabwe has been on the increase from 46.3 percent in 2000 to 49.5 percent in 2014. In all these, it is evident that even at the lowest rate of these countries' female labour participation, Nigeria's highest recorded rate is still lower. This is really surprising as Nigeria has been seen to have a better economic standing than both Ghana and Zimbabwe.

A look at the economic indicators of these countries proves this. For instance, Nigeria's GDP as at 2015 according to www.tradingeconomics.com stood at $596b as against $38.6b and $14.20b for Ghana and Zimbabwe respectively. Nigeria's GDP growth rate also stood at 6.31% which was also higher than that of Ghana and Zimbabwe which recorded 3.99% and 4% respectively. The only edge that Zimbabwe had over Nigeria is its adult literacy rate of 83.58% which is a bit higher than that of Nigeria and Ghana which were 68% and 57.9% respectively. The female labour force participation rates of Ghana and Zimbabwe show greater improvement compared with that of Nigeria.

The same trend of low female labour participation rate is also noticed in Anambra State where, according to Anambra State Bureau of Statistics (2010), a total of 4,094 males and 2,511 females were engaged by the State Public service in 2009 and also 2,493 and 1,840 of males and females respectively in 2010 even though the women folk are as certified as the male folk. This simply shows that low female labour force participation is an epidemic that must be tackled from its root.

In the light of the above, this study intends to give answers to the following question: What are the five major factors that inhibit female labour force participation in Awka South Local Government Area of Anambra state? In line with the above question, the general objective of this study is to identify the major factors that discourage female labour force participation in Awka South Local Government Area and this study hypothesizes that there is no outstanding factors that inhibit female labour force participation in the study area. To this end, this paper is organized across a five-section outline. Section one contains the introduction, section two contains the review of relevant literature, section three contains the methods and procedures by which the study is conducted, section four documents the results and discusses the findings while section five concludes the paper and proffers some policy recommendations.

2. Review of Literature

2.1. Conceptual Issues

Labour force participation refers to an individuals' decision whether or not to participate in the labour force (Ehrenberg and Smith, 1997). It involves an analysis of whether a person's desired hours allocated to market work is greater than zero (Hoffman and Evans, 1974). The standard measure of labour force participation is the labour force participation rate, which is the labour force divided by the working age population expressed as a percentage. People are counted as participating in the labor force if they are engaged in activities that are included in the system of national accounts (Verick, 2014). Therefore, in measuring the labour force participation rate of women, the number of women in the labour force is divided by the number of women in the working age population.

2.2 Review of Basic Theories

Two theories are apt for discussing and evaluating the factors that affect female/women labour force participation. They are the neoclassical work/leisure trade-off model and the Becker's human capital theory.

i. The Neoclassical Work/Leisure Trade-off Model

According to the Neoclassical School of Thought in economics, a model of labour supply is about an individual's decision to participate in the labour force and about the total number of hours that one is willing to work at a given wage rate. An individual makes a rational decision between leisure and hours of work in order to maximize her/his utility and this can simply be explained by the traditional income/leisure *trade-off* model (Bosworth, 2006). On a daily basis she/he has 24 hours limited time which has to be allocated between work, leisure and some basic activities. This means that the individual must forgo some of his/her activities in order to increase working hours. Leisure is the activity mostly modeled as an individual is willing to trade-off with work. Every possible real wage rate makes the individual behave differently depending on her/his preferences. The two possible effects on an individual's behaviours are categorized into *income and substitution effects*. If the *income effect* dominates individual preferences, then an increase in the wage rate makes an individual to demand more leisure and decreases in hours of work. On the other hand, if a *substitution effect* dominates individual preferences, then the individual increases his work hours and decreases leisure hours (Borjas, 2008).

ii. Becker's Human Capital Theory

Human capital corresponds to any stock of knowledge or characteristics of an employee (either innate or acquired) which complements his productivity (Daron, 2009). The human capital theory emphasizes the importance of education and training in the development of

human resources as there is a positive correlation between education and wage rates (Becker, 1975). Personal incomes evidently vary according to the amount of investment in human capital. Development economists argue that the relationship between education and labour force participation may be U-shaped across years of education. Thus labour force participation rates were found to be high for illiterate women, lower for women educated at the primary and secondary level and higher for female college graduates. This U-shaped relationship can to an extent be explained by the positive correlation between women's education and wage rates (Cameron, Dowling and Worswick, 2001 and Hoffman and Evans, 1974).

