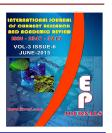


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The influence of disinheritance of widows' rights and their children's upbringing in Orsu local government of Imo State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

The process of widowhood is believed to represent a life phase, which depicts one of the fundamental problems which the aged and by extension the young people experienced. This study is concerned with the influence of the disinheritance of widows' right and their children's upbringing. This study was analyzed using SPSS 16 and result showed that the widowhood practices do adversely influence the widows and their children's upbringing. The influence of the disinheritance of widows' rights and their children's' upbringing was analyzed and it was evident that there are some socio-economic factors that lead to these inhuman acts by some people. The disinheritance of widows rights to their husbands properties often come as a result of some cultural practices that encourages these widows' right denial. These cultural practices come to play when the widow is either barren, suspected of killing her husband, when there is hatred between her and her in-laws etc. The research adopted a descriptive research design with the use of questionnaire to elicit information from the respondents. The study employed qualitative and quantitative method of data collection. The researcher administered by hand 250 questionnaires to the respondents but only 200 copies were correctly filled and returned. The researcher used simple descriptive statistics such as mean, frequency distribution, percentage and table, four likert scales to analyze the purpose of the study. The study clearly reveals that the cultural/widowhood practices on the long run do influence the widows negatively in all ramifications. The study shows that the literate widows were not adversely influenced by these widowhood practices as in the case of the illiterate widows. The widows are being subject to some dehumanizing cultural practices such as swearing in a shrine, drinking of the water used to bathe the husband's corpse, shaving of hair. Widows upon the death of their husband do adopt some coping measures such as sending their children to their relatives to help in training them, giving out girls early in marriage, Enrollment of the children in public Schools, Cutting down on expenses, entrepreneurship development, working on other people's farmland for payment. From the study, it is revealed that widowhood practices such as denial of the right of the widow to her husband's property has a negative influence on the widow and her children such as poverty, loss of identity, loss of self-esteem/prestige, poor feeding, dropping out of school, rejection by her relatives etc. Based on the above findings, the researcher recommends that; one of the effective ways of challenging the influence of harmful cultural practices that dehumanizes is broad based education. Women's' education is necessary to empower the woman with knowledge about the dangerous implications of which they are obviously partners with the males. When a man invest on any business or buy any property, he should put the names of his wife and children as the one to inherit the business and the properties. Government must ensure that education for the women: especially the girl-child is pursued vigorously and made compulsory up to at least the secondary school level. Also the state working in collaboration with women groups and Non-Governmental Organization (NGOs) should evolve training programs to equip women with skills and entrepreneurship so as to improve their economic status.

Introduction

In all cultural settings, widowhood is associated with trauma and presents an immeasurable of varied nature; economic. social and psychological. Widowhood is defined as the state of mourning the loss of one's husband or wife through death. The stress of this phenomenon is as real as those of loneliness and divorce. Widowhood is thus seen as a life event with wide range of consequences. For instance, widowhood is known to be responsible for the poor health status of widows and widowers, with minimal long term consequences and is also associated with intense grief and angry expressions, especially among more widows than the divorced (when) compared. This is possible because of the deprivation following loss of spousal intimacy through death. It can thus be concluded that widowhood by implication is a stressful life demanding practicable event support systems.

In the opinion of Goldman and Lord (2004), mourning and widowhood are the opposite side of the same coin with wide range of implications for those affected. Gbenga (2009) has observed that widowhood is an issue that affects more women than men. He noted that over the long term, women are affected more severely than men both financially, psychologically, sexually, socially. For instance, issue of mourning and widowhood processes in Nigeria surrounded by a number of cultural expectations. It has been observed that widowhood in Nigeria is an immoral or unpleasant situation which merely allocates to the widows a position of societal scorn, disdain and permanent membership of the wretched of the earth.

