

Challenges of Cultural Widowhood Practices Against Women in Igboland: The Biblical View, and The Way Out

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Abstract

Immediately after the death of the husband of a woman, the close relations of the late husband, will take almost all the property of the man like: cars, television sets, lands, houses, and etc, including frozen account of the dead husband. Sometimes, the widow is accused of poisoning the husband, and she is expected to prove her innocence by swearing; by crossing over the coffin, or drinking the red sand of the grave of the deceased husband, or forced to drink water used for bathing the husband's corpse. Based on the above situations, widows suffer a lot for lack of human needs. Most of them die early as a result of the stress they pass through. The researcher wonders why the loss of a beloved spouse should result in oppression and deprivation instead of sympathy and support. These problems the widows encounter are mostly as a result of greed from the husband's relations. The researcher observed that; widows find it difficult to adjust to the new situation in which they find themselves. Based on this, the researcher is interested in investigating the nature of cultural widowhood practices in Nigeria and to proffer possible solutions to these problems. The main purpose of this paper is to study the challenges of widowhood practices in Igboland and the way forward. Oral interview was used as a method of data collection. Secondary and Primary sources were used. Research works were also used. The following recommendations were made; that government, churches, organizations, traditional rulers and women associations should join hands to ameliorate the conditions of widows in Igboland. A strong law must be promulgated to ensure that widows get their rights after the death of their husbands.

Keywords: Widowhood practices, Igboland, Biblical view

Introduction

The Institution of marriage was created by God. God's intention was for man to have a happy and successful companionship. However, man is not meant to live forever. Therefore, death is inevitable in life. When a man dies, the other one left behind is in a condition of widowhood. This is not a palatable condition, and it becomes more painful when a woman is left behind to fend for herself and the children. The current trend of widowhood involves many young women who are faced with many challenges in life.

Loss of a husband as the head of the family can cause the wife and the children a lot of trauma and challenges in life. The sudden departure of the head of the family means a bleak future and the beginning of a new life entirely. Nwoke in Adamu (2008) was of the opinion that the widow is sometimes left in the state of dissolution. Contributing to the issue of widowhood, Akpala (2006) is of the view that, the death of a spouse can be the most devastating life experience of the affected individual in her lifetime. The psychological trauma that comes after the death of a spouse is always tremendous on the surviving spouse. However, in most cases, a surviving wife becomes the primary suspect for a husband's death, whereas in the case of a husband, he is provided with materials needed to comfort him on the death of his wife. While the wife receives all manner of insults from the spouse's relations, the man on the contrary receives sympathy and encouragement, from relatives, friends and sympathizers.

Men are never tortured or suspected to have killed their wives when they die, rather, men

are usually encouraged to put behind them, the death of their wives to face the challenges of life ahead of them. In many places, women who lose their husbands are sent away from their matrimonial homes, and all their properties confiscated by their husband's relations. The fact that Igbo women are being subjected to torture after the death of their husbands is a well-known practice in many parts of the country. The widow mourns her dead husband for nearly a year. Within these months of mourning, she is confronted with several problems and challenges from people, both within and out of the relations of the deceased husband. She now takes the position of the husband and attempts to ensure that all needs are met. for example; the physical needs, safety need, needs for belongingness, need for information and so on. Therefore, this study is set to examine the nature of cultural widowhood practices in Igboland: Biblical view, and the way out.

Theoretical Framework

Relative Deprivation theory propounded by American sociologist Robert K. Merton was used in this research as a result of its relevance to the research. Theory of relative deprivation is based on the concept that persons may feel deprived of some desirable thing relative their own pasts, other persons or groups, or some other social category.

According to Walker and Heather (2001), Relative Deprivation may be seen as the experience of being deprived of something to which one believes oneself to be entitled to. The widow's entitled to her late husband's

property is denied such property thereby rendering her powerless and voiceless. Relative deprivation theory is based on the notion that people will often feel that they have less than some comparative standard. People can feel relatively deprived of tangible items, such as money or cars, or intangible items, such as social status or respect. Shaefer (2008) defines relative deprivation as the conscious experience of a negative discrepancy between legitimate expectations and present actualities. Consequently, it has important consequences for both behaviour and attitudes including stress, political attitudes and participation in collective action of a widow that will bring about community development. Hence the behaviour and attitude of a widow who lost her husband to death change overnight from wealth to poverty, clean to unclean as perceived, good woman to evil widow. However, this situation of discontent ought to push a widow into joining social movements to end it but widows we know are prone to conflict avoidance, are short term oriented and they believe that imminent life difficulties may arise since there is no guarantee that in their life-improvement will result from social action. This is a true condition of denial, marginalization, and exclusion of a widow.