2.3 Empirical Literature Review

Okpala (1989) examined the relationship between labour force participation and fertility in Lagos, Nigeria using primary data. Both simple statistics and ordinary least square were used to draw inferences. When OLS was used, the study found a significant negative relationship between fertility and female labour force participation among civil servants. Among self-employed women, a negative relationship existed but it was insignificant. Onah (2001) and Odora (2003) carried out studies on how education influences employment and salary grade and on the determinants of women employment respectively. Both studies concluded that education of women led to their increased employment. Similar studies like those of Adeke (2006), Anugwom (2009), Aromolaran (2004), and Leach (1998) reached similar conclusions.

Aminu (2010) estimated the determinants of labor force participation and earnings in wage employment in Nigeria using the probit model of labor force participation, the multinomial logit models of labor force participation, and the Mincerian human capital model. The contribution of this study to the already vast literature on labor force participation is the inclusion of an important household variable – the presence/absence of an elderly female in the household – which was hypothesized to have a positive effect on both male and female participation rate in the wage employment sector of Nigeria. As expected, the presence of elderly female persons increased the probability of labor force participation across all sectors of wage employment for males and females in the 2007/2008 General Household Survey data set while it exercises negative and positive influences in private and public sectors respectively in 1998/1999 data sets. The use of two data sets for this study made possible a comparative analysis with respect to determinants of labor force participation and earnings in the Nigerian economy. Other studies in Nigeria whose conclusions are quite similar to that of Aminu's include those of Anugwom (2009), and Babalola and Akor (2013).

From the foregoing it is evident that studies have been undertaken on the determinants of female labour participation rate in Nigeria but literature search shows a dearth in similar studies for Awka South Local Government Area (LGA) of Anambra. This study therefore stands to fill this knowledge gap.

3. Research Methods and Procedures

This study adopted the survey research method so as to obtain as much and as accurate information as possible. Since attitudes and opinions are elicited only by questioning either directly or through well designed questions, a questionnaire was designed to provide information about the major factors that influenced the respondents' inability to accept formal employment. An in-depth interview schedule was also constructed, in line with the questions on the questionnaire list, with aim of discussing with the respondents in details and without constraints.

The population of this study is the entire women within the working age population who reside in selected towns in Awka South LGA, are not in any formal employment contract, and this did not include full time students. Awka South is made up of eight towns but three towns namely Awka, Nibo and Okpuno were selected for the study. These towns were selected because of the presence of government establishments as well as formal private establishments in them. A quota sampling technique was used and a total

of 50 questionnaires shared in each of the towns making it a total of 150 while purposive sampling was used to select the respondents from each of the towns.

A pilot study was conducted and 20 pre-test copies of the questionnaire were distributed to female between the ages of 18 and 65 in Amansea, a neighbouring town to Awka (capital of Anambra State) and all the ambiguities noticed during the pre-test were eliminated before the data collection phase. This study adopted the simple statistic approach using tables, charts, frequencies, percentages, et cetera, to analyze the responses of the participants. In addition, the One-Sample t-test was adopted in testing the hypotheses and cross tabulations were also used to examine the interaction between cases.

4. Result Presentation, Analyses and Discussion of Findings

A total of 150 copies of the questionnaire were administered to the respondents out of which 136 copies, representing about 90.7% of total distributed were returned. The analyses that follow are therefore, based on the 136 returned questionnaires.

4.1 Demographic Features of Respondents

Table 4.1 Age and Marital Status of Respondents

		Marital Status		
		Married	Single	Total
Age	18 – 30 years	29	43	72
	31 – 45 years	39	16	55
	46 – 60 years	9	0	9
	Total	77	59	136

Source: Field survey (2016).