Across different cultures in Nigeria, there are harmful traditional widowhood practices which have attracted the attention of the

global struggle in general on violence against women. In addition to this perspective as another aspect of gender base violence is other that includes certain for the status of women in Nigeria relative to men in the circumstance of death. Sufficient evidence suggested that widowed women severely affected financially, are psychologically, sexually and socially. (Stallion 2011:Afolanya,2011).the severe effect of widowhood in Nigeria are rooted in cultural and traditional practices as well as the socialization processes that condition women to positivity and dependence. This condition have erected enormous difficulties for women to creativity and stoutly initiate new robust new relationship both men and women in social and economic spheres upon widowhood. The debilitating conditions of widows are worsened by social factors that instrumentally feed into the situation ranging from loss of livelihood upon widowhood, and the fact that widows are less likely to remarry than widowers (Stallion, 2011).widows rather sympathize with even assisted are subjected to near inhumane treatment in traditional ritual rites and practices such as solitary confinement, defacement, disinheritance, a relatively mourning period of limited but active social economic activities outright ostracism. The widowhood condition exposes women to psychological and physical abuse as well as a whole range of health related problems including developed countries, HIV/AIDS. In substantial information on widows exists especially in terms of age category and number of women in widowhood. The statistics are certainly absent or are available in uncoordinated and improper forms that are not easily accessible in the developing world. For example, it is estimated that there about 7%-16% of widows among women worldwide (UN, 2001).

The phenomenon of widows is attributed to death of a husband which causes are varied. In contemporary societies like Nigeria, the first notable variety of death worth considering due to its profound and immediate impact on widowhood in terms of creating many widows at a given time is war or armed conflict. World War I and II, they Ibo programs of 1966, the violent political crisis in western Nigeria in the mid 1960's, the Nigerian civil of 1967-1970 all produced more widows than any period in modern Nigeria (Agene, 2008). Without debate, majority of those who lost their lives in all these wars and crises and bombings are men many of whom were married. Those left behind include widows and children in a sizable portion.

Once upon the death of a husband, irrespective of the age of the wife, she descends into widowhood and depending on the cultural background of the marriage; the widow's conducts and activities are henceforth regulated by customary practices and norms. In general, according to Ewuluka in Vaness (2003), widowhood rites include isolation and confinement, restrictions in movement and association and shaving.

It is difficult to achieve a good life by a widow when she has no right to inheritance. Upon the death of a husband, widows may be completely disposed and chased off (Afolanyan, 2011). One of the major effects of widowhood is poverty. Many Nigerian pauperized by widowhood practices and these practices drastically reduce the economic status of widows upon the death of a husband leaving the woman o face difficulties and hardship that will in turn affect the upbringing of the children.

Nigeria like their counterparts elsewhere in especially Africa and Asia are a special social category that is scantly acknowledged

in social policy but in potently vulnerable to psychological, socio-economic and risks as a result of the widowhood practices prevalent in Nigeria. One of the major influences of the disinheritance of widows' right is poverty. Many Nigerian widows pauperized by widowhood practices. These practically reduce the economic status upon the death of a husband. Before detailed elaboration on the process that this act assumes, it is important to consider poverty in elaborate broad sense in which the United Nations conceived it. Poverty is beyond income and includes wellbeing or good life in multi-dimensional sense that comprises both material psychological and components. Wellbeing therefore encompasses peace of mind, good health and safety, freedom of choice and action and being able to associate in a community. In a nut shell, wellbeing means a dependable livelihood and a steady source of income (UN, 2001).

Poverty level of widow is exacerbated by factors of illiteracy and lack education and training. Long drawn out and rigid and expensive burial rights further compound the economic condition of the widows long period of mourning with characteristic restriction on movement and interaction restrain the poor widow in engaging in any creative income generating opportunities which may arise from initiating new social levels of interaction, stereotyping plays a critical rate in the process (UN, 2001; Stallion 2011).

Faced with the reality of the existence as widows, two other effects range them. They are; the loss of status and self-esteem and depression or stress to the very extent that marriage is perceived as a symbol of success. Upon the death of husbands widows are moved from a category of success to losers. With the death of a

husband, the social status of the widow is largely reduced and with it the loss of self-esteem (Stallion 2011). Closely related is the issue of loss of identity. Upon marriage and until recently, Nigerian women would change their names underlining the reality of a new identity which is the derived from the marriage as a vacation. With the death of a husband, widows are thrown into a crisis of identity and are no longer willing to identify themselves with reference to a diseased spouse.

