

## **THE EFFECTS OF MARKET ORIENTATION AND TRAINING ON BUSINESS PERFORMANCE OF WOMEN: THE MEDIATING ROLE OF INNOVATION.**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This study examines the effects of Market orientation (MO), Training (TR) on the Business Performance (BP) of women in Nigeria using Innovation (I) as a mediator in order to improve the performance of Women, which long-run contributes positively towards the increase of Nigeria GDP. Data required for the study was collected from the Women Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME's) operating in the North-Western Nigeria using a survey design and a systematic random and stratified disproportionate sampling. A designed questionnaire has been distributed across the target population of 576 through self-administration. In order to evaluate the sample data, the study has adopted the Partial Least Squares-Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM). The findings revealed that MO, TR and Innovation are important strategic for the performance of women MSMEs in Nigeria. The findings also revealed that women MSME performance depends on the degree of MO, TR of the business performance. However, innovation was found to mediate the effects between MO, TR and business performance of women. The findings of this study provide important insights to women owner/managers of MSMEs, policy makers and researchers to further understand the effects of MO, TR and I on women MSME performance. Women MSMEs should also be encouraged to improve their MO, TR and I, which may increase their performances. Finally, the study implications, limitations as well suggestions for future research are discussed.

**Keywords:** Micro Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), Business Performance of Women, Market orientation, Training, Innovation.

### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

The significance of MSMEs in influencing economic growth is recognized, their performance all the over the world is unanticipated (Ibrahim & Rosli, 2016; Ali, Hilman & Gorondutse, 2017; Gorondutse, Ali, Abubakar & Naalah, 2017). The high level of employment and low

contribution to the Nation's GDP indicate their low performance (Naala, Nordin & Omar, 2017). This brings many researchers and practitioners to give so much attention to their significant contributions to the economic growth and the development in developed and developing countries (Gorondutse, Ibrahim, Abdullwahab, & Naalah, 2018; Naala Nordin & Omar, 2017; Naala, 2016; Eniola, 2014). Over the time, professionals have acknowledged the fact that market orientation research is an important effect on the development of marketing knowledge (Kanagal, 2017; Kohli & Jaworski, 1990). International studies in marketing management often concentrate on developed countries, rather than developing countries. In addition, marketing researchers have recognised this constraint and called for the extension of such research to an international context (Homburg & Pflesser, 2000; Homburg, Jozic & Kuehnl, 2017). Studies on market orientation about business have advocated that organisations that are continually studying their competitors' actions and customers' needs will have a better understanding in combating their rivals as well as meeting the needs of their consumers (Ansah & Chinomona, 2017; Wang, Chen & Chen, 2017). Previous studies confirm market orientation to have positive effects on business performance (Jogaratnam, 2017; Gilaninia et al., 2013).

Women entrepreneurs in developing countries lack training (Ekpe, Mat & Razak, 2016), and entrepreneurial activity is a source of human capital development that plays the role of providing an opportunity for learning, ability, attitudes, and skills to individuals. The impact of training in developing countries on women entrepreneurs' performance has not been addressed adequately in the literature because most women are facing societal discriminations, poverty, and low educational level (Mtey & Sulle, 2013; Abdulkadir et al., 2012). According to Abdulkadir et al. (2012), training is an important factor in the MSMEs as it provides women entrepreneurs with the abilities and practical experience required for business development. Literature shows that most of the micro-finance customers are lack of specialized skills in using the microfinance facilities. Therefore, they need training in order to use the microfinance facilities. On the other hand, most women entrepreneurs in developing countries are lacking prior business experience that is among the important factors for enterprise success (Idris & Agbim, 2015).

Therefore, women entrepreneurs need training in using the microfinance facilities to further strengthen their business experience. Some literature suggested the need to study training on women business performance in developing countries because of their low income and low educational background (Geordis & Pitelis, 2016; Saks & Smalley, 2014). Training is linked to education' and women entrepreneurs in developing nations are less educated if compared to women in developed nations (Ibru, 2009; Hameed, Hussin, Azeem, Arif & Basheer, 2017). Previous studies confirm training to have positive impact on business performance (Chinomona, 2013; Saks & Smalley, 2014; Aragon, Jimenez & Valle, 2014). However, the utilization of

entrepreneurial opportunity is determined by the entrepreneur's level of knowledge or skills acquired and social networking through working experience (Idris & Agbim, 2015).