As a preliminary, some demographic features of the participants were presented so as to have a glimpse at the characteristics of the respondents. Table 4.1 shows the age distribution of the respondents cross-tabulated with their marital status. The table shows that out of the 136 respondents, 77 of them (56.6%) are married while 59 of them (43.4%) are still single. 29 respondents out of the 77 married respondents are within the age bracket 18 – 30 years, 39 respondents fall within 31 – 45 years bracket and 9 respondents are within 46 – 60 years bracket. On the other hand, 43 respondents of the 59 single respondents are within 18 – 30 years bracket, while 16 respondents fall within 31- 45 years bracket, none of the single respondents is above 45 years old.

4.2 Data on Nature and Size of Household

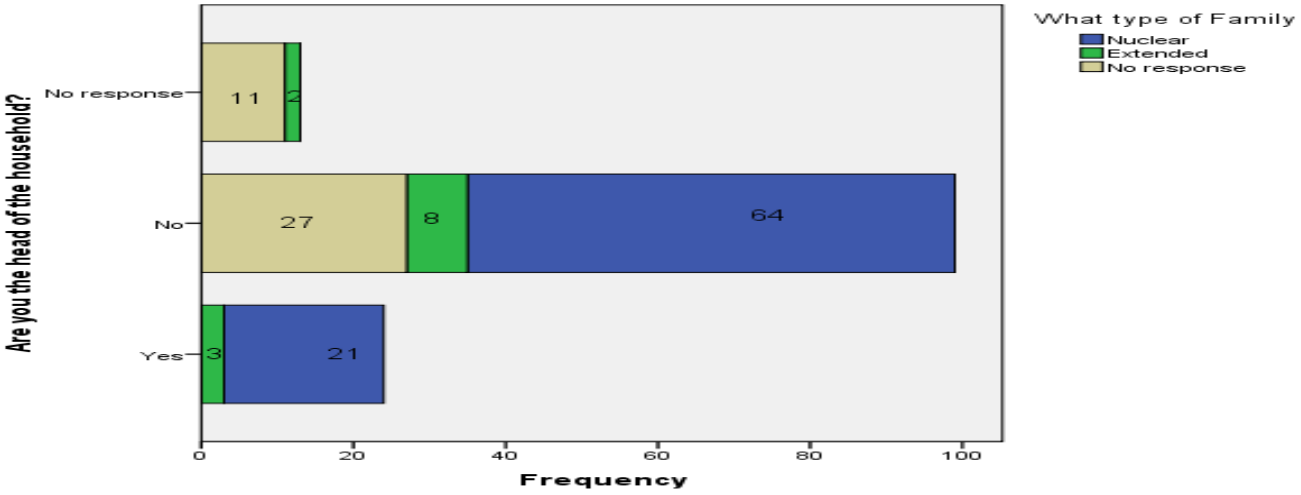
Table 4.2 presents cross tabulated responses of the respondents on whether they had children and if yes, how many. 70 of the 136 respondents (51.47%) have children while 62 persons (45.59% of the total respondents) claimed they had none. Four out of the study's respondents (2.94%) did not respond to this question. On the number of children, 57 respondents (out of 70) have between one and three children, 14 respondents have between four and seven children and 2 respondents have eight children and above.

Table 4.2 Size of Respondents' Household

		Do you have children?			
If yes, how many?		Yes	No	No response	Total
	1-3 children	55	0	0	55
	4-7 children	13	0	0	13
	8 and above	2	0	0	2
	No response	0	62	4	66
	Total	70	62	4	136

Source: Field survey, (2016).

Figure 4.1 Headships of the Household and Type of Household



Source: Field survey, (2016).

Figure 4.1 shows that out of the 24 respondents who are the heads of their households, 21 respondents have nuclear families while three respondents have extended families. On the other hand, out of the 99 respondents who are not heads of the households, 64 respondents have nuclear families eight of the respondents have extended household while 27 of them did not respond to this question.