Among the people of Edo in Edo state in south-western Nigeria which is consisted of a variety of minority ethnic groups, conspicuous practice includes seven days period of mourning under restricted movement and association. Shaving of the from unwashed plates, head, eating compulsory wailing, and washing the dead man's body and drinking the water (Emery 2003) and some of the de-humanizing practices that widows are subjected to. Among the Idoma-speaking people of northcentral Nigeria, the mourning is imposed with heavy restriction on movements of the widows. Among the TIV or central Nigeria, a year period of mourning is imposed and the widow is expected to dress in white rather than black as is used to be until the 1980's, in addition, she would have her hair cut low and would further refrain form of sexual relationship during the period of mourning. Among the Hausa/Fulani community trained with an Islamic religious element, mourning and purification rites are also imposed and adhered to. A Muslim widow in Kano undergoes a four month mourning period and observes reasonable number of days of seclusion which run concurrently (Emery, 2003).

Among the Igbo or south eastern Nigeria, a widow's head is shaved immediately upon the death of her husband. In addition, a

widow is expected to use sticks in scratching her body from time to time during the mourning period. Besides, she is restricted from washing herself. These practices are rooted in the belief that even is unnatural. Therefore a widow must pass through these rituals to prove her innocence and purifying herself and at the same time protect herself further defilement (Okoye 2000). At the death of a husband, the mourning period ranges from one week to a year with activities that differs from one community to another. In most Igbo communities, a widow is expected to dress in mud cloth called 'ogodo mkpe' for a period of seven days to a year depending on the emphasis of the community. In other communities, a widow is expected wail three times in a day or once in a day for three or seven days. In addition, the woman's hair is being entirely shaven; she would sit on a mat surrounded by sympathizers and cloud in black attire for seven months during the mourning period.

Among the Yoruba of south-western Nigeria, widowhood practices are generally characterized by human greed, superstitious beliefs and religion (Afolayan, 2011)

Many cultures in Nigeria share similarities in widowhood practices. Many of these ethnic groups as Yoruba, Igbo and minority groups as the Tiv, Idoma, Urhobo, Isan and including those in Edo Delta states observe a mourning period that differ in degree. This may range from a few days to a year. During this period, the widow's appearance is district by dressing in white or black attire accentuated by a grieving expression. After the mourning period, the widow is expected to remarry to a relative of her late husband. In general, this practice is on the decline due modernity and Christian religious influence (Akumadu, 2004). With increasing level of education of widows and their children as well as among the relatives of the husband of the widow, levirate marriages are no longer attractive and acceptable. The widow may remain unmarried as long as they may choose.

Another element that has share intercultural practices is the question of inheritance. According to Nwogugu (2000) Succession and inheritance among Ibos resolve around the principle of primogeniture and is primarily patrilineal. Both rights succession and inheritance flow to the eldest son or in the absence of any to the brother. Where there only female children, property ownership passes to the brother of the deceased. Among the Yoruba people, property devolves around all the children irrespective of age and gender.

Purpose of the study

The main purpose of the study is to identify the influence of disinheritance of widow's rights and the children's upbringing in Orsu Local Government Area of Imo State. Specifically, the study;

- 1. Identified the cultural practices that lead to the denial of widow's rights of the husband's properties.
- 2. Determined how these practices affect the upbringing of widow's children
- 3. Proffered solution to widowhood practices.

Research questions

The following research questions will guide the study;

- 1 .What is the cultural practices that lead to the denial of widow's right s of their husband's properties?
- 2. How do widowhood practices affect the children on how the widow trains them?

3. In what way can the denial of widow's rights be solved?

Hypothesis

There is no significant difference on the upbringing of children whose parents are still living and the children of the widows.

Research methodology

Design of the study

This is a research survey designed to find out the influence of disinheritance of widow's inheritance rights and the children's upbringing .Survey designs are also called correlation or explanatory studies tendency denoting their to connections and relationships between variables without manipulating them. It focuses on what can be observed on the ground noting how disinheritance widow's rights has influence on the widows and their children's upbringing.