The current study used innovation as a mediator to probe the effects of market orientation, training, social network and access to finance on business performance. More so, it is important to note that without analyzing the mediating variable, it is difficult to evaluate the link between market orientations, training and business performance on why they effect each other under what condition of indirect effects (Baron & Kenny, 1986; Hayes, 2009). Therefore, based on literature review, the present study intends to investigate if innovation mediates the effects of market orientation and training on business performance of women in Nigeria.

This paper has been classified into five sections, and this section is the introduction followed by the literature review. The third and fourth sections are the methodology as well as the result and discussions, respectively. Lastly, the paper provided a conclusion.

## **2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW**

Prifti and Alimehmeti (2017) examined the impact of market orientation and innovation on firm's performance. The authors used a data sample comprising of 99 companies that operate in Albania, using questionnaire and structural equation model for analysing the data. Results indicated there is a significant positive relation between market orientation, innovation and the firms' performance. Similarly, Lim et al. (2017), examined market orientation, innovation commercialization, capability relationships and the moderating role of the supply chain in influencing the firm performance using the survey of 180 top managers in Dun and Bradstreet Midwest state of the USA. Data was analysed using multiple regressions method and the results of the study shown a moderating effect of the Supply Chain Influence (SCI) in Market Orientation (PMO) and Firm Performance (FP). The authors further recommended for the future research to focus on target industries in various environments, which will reinforce the line of inquiry as well as shed more light on the issues. Also, Ozkaya, Droge, Hult, Calantone and Ozkaya (2015) conducted a study on the market orientation, knowledge competence and innovation performance with the sample of 673 managers from China and US using questionnaire and chi-square for data analysis. Findings revealed positive relationship between the customer, competitor's knowledge competencies and the overall firm's performance. Grisseman, Plank, Brunner-Sperdin (2013) conducted a study on enhancing the firms' performance regarding the role of innovation and customer orientation, using a total data sampled from managers of 203 hotels. The findings showed the influence of "innovativeness" as well as innovation behaviour on both financial and non-financial firms' performance.

Rosli and Mahmood (2013) studied the moderating effects of human resource management practices along with entrepreneur training on innovation performance of the small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in Malaysia using the sample of 284 SMEs in Malaysia. Data was collected using a self-administered questionnaire. The results indicated that training of entrepreneurs has a strong positive influence on the firm performance. Davoudi, Fartash, Venera, Asiya, Rashad, Anna and Zhann (2018), examined the “Mediating Role of Open Innovation” on the Relationship between Intellectual Property Rights and firm’s Performance, using 30 companies of RUSSIA’s Semnan Science and Technology Park as case study. The authors collected data by means of self-administered questionnaires, and analysed the data by means of Structural Equation Model. The results indicated that there is a significant positive relationship between open innovation and firms’ performance. The authors recommend further research to improve the study by extending the work to other sectors, such as manufacturing sector, service, educational, and electronic sectors, amongst others. Zhou, Zhou, Feng and Jiang (2017) explored the dynamic capabilities and organisation performance with mediating role of innovation. A sample of 204 Chinese firms in China was selected. Data were drawn from a questionnaire and the PLS-SEM was used for data analysis. Results indicated that innovation has a substantial effect on the dynamic capabilities of influencing organizational performance. The researchers suggested that future study should consider extending the study to various enterprises