Table 4.3 Structure of Respondents' Household

Variable	Responses	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Total number of people in the household?	2 – 5 persons	61	44.9
	5 persons and above	38	27.9
	No response	37	27.2
How many dependents?	0 - 2 persons	31	22.8
	3 – 5 persons	48	35.3
	6 persons and above	17	12.5
	No response	40	29.4
Are you the bread winner of the family?	Yes	19	14
	No	96	70.6
	No response	21	15.4

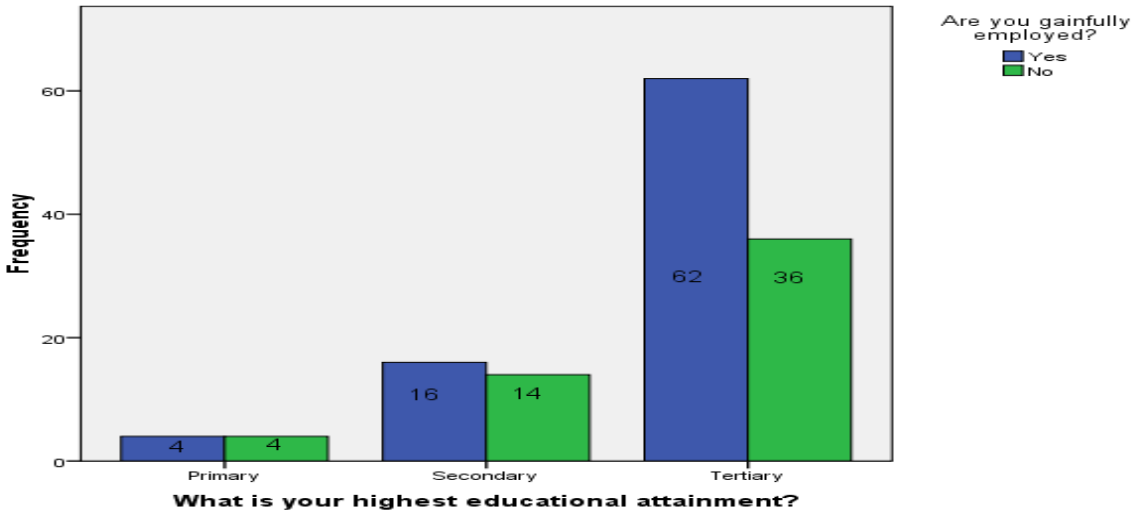
Source: Field survey, (2016).

Table 4.3 contains the responses of the respondents to the structure of their households. It shows that out of the 136 respondents sampled, 61 of them claimed that there about 2-5 persons in their households and this number represents 44.9% of the total sample. 38 respondents claimed that their households are made up of five persons and above and this represents about 27.9% of the sample. 37 out of the respondents did not respond to this question. On the question of number of dependents, the study shows that 31 respondents have at most two dependents, 48 respondents have between 3 – 5 dependents while 17 respondents have at least six dependents. 40 respondents did not react to this question. Again, the result shows that 19 respondents are their families' bread winners, 96 respondents are not while 21 respondents did not react to this question.

4.3 Education and Job Status

Figure 4.2 presents the respondents' education and employment status. This result indicates that 82 respondents, which represent 60.3% of entire sample, are gainfully employed, while 54 respondents, representing 39.71%, are not gainfully employed.

Figure 4.2 Respondents' Highest Educational Attainment and Labour Force Status



Source: Field survey, (2016).

Further breakdown shows that out of eight respondents that possess primary school certificate, four of them are gainfully employed while four are not. 16 respondents out of 30 respondents that possess secondary school certificate are gainfully employed while 14 respondents are not gainfully employed. Furthermore, out of the 98 respondents that have attended tertiary institution, 62 of them are gainfully employed while 36 of them are not.

Table 4.4: Respondents' Employer and Grade Levels

Employment Status	Total Response	Total Frequency (%)
Farmer	44	32.35%
Entrepreneur	14	10.29%
Trader	12	8.82%
Employed in Private sector	9	6.62%
Others	3	2.21%
No response	0	0
Total	136	100%

Source: Field survey, (2016).

Responses on the respondents' employer and grade levels are contained on Table 4.4 and it shows that 44 respondents, (constituting 32.35%) out of the total number of respondents, are farmers 14 of them (representing 10.29%) are entrepreneurs, 12 respondents (representing 8.82%) are traders, nine respondents are private sector employees, three of the respondents work elsewhere while 54 out of the 139 respondents (representing 39.71%) are unemployed.

Table 4.5 Spouses' Highest Educational Attainment and Employment Status

		Is your husband employed?			
		Yes	No	No response	Total
What is your spouse's highest education attainment?	None	0	0	0	0
	Primary	5	2	0	7
	Secondary	16	4	2	22
	Tertiary	44	4	2	50
	No response	0	0	57	57
	Total	65	10	61	136

Source: Field survey, (2016).