Population of the study

The population of the study is comprised of all the widows in Orsu local Government Area of Imo state. According to national population census (2006), Orsu Local Government Area has a total population of 120,224 (one hundred and twenty thousand, two hundred and twenty-four) consisting of 24,045 women and out of which there is a total number of 8,015 widows.

Sampling techniques

The sampling technique that was used for this study was the purposive sampling technique which focuses on sampling technique where the units that are investigated are based on the judgment of the researcher i.e. it rejects people who do not fit a particular profile. In this case, purposive sampling technique was used specifically to elicit Information from the widows who in one way or the other have been denied of the rights of their husband's properties.

Instrument for data collection

Questionnaires were the major instrument for the study. The questionnaires is made up of six (6) different sections which include section A and section B, C, D, E, F. Section A shows information on the personal data of the respondents while the section B, C, D, E, F contained items which were developed to correspond to the specific objective of the study.

Validation of instrument

Drafted copies of the structured questionnaires were given to three (3) lecturers from the department of Home Economics/Hotel Management and tourism of Michael Okpara University of Agriculture Umudike for them to validate. Their suggestions corrections and to construct the final copies of the questionnaires.

Administration of the instrument

A total of 250 copies of questionnaires were administered by hand to the respondents, and only 200 copies of the questionnaires were correctly filled and returned.

Method of data analysis

Editing to ensure accuracy and reliability of the information contained in transcripts, was helpful in raising accuracy of information and ensuring that all desired information was conceptualized, coded and verified to reduce possibility of mismatch between available information and was intended to be captured as per research. After screening, arrangement of data collected was done, to ensure logical ordering, linking themes and grouping of coherent information. Quantitative data analysis involved the use of Statistical Packaging for Social Science (SPSS). SPSS is known for its ability to process large amounts of data given its wide spectrum of statistical procedure which was purposefully designed for social sciences.

This was applied to run descriptive data to frequency distributions produce percentages charts and tables were produced using spreadsheet applications. Scores of respondents in each item was pulled to give overall score and then converted to percentage expressed as fraction of the overall score. This helped to reduce the massive amount of information that was obtained. The data was then summarized in tabular form indicating averages, frequencies and percentages.

Results and Discussion

Socio-economic characteristics of respondents

This section contains the socio-economic characteristics of the respondent. Socioeconomic characteristic plays a vital role in interpretation enhancing the of the functional analysis. They include age, educational level, household size and occupation respondents. The of questionnaire was shared among widows in Orsu local government area of Imo state.

Age

Age distribution of the respondents is presented in Table 4.1; The result obtained in Table below indicates that respondents within the age bracket of Below 20, 20-30,

30-40, 40-50, and Above 50, constitutes 8%, 12%, 26%, 28%, and 26% respectively of total population. However the mean ages were 50.1 years. This means that majority of the widows are middle aged.

Household size

Distribution of the respondents according to their household size is presented in Table 4.5. It shows that 32%, 40%, 26% and 2% of respondent had a household size of 1-5, 6-10, 11-15 and 16-18 persons respectively.

Level of education

Distribution of the respondent according to their level of education is presented in Table below

overwhelming majority An of the respondents have formal education. This is desirable because according to Obasi (1991), the level of education of a widow will not only increase her productivity but also enhances her ability to stand for her legal The implication is that these respondents are better positioned to take advantage of their right and boost their welfare and security. Improved education level brings about positive changes in the knowledge, attitude and skills through research and extension.

The Frequency table above shows that 192 widows who made up to 96% of the entire population strongly agree that a widow that has one or more male Child will not be denied of her husband's property. Also, 6 widows agree that having one or more male children will not be denied of their husband's properties. Where two widows disagree that having male child will not make the widow not to be denied of her husband's properties. Again, the table shows that 186 widows which sum up to 93% of

the total population of study strongly agree that barrenness is a factor that leads to the denial of a widows' right to her husband's properties. And 12 widows agree that barrenness leads to the denial of a widow's right to her husband's properties whereas 2 widows disagree that barrenness cannot lead to denial of widows right to her husband's properties. The frequency table also shows that 178 widows that sum up to 89% of the total population of study strongly agree that when a widow is accused of killing her husband she is denied the right of her husband's properties. Where 22 widows also agree that killing the husband can lead to the denial of the right to the husband's properties. Also, it shows that 174 widows making up to 87% of the entire population strongly agree that hatred from her in-laws leads to the denial of the widow's right to her husband's properties. Whereas 26 widows agree that hatred form the in-laws leads to the denial of the widow's right to her husband's properties.