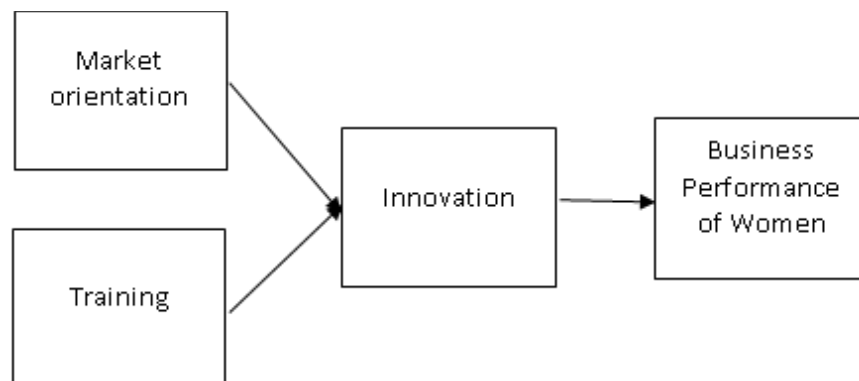
Al-sa`di, Abdallah and Dahiyat (2017) examined the correlation of knowledge management to operational performance in some selected Jordan’s industrial companies, using the mediating role of product and process innovation, with a sample of 207 sampled data from the Jordanian firms situated in Amman. The research uses survey questionnaires and PLS for data analysis. The results indicated that Knowledge Management has significant positive effects on the product and process innovations within the case study. Mahmoud, Blankson, Owusu-Frimpong, Nwankwo and Trang (2016) reviewed the impact of market orientation and business performance on the mediating role of innovation using a sample of 28 banks in Ghana with survey data of senior managers and multiple linear regressions for data analysis. Findings showed a significance impact of innovation relationship between market orientation and business performance was positive and consistent. They recommended future researchers to use larger sample size.

Sharma, Davcik and Pillai (2016) investigated the mediating effect of product innovation in influence Research, Development expenditure and brand equity on marketing performance. Using a sample of 10,282 data of Bureau van Dijk Electronic and ACNielsen Italy’s report on household’s financial statement of food purchase database using regression for data analysis. Findings showed a Research, Development expenditure and Brand Equity have a positive effect on product innovation and marketing performance. Recommended future researchers to use

moderating effect of product innovation on the influence of Research and Development expenditure as well as brand equity on marketing performance.

Naala, Nordin and Omar (2017) studied the relation of Innovation Capability and Firms' performance among the North-Western Nigeria SMEs, by the means of 280 data sampled from the SMEs. Data was analysed using PLS-SEM, the findings revealed that innovation capability is a significant SMEs success factor. Lu, Zhu and Bao (2015) examined the mediating effect of innovation on the High performance human-resource management and firms' performance in China. The study used data sample from 150 pre-survey Chinese manufacturing industries in some selected cities of China (Beijing, Shenzhen, Shanghai, Changchun, Harbin). Data were drawn from questionnaires and the PLS-SEM was used for the analysis. Results indicated that innovation has a vital influence on high performance to HRM and firms' performance. The researchers suggested that future study should enhance the measurement of innovation by expanding the scope of the research to various enterprises scenarios and examine the relations and mechanisms of high performance HRM system and corporate performance further. Therefore, based on the above studies, the present study proposes the following hypotheses:

- H<sub>1</sub>: Market orientation is positively related with Business performance of women in Nigeria.
- H<sub>2</sub>: Training is positively related with Business performance of women in Nigeria.
- H<sub>3</sub>: Innovation is positively related with Business performance of women in Nigeria.
- H<sub>4</sub>: Innovation mediates the effect of market orientation (MO) and business performance of women in Nigeria.
- H<sub>5</sub>: Innovation mediates the effect of training (TR) and business performance of women in Nigeria



**Figure 1: Research frame work**

This study employed the Resource-Based Theory (RBT) for enhancing and supporting the framework. The RBT encapsulates the focus of the study by taking into consideration the relationships among the variables. The focus of this study is primarily on how businesses generate and achieve their performances. In this study, the Resource-Based Theory (RBT) is adopted for explaining the relationship between independent variables, the mediator and the dependent variable. In this study, market orientation and training are selected as the independent variables, innovation is used as the mediator, and the dependent variable is business performance of women it exploited into strengths and weaknesses by businesses, which leads to outperformance on the businesses. In conformity to the RBT, Market orientation, training and Innovation are business's resource, which is likely to give a sustainable and outstanding performance to the business, since skill is acquired through experience, which gives different uncommon and unique characteristics to the business strategies. The skill acquisition will allow women entrepreneurs to outperform their competitors.