Figure 4.5 shows the respondents' spouses' education and employment status. Out of seven respondents whose husbands possess primary school certificate, five of them are gainfully employed while two are not. 16 respondents out of 22 respondents whose husbands possess secondary school certificate are gainfully employed while 4 respondents are not gainfully employed, 2 persons did not respond to the question. The result further indicates that out of the 50 respondents whose husbands attended tertiary institutions, 44 are gainfully employed while 4 are not gainfully employed. 2 persons did not respond to the question. This result indicates that 65 respondents, which represent 47.8% of entire sample, claimed that their husbands are gainfully employed, while 10 respondents, representing 7.4% claim otherwise, however, 61 persons did not respond to the question of whether their husbands are employed or not.

Table 4.6 Spouses' Job Description and Wage Range

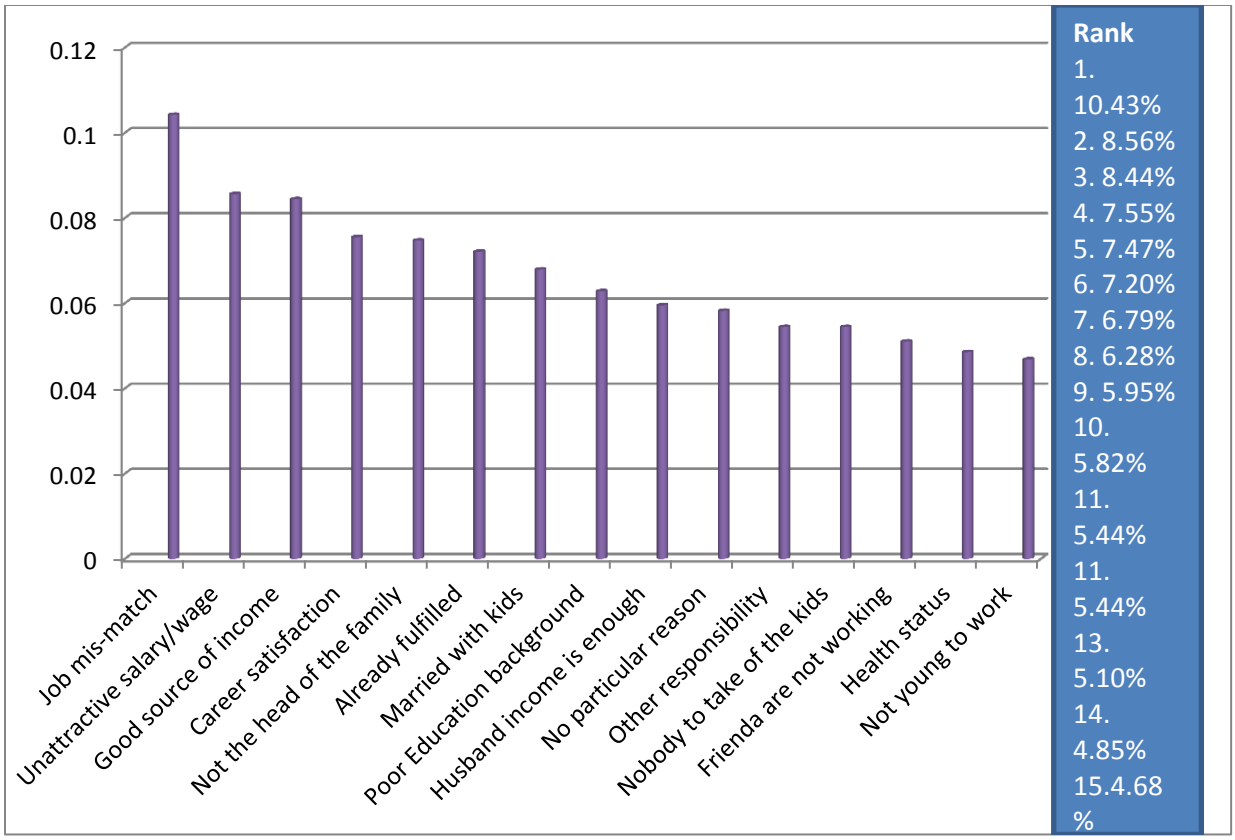
		What is your husband's wage?			
		Less than 18,000	18,000 and above	No response	Total
If yes what type of job?	Government worker	1	5	1	7
	Entrepreneur	4	15	2	21
	Trader	1	16	6	23
	Employed in Private sector	2	5	7	14
	Others	0	0	10	10
	No response	0	0	61	61
	Total	8	41	87	136

Source: Field survey, (2016).