The frequency table simply shows that 124 widows of the population summing to 62% of the population strongly agree that poverty is an effect of the cultural/widowhood practices that affect the widow and her children. Also 36 widows agree that poverty is an effect of the cultural/widowhood practices. 28 widows are not of the opinion that poverty is caused as a result of the widowhood practices as it affects the widows and their children. Whereas 12 widows strongly disagree that poverty is caused as a result of the cultural/widowhood practices. Also, 180 widows, that is 90% of the population strongly agree that the widowhood/cultural practice leads to the loss of Self Esteem of the widows and 18 widows agree that the widowhood practices leads to the loss of Esteem of the widow whereas 2 widows disagreed that the cultural practices does not lead to loss of Esteem of

the widows. The table also shows that 78 widows, that is, 39% of the population strongly agree that the cultural practices leads to poor feeding and poor health condition of the widows and her children. Also 50 widows agree that the cultural practices leads to the poor feeding of the widows and their children. Whereas 42 widows disagree that the cultural practices causes poor feeding/ poor health, Also 30 widows strongly disagree that the cultural do lead to poor feeding/poor health of the widows and their children. The table also shows that 70 widows strongly agree that these cultural practices/widowhood practices lead to the dropping out of school by the widows' children. Also, 44 of the population agree that the cultural widows practices/widowhood practices cause the children of the widows to drop out of school. Whereas 48 widows disagree that these widowhood practices causes the widows children to drop out of school. Also 38 widows strongly disagree that the widowhood practices causes the children to drop out of school. Again the table tells that 170 widows strongly agree that these widowhood practices leads to the rejection of the widows and their children and 18 widows agree that these cultural practices leads to the rejection of the widows and their children whereas 12 widows disagree that these cultural practices leads to the rejection of the widows and their children.

Results and Discussion

From the frequency table above, it shows that 130 of the population of widows which sum up to 28% of the entire population strongly agree that farming for others for the purpose of being paid is the measure that they take to lessen the influence of the disinheritance of their late husband's properties. Also 28 widows agree that they adopt the coping measure of farming for

others in order that they may be paid and this sum up to 14% of the population. Where 26 widows disagree that farming for others is a measure of lessening the influence of the disinheritance of their late husbands' properties and this is about 13% of the population. And 16 widows, 8% of the population, strongly disagree to the idea of farming for others in order to be paid. Again, the table shows that 176 widows which is about 88% strongly agree that entrepreneurship development adopting lessens the influence of disinheritance of their late husband's properties. Also 24 agree entrepreneurship widows that development, that is about 12% of the entire population, is adopted to lessen the influence of the disinheritance of their late husband's properties. Again, 100 widows which is 50% of the population strongly agree that hawking is a coping measure that lessens the influence of the disinheritance of their late husband's properties. Where 54 widows agree, that is, 27% of the population adopt hawking as a measure to lessen the influence of disinheritance of the disinheritance of their late husband's properties. 30 widows which is about 15% of the population disagree to adopting hawking as a coping measure to lessen the influence of the disinheritance of their late husband's properties. And 16 widows, that is, 8% of the population strongly disagree to adopt the hawking measure as a way of lessening the influence of the disinheritance of their late husband's properties. But 4 widows out of the entire population which is just about 2% of the population strongly agree to adopt begging as a coping measure to lessen the influence of the disinheritance of their late husband's properties, 10 widows also agree that begging is a measure of lessening the influence of their late husband's properties and this is just about 5% of the population. 24 widows disagree to begging as a coping measure of lessening