Explanation of Terms

Widowhood explained

When one of the partners dies in a relationship, the other is said to be **widowed**. This is only true if the person who's alive **chooses not to remarry**. That is, they can be called a widow only if they

don't **remarry** after their spouse dies. **Widowhood** is the state of being widowed. It is used for both men and women. Widowhood is a condition in which a woman lost her husband by death. The death of a man automatically plunges his wife into widowhood. In a patriarchal society; widows are subjected to inhuman treatment at the death of their husbands. Widowhood practice is an unjust cultural practice directed against women who lose their husbands

A woman becomes a widow when the man with whom she had planned the present and the future life is no longer available to share, shape the hopes and the dreams of years ahead. She becomes helpless as she commences a lone journey full of uncertainties of life. She is seen as a liability, powerless, voiceless and vulnerable (Eze, Egwuatu and Nnamdi, 2024). Boulding (2009 in Eze, Egwuatu and Nnamdi, 2024), noted that a widow is like a melancholy bird that sits wailing all night, increasing her distress without redeeming features. She can also be seen as a woman who is done with her wedding affirmation of till death do us path. This situation gives birth to widowhood. Hence widowhood can be described as a by-product of every enduring marriage which ends with a spousal (husband) bereavement. Encyclopedia of Death and Dying (2008) stated that a widow is a woman, young or old who formally contracted her marriage under the customary marriage act or any religious act and lost her husband to death but did not remarry. Oreh (2006) states that widowhood involves a physical break in the family relations and is ranked by widows as the most stressful and devastating event in life. This is because widowhood does not only involve

the loss of the role of a wife to the husband but also the loss of a person most supportive of the woman, the person who has played a central role in the woman's life, the father of her children, the family breadwinner and the companion of the woman. This transition from wifedom to a widow happens so suddenly and swiftly that in one minute a woman who is a wife transits to a widow. It is at this moment that she starts to experience all the widowhood practices under discussion (Eze, Egwuatu and Nnamdi, 2024).

Review of Widowhood in Igboland

According to Eze, Egwuatu and Nnamdi, (2024). Widowhood cultural practice is an unfair cultural practice against women especially when it hinders the rights of women. The death of a spouse is not the same for males and female folks; invariably, when a man joins his ancestor, the deceased wife experience negative dimension in her life, it is at this point that a woman begins to mettle some rituals associated with harmful traditional practice on issue of inheritance.

The widow is silence in some oppression that ends her socio-economic disposition; the widows' ordeal begins immediately the death of her husband is announced by the family (Oloko 1997 in Eze, Egwuatu and Nnamdi, 2024). The harmful maltreatment of widows is accompanied with rituals, oppression, dehumanization and humiliation of bereaved women with traditional religious practice (Nwoga, 1989 in Eze, Egwuatu and Nnamdi, 2024). The traditional practice on the bereaved man depends on status of the dead person, but the wife of a common man passes through traumatic wailing beating her chest, fling her arms and sat on bare floor for other

women to surround her until the remains is laid to rest. The widow scream tears on the death of her husband or she faces fine, punishment or sanction (Eze, Egwuatu and Nnamdi, 2024).

Widowhood varies from bad to worse depending on the status of the family affected; it affects socio-economic dislocations on the well-being of the family. A woman in Igbo culture is not accorded full social recognition no matter her status in life unless she is married and bears children or at least a child. Igbo women remain women of substance as long as their husbands are alive. If an Igbo woman loses her husband to death, her story changes. Automatically, she becomes a murder suspect in some places because death in most parts of Igbo land is never deemed a natural occurrence. The widow is seen as unclean and unholy, and as a result of people's perception of the widow, certain harmful widowhood practices are meted out to her. These practices arise from the culture of the particular Igbo community. The Igbo culture includes various customs, practices and traditions of the people. It comprises of archaic practices as well as new concepts adapted into Igbo culture either through evolution or external influence. Odimegwa (2010) in Eze, Egwuatu and Nnamdi, (2024), assert that in Igbo cosmology, community life embraces the living and the dead, and it is for these reasons that widowhood practices are put in place. The Igbo culture makes it incumbent on the living to respect the wishes of the dead, while the dead are compelled to protect the living. Widowhood practice is an integral part of the funeral rites accorded the dead.

A widow, according to Young (2006) in Eze, Egwuatu and Nnamdi, (2024), cannot avoid standing out by the conspicuous clothing culture demands her to wear. This intense period of social rejection lasts for a relatively limited time, in some places six months while in others one year. These practices have far reaching consequences on the widow, her children and the community at large.

However, to liberate widows from all forms of discrimination, advocacy campaign, lectures, seminars, workshops will eliminate these harsh practices meted against women in Igboland and Nigeria in general.