Table 4.6 presents information on the nature of job in relation with salary/wage range of the respondents' spouses. Out of seven respondents who said that their spouses are government workers, one respondent maintained that her spouse earns less than ₦18, 000 while 5 respondents said that their husbands earn ₦18,000 and above. Out of the 21 respondents who maintained that their spouses are entrepreneurs, 15 of them said that their husbands earn above ₦18, 000, 4 respondents said that theirs earn less than that while there was no response from two of the respondents. Out of the 23 spouses who are traders, 16 of them earn above ₦18, 000 while one of them earn less than ₦18, 000. When asked what type of job their husbands did, 10 of the respondents chose others and this corresponds to the number of respondents that their spouses are not gainfully employed.

4.4 Factors Inhibiting Female Formal Labour Force Participation in Awka South LGA, Anambra State

Figure 4.3 presents and ranks this study's findings on the respondents' perception on the factors inhibiting female formal labour force participation rate based on the information obtained from the respondents in three selected towns of Awka South Local Government Area.
Figure 4.3 Factors affecting Female Formal Labour Participation Rate in Selected Towns in Awka South LGA of Anambra State



Source: Field survey, (2016).

Findings show that these five major factors: job mis-match, unattractive salary/wage, adequate source of income, career satisfaction and not being the head of the family are the major ones that deter the females from participating effectively in the formal labour market in Awka South LGA of Anambra State. All the respondents were asked to indicate the factors that inhibit/constrain their ability to get into formal employment in order to participate effectively in the labour market. Using the five likert scale the results of Figure 4.3 are based on the strongly agreed responses. Job mis-match ranks (10.42%) highest amongst the constrains to female formal labour participation rate in the study area. This is followed by unattractive remuneration (8.56%), adequate alternative source of income (8.44%), personal satisfaction (7.55%) and (7.47%). The least factors that constitutes constraints to female formal labour force participation in the study area include that the respondents perceives themselves as being too old to take up formal employment (4.68%), the respondents' health status (4.85%), peer influences (5.1%) and parental responsibilities to the respondents' children (5.44%).

4.5 Test of hypotheses

The hypothesis earlier postulated by this study was tested using the One Sample t-test. The decision rule is that if the p-value is less than or equal to 5% (>0.05), the null hypothesis is rejected in favour of the alternative hypothesis. The null hypothesis is that female formal labour participation rate in Awka South LGA has not been hindered by any major factor.

Table 4.7 One Sample t-test

	Test Value = 0					
					95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Lower	Upper
Good education background	11.86***	135	.000	4.21324	3.5107	4.9158
Good source of income	15.93***	135	.000	5.17647	4.5340	5.8190
Unattractive wage	15.37***	135	.000	4.97794	4.3372	5.6186
Not head of the family	15.67***	135	.000	5.22794	4.5681	5.8878
Have other responsibility	14.17***	135	.000	5.02206	4.3210	5.7231
My husband's wage is enough	15.28***	135	.000	5.25735	4.5768	5.9379
Not young to work	14.42***	135	.000	5.18382	4.4729	5.8947
Health status	13.78***	135	.000	4.99265	4.2763	5.7090
Married with kids	17.18***	135	.000	5.62500	4.9775	6.2725
Friends are not working	13.80***	135	.000	4.96324	4.2520	5.6745
Fulfilled already	16.72***	135	.000	5.47794	4.8301	6.1258
I am satisfied	15.80***	135	.000	5.24265	4.5865	5.8988
I have not found job	17.21***	135	.000	5.22794	4.6272	5.8287
Nobody to take care of my children	14.70***	135	.000	5.16912	4.4735	5.8647
No particular reasons	18.17***	135	.000	5.97059	5.3208	6.6204

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