### **3.0 METHODOLOGY**

This study examines whether innovation mediates the effects of market orientation, training and business performance of women MSMEs in Nigeria. The population consists of owners/managers of micro, small as well as medium enterprises in North-western Nigeria. Employing a disproportionate random sampling to determine the amount of sample drawn from the population of MSMEs in each state, simple random technique was used to select the sample from three states namely: Kano, Kaduna and Sokoto states for which data were finally collected for analysis of this study. Questionnaires were administered to 576 owners/managers of SMEs who are registered member of Nigeria Association of Micro Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME). Of the distributed questionnaires, 452 (78.5%) were returned completely answered while 428 (74.3%) were suitable for final analysis due to removal of ambiguous responses and outliers. Thereafter, data were analysed using statistical package for social sciences SPSS 25 and Smart-PLS SEM 3. (Hair et al., 2017).

The research framework comprises of 4 constructs and multiple items were used to measure each of the construct. All the latent constructs were measured with uni-dimensional and reflective items and all items were scored on a 5-point Likert scale with (1) Strongly Disagree (2) Disagree (3) Neither Agree/ nor Disagree (4) Agree (5) Strongly Agree. The study uses seven items adopted from Suliyanto and Rahab (2012) to measure BP. Ten items used for MO were adapted from Didonet et al. (2012) Huhtala et al (2014). TR was measured with 7 items adapted from Rowland et al. (2017) and Innovation 6 items adapted from Huhtala et al. (2014) and Vorhies and Morgan (2005).

Test for common method bias were conducted for this study because of self-administered cross-sectional survey approach employed (Podsakoff et al., 2003). Additionally, Harman's single factor test was adopted to study CMV which assumes that, if the amount of CV considerably exists, either a single factor emerges or one general factor that would account for more than half of the covariance in the independent and dependent variables (Podsakoff & Organ, 1986). All indicators in the current study were subjected to principal component factor analysis in accordance with Podsakoff and Organ (1986). No single factor has the majority of covariance in the independent and dependent variables (Podsakoff *et al.*, 2012), suggesting the unimportance of common method bias that may likely inflate the link between the variables measured in the current study.

#### **4.0 RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

This study conducted reliability test using values from composite reliability and the values from these measures for each of the construct exceeded the recommended figure of 0.70 (Hair et al., 2014) as depicted in Table 1. The results indicated and confirmed that all the reliability was met. As regards the validity, the cross loadings which is also referred to as item-level discriminant validity (Henseler et al., 2016), indicated that item loading on the construct it measures is greater than it loadings on other constructs in the model (Chin, 1998). The average variance extracted (AVE) for all the constructs exceeded recommended values of 0.50 as shown in Table 1, thus convergent validity was attained for this study (Fornell & Larcker, 1981; Hair et al., 2014). However, for discriminant validity, the squared root of AVEs for each construct is greater than the inter-construct correlation estimates (Hair *et al.* 2017). This is shown in Table 1. Further confirmation of mediation test and direct relationship after minimum values was achieved as indicated in Table 2 and 3. These indicated that all the constructs of the study attain acceptable level of performance (Hair et al., 2016).