the influence of the disinheritance of their late husband's properties and this is just about 12% of the population. And 138 widows, that is, 69% strongly disagree that begging is a coping measure of lessening the influence of the disinheritance of their husband's properties. The table also shows that 4 widows, that is 2% of the population strongly agree that sex working is a coping measure to lessen the influence of the disinheritance of their late husband's properties. 8 widows agree, which is just 4% of the population, that sex working is a measure of lessening the influence of the disinheritance of their late husband's properties. 36 widows disagree that sex working is a coping measure to lessen the influence of the disinheritance of their late husband's properties and this is about 18% of the study population. Also 152 widows strongly disagree, that is 76%, that sex working is a coping measure to lessen the influence of the disinheritance of their husband's properties. The table also shows that 144 widows who sum up to 57% of the entire population strongly agree that apprentice is a coping measure that they lessen the adopt influence disinheritance of their late husband's properties. Whereas 66 widows agree that apprentice is a coping measure that they adopt to lessen the influence of the disinheritance of their late husband's properties and this is about 33% of the population. 14 widows disagree that apprentice is a measure that lessen the influence of disinheritance of their late husband's properties and this is about 7% of the population. But 6 widows strongly disagree that apprentice is a measure that lessen the influence of the disinheritance of their late husband's properties, and this is about 3% of the population. The table again indicates that 150 widows adopt the measure

of letting their relatives to help them train their children as a measure of lessening the influence of disinheritance of their late husband's properties and this is about 75% of the population of study. 34 widows agree that training their children by their relatives is a coping measure of lessening the influence of the disinheritance of their late husband's properties and this make up to 17% of the entire population. 16 widows disagree to the coping measure of training their children by their relatives and this is about 8% of the population. The table also shows that 146 widows simply chose the coping measure of enrolling their children into public school, and the portion of this population is 73%. And 40 widows agree that the coping measure of sending their children to public schools and this is about 20% of the total population. Whereas 12 widows disagree to the coping measure of enrolling their children into public schools and this is about6% of the proportion of the population. And 2 widows strongly disagree to enrolling their children into public school as a coping measure to lessen the influence of the disinheritance of their late husband's properties and this is just 1% of the population of students.

Conclusion

It can be concluded that cultural and social norms associated with widowhood such as mourning rites that places heavy restraints on movements and social contacts and lack of inheritance do deepen poverty among widows reducing them to further abuse and discrimination. This also influences the upbringing of widow's children in so many ways such as causing them to drop out of school, begging, sealing and/or even sex work.

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Table.1 Age distribution of Respondents

Age (years)	Frequency	Percentage	
Below 20	16	8.0	
20-30	24	12.0	
30-40	52	26.0	
40-50	56	28.0	
Above 50	52	26.0	
Total	200	100.0	
Mean	50.1		

Source: Field Survey (2014)

Table.2 Distribution of respondents based on household size

Household size	Frequency	Percentage
1-5	64	32.0
6-10	80	40.0
11-15	52	26.0
16-18	4	2.0
Total	200	100.0
Mean	7.9	

Source: Field survey (2014)

Table.3 Distribution of Respondent based on level of Education

Level of education	Frequency	Percentage	
Primary Education	40	20.0	_
Secondary Education	108	54.0	
Tertiary Education	52	26.0	
Total	200	100.0	

Source: Field survey (2014)

Some of the cultural practices that leads to the denial of widows' right of the Husband's properties

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Number of male child	192	6	2	0
Bareness	186	12	2	0
Accused of killing the husband	178	22	0	0
Hatred	174	26	0	0

Source: Field Survey (2014)

Influence of Widowhood Practices on the Widows and Their Children

INFLUENCES	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Poverty	124	36	28	12
Loss of Identity	180	18	2	0
Loss of Self Esteem	178	20	2	0
Poor feeding/poor Health	78	50	42	30
School dropout	70	44	48	38
Rejection	170	18	12	0

Source: Field Survey (2014)

What coping measures have you been taking to lessen the influence of the disinheritance of your late husband's inheritance?

Some of the coping measures taken	Strongly	Agree	Disagree	Strongly
	Agree			Disagree
	130	28	26	16
Farming for others for payment				
Entrepreneurship development	176	24	0	0
Hawking	100	54	30	16
Begging/Stealing	4	10	48	138
Sex working	4	8	36	152
Apprentice	114	66	14	6
Sending the children to relatives to help in	150	34	16	0
training them				
Enrolment of children into public schools	146	40	12	2

Source: Field Survey (2014)

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