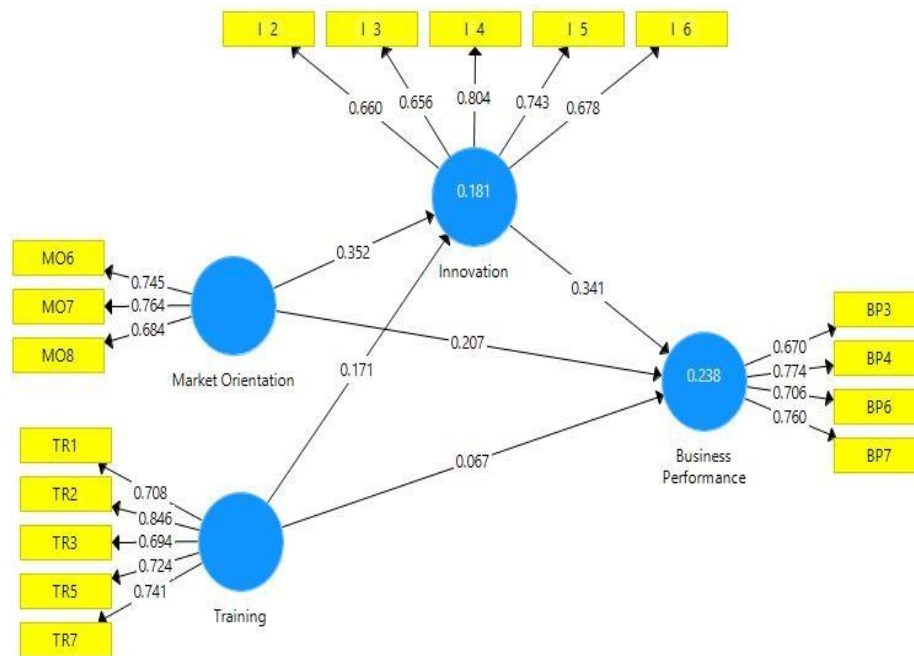


Fig. 2: PLS Algorithm

Table 1: Indicator Loadings and Internal Consistency Reliability

Variables	Indicators	Standardized Loadings	Composite Reliability	AVE	Item(s) deleted
Business Perf.	BP3	0.666	0.819	0.531	BP1, BP2, BP5
	BP4	0.778			
	BP6	0.698			
	BP7	0.765			
Innovation.	I2	0.693	0.835	0.505	
	I3	0.656			
	I4	0.804			
	I5	0.743			
	I6	0.678			
Market Orientation	MO6	0.745	0.775	0.535	IP1
	MO7	0.764			
	MO8	0.684			



Training	TR1	0.708	0.861	0.554	TR4, TR6
	TR2	0.846			
	TR3	0.694			
	TR5	0.724			
	TR7	0.741			

**Table 2: Discriminant Validity Fornell-Larcker Criterion**

Latent Variables	BP	I	MO	TR
BP	<b>0.729</b>			
I	0.440	<b>0.711</b>		
MO	0.357	0.392	<b>0.732</b>	
TR	0.202	0.254	0.234	<b>0.745</b>

**Table 3: Cross Loadings**

Latent Variables	Business Performance	Innovation	Market Orientation	Training
BP3	0.670	0.220	0.194	0.211
BP4	0.774	0.395	0.293	0.206
BP6	0.706	0.240	0.265	0.142
BP7	0.760	0.379	0.273	0.048
IP2	0.192	0.660	0.230	0.122
IP3	0.267	0.656	0.299	0.066
IP4	0.418	0.804	0.301	0.242
IP5	0.365	0.743	0.267	0.262
IP6	0.259	0.678	0.297	0.161
MO6	0.267	0.314	0.745	0.213
MO7	0.298	0.304	0.764	0.162
MO8	0.206	0.232	0.684	0.133
TR1	0.146	0.156	0.103	0.708
TR2	0.214	0.206	0.264	0.846
TR3	0.064	0.136	0.160	0.694
TR5	0.056	0.199	0.214	0.724
TR7	0.200	0.223	0.127	0.741

The result of the data analysis using Smart-PLS SEM software is shown in figure 2 and 3.

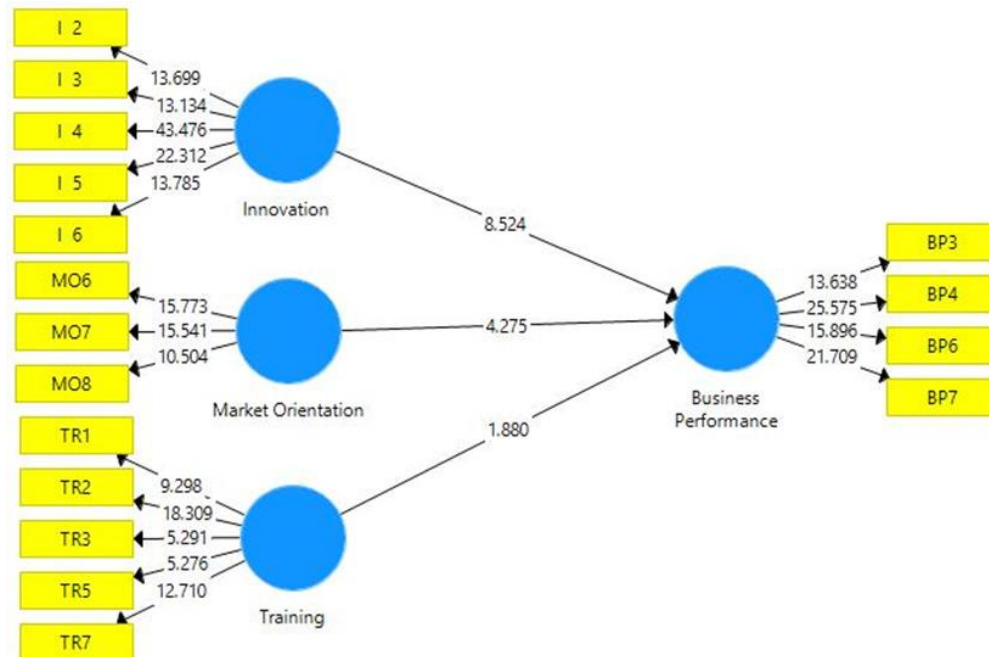


Figure 3: Direct Relationship between the variables.

The testing of hypotheses was conducted using Smart-PLS SEM software to determine the direct relationship and the interaction effect (H1 – H3). Statistical model for direct relationship displays the links between MO, TR, I independent latent variables and Business Performance of women dependent latent variable as shown in figure 3. Table 4 shows the results of the direct relationship between independent variable and dependent variable.

Table 4: Hypotheses Testing of Direct Relationship

Hypothesis	Path	Beta	STDEV	t-value	p-value	Remarks
H <sub>1</sub>	MO -> BP	0.204	0.048	4.275	0.000	Accepted
H <sub>2</sub>	TR -> BP	0.086	0.046	1.880	0.030	Accepted
H <sub>3</sub>	I -> BP	0.343	0.040	8.524	0.000	Accepted

The findings as shown in Table 4 revealed that the influence of MO on business performance which is positive and significant with beta value ( $\beta = 0.204$ ) and t value ( $t = 4.275$ ), thus in support of H<sub>1</sub> as hypothesized in the study. The finding confirms the results of the research of the previous studies such as (Ansah & Chinomona, 2017; Jogaratnam, 2017; Gilaninia, Taleghani, & Talab, 2013). Training and business Performance has also significant positive effect and support

with H<sub>2</sub> ( $\beta = 0.086$ ) and t value ( $t = 1.880$ ), and this concurs with the past studies (Chinomona, 2013; Sila, 2014; Saks & Burke-Smalley, 2014; Xayavong et al, 2016; Georgiadis & Pitelis, 2016). Similarly, the direct link between innovation and business performance was also tested and the findings shows a significant positive effect between Innovation and Business performance with H<sub>3</sub> ( $\beta = 0.343$ ) and t value ( $t = 8.524$ ). MO assists an organisation or business to better understand the needs of customers and influences the organisation to improve its capabilities.

This result may be explained by the fact that the majority of the respondents are from the micro and small organisations. Women owner/managers are not investing high because of the financial constraint. The entrepreneurs are more concerned with daily survival of their businesses and keeping good relations with customers. To women owner/managers it is more immediate importance to generate economic transactions and keeping their cash flow fluid then to investing in competitor orientation, which is deemed optional since it does not yield immediate return to their businesses.

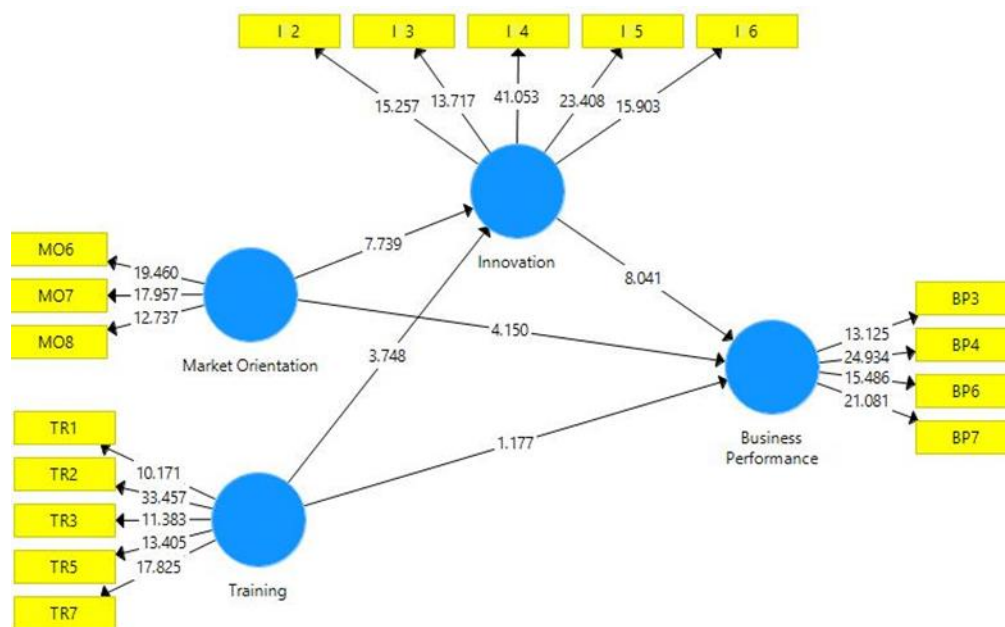


Fig. 4: Mediating effect

**Table 5: Summary of Mediation Relationship**

Hypothesis	Path	Beta	STDEV	t-value	p-value	Remarks
H <sub>4</sub>	MO -> I -> BP	0.120	0.022	5.528	0.000	Accepted
H <sub>5</sub>	TR -> I -> B P	0.058	0.018	3.222	0.001	Accepted

The structural model that shows the mediating effect of innovation on the relationship between MO, TR and BP of women was illustrated in figure 3. Table 5 explain the indirect relationship between MO and Innovation with a significant positive influence ( $\beta = 0.120$ ) and t value ( $t = 5.528$ ) and also, between TR and Innovation with a ( $\beta = 0.058$ ) and t value ( $t = 3.222$ ).

The finding shows a mediated relationship on the effect of training on business performance where innovation serves as a channel in enhancing the business performance of women. Nigerian women MSMEs that practice participation accord to the subordinate or team work training is better faster in improve business performance whether directly or indirectly by invoking innovation. The finding helps to fill the gap in the literature with regard to the effect/role of innovation as a mediator in the effect between MO, TR and business performance of women, specifically in Nigeria MSMEs context. The effect is assumed to be mediated if independent/predictor variable has effects on the dependent/outcome variable through a mediator variable (Baron & Kenny, 1986). Therefore, the results show that MO, TR has an effect on the mediator variable of innovation, and this in turn influences the dependent variable business performance (Hair *et al.*, 2016).

## 5.0 CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, issues of the performance of women MSMEs will remain an important agenda for political leaders, managers and employees of, academicians, researchers and community at large. It is believed that the women MSMEs performance of owner-managers, and entrepreneurs provide rich backdrop against which women business can still have room for improvement on the GDP as regards to Women MSMEs and their owner-managers, this study has contributed to women entrepreneurs and the understanding of owner/managers of women MSMEs. Women MSME entrepreneurs are likely to have variety of thoughts and actions that will possibly assist them in Running their business with the required time and attention as such it will give room for improvement and better performance.

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