Every society has its own rites for the dead that affect the wife of the dead and the children in some cases. In Igbo land, this phase of life is accompanied by certain socio-cultural practices which Nwoga (1989) referred to as sets of expectation as to the actions and behaviours by the widow, actions by others towards the widow and rituals performed by or on behalf of the widow from the time of death of her husband. Later phase of these practices may include issues of inheritance, the state of the widow and marriage or remarriage of the widow (Eze, Egwuatu and Nnamdi, 2024). Oreh (1998) expressed that widowhood practices can be seen as socio-cultural practices encompassing burial rites, mourning rituals, inheritance rights of the widow, her expected behaviour towards others and other people's behaviour towards her arising from the death of her husband. These practices according to Nwaogugu (1989) in Eze, Egwuatu and Nnamdi, (2024), are culture-bound because they reflect the prevailing values of a given socio-cultural milieu. Umezina (2007)

noted that although widowhood practices are common phenomena in Igbo land, the intensity is not the same in every town. These cultural practices have portrayed the Igbo state of Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo States in a very bad light, particularly regarding the treatment of women who have lost their life partner, breadwinner, confidant and husband, all rolled into one. In collaboration to this, Foehner & Cozart (1988) stated that these practices make widowhood exhaustive and traumatic and are capable of making the widow lose focus. Thus the widow is frightened, lonely and grieving excessively. In Igbo culture, widowhood practice is an exclusive preserve for widows, not widowers. Agumagu (2007) in Eze, Egwuatu and Nnamdi, (2024), observed that a widower has no traditional lay down laws governing his mourning rites. This period which is supposed to be a quiet and private time as the widow strives to accept her loss has been turned into a period of agony, anxiety, pain and insecurity for the widow in Igboland. This is because it is a period the widow is subjected to psychological, social, physical and emotional torture as a result of her bereavement.

Different Types of Widowhood Practices in Igbo Land

1. **Programmed Wailing:** The widow is compelled to wails very early in the morning before and after the burial of her husband. This is to demonstrate the depth of her grief over the death of her husband.
2. **Sitting on the floor:** The widow is compelled to sit on the floor by the instruction of "Umuada" as a sign that

- she has lost her pride which is her husband.
3. **Sleeping or sitting next to the corpse:** This practice mandates a widow to sit by her husband's corpse or to lie down on a mat beside the corpse. To accord her dead husband respect and to enjoy his company for the last time a widow is mandated to sit by her husband's corpse and also lie beside her husband's corpse.
 4. **Oath ritual:** As a proof of her innocence, that she did not kill her husband or hide any of her husband's property, the widow is forced to drink the water used in bathing her husband's corpse.
 5. **Shaving of hair:** In Igbo land, the widow's hair is shaved to make her seem not useful any longer as it was believed that her beauty is meant for her husband and since the husband is no longer alive, she has no need keeping her hair. It is a common belief that the beauty of a woman is for her husband only.
 6. **Tying up of hands in rags:** Okoye (2001) in Eze, Egwuatu and Nnamdi, (2024), assert that in Uzo-Uwani LGA in Enugu State, the widow's hands are tied up in rags in the manner of the boxer's gloves for three months. During this period, the widow does not eat with her hands, thus she experiences a period of starvation unless she is fed by another widow. This is to show the widow that she has lost her freedom.
 7. **Forced to take a bath on her husband's grave:** the widow is forced to take a bath on the husband's grave and to run back naked inside the house as a sign of severing her relationship with her dead husband.
 8. **Stipulated period of mourning:** In some Igbo communities a widow is expected to compulsorily mourn with a stipulated mourning outfit for six months or one year. This is an outward show of grief.
 9. **Dropping of condolence gifts on the ground/forbidding to shake hands with people:** She is not expected to stretch out her hands to receive gifts from people because she is termed unclean. She is also forbidden from shaking hands with anybody.
 10. **Widow inheritance (Forceful remarriage):** According to Eze, Egwuatu and Nnamdi, (2024), this is called (Nkuchi nwanyi) or forceful remarriage of a widow to her husband's younger brother or a close relation. This way the widow is assured that she will not be disinherited of her husband's properties or driven out of her matrimonial home. This widow inheritance is called levirate arrangement. This arrangement has its own problems. The children of the widow may not like it, and the first wife of the younger brother may feel threatened.
 11. **Wearing of black or white mourning outfit:** is often associated with evil and the widow is expected to wear this outfit first to be noticed as a widow and secondly as someone who has an evil omen. The Christian

mothers now insist on wearing white instead of black. Whether it is black or white, there is no difference, since mourning outfits are the same because they have the same interpretation.

12. **Disinheritance of a widow:**

According to Eze, Egwuatu and Nnamdi, (2024), this is a situation where a widow is not allowed to inherit any property of her husband. Igbo land is mainly a patriarchal society in which a widow is seen as a chattel of her husband and his family. As a chattel, she is incapable of owning or inheriting a property but she qualifies to be inherited herself. The only exception is if the woman has a living male child who can inherit part of his father's property and through him the mother may benefit. It is worse in a matrilineal society where the members of the man's maternal family particularly the man's brothers, sisters and their children dispossess the dead man's biological children of their father's property. This practice contradicts section 36 of the Nigerian Marriage Act which stipulates that a widow with children is entitled to one-third of her husband's estate. Where the widow has no child, she is entitled to half of her husband's estate. The above therefore indicates that on paper, a widow and her children are entitled to inherit from the dead man's estate as sole beneficiaries. In practice this is not the case. The customary law contradicts Section 36 of the

Nigerian Marriage Act. Disinheritance of widows is one major problem suffered by widows across board. Nwoga (1989) was of the opinion that it is acquisitiveness that controls the treatment of a widow especially in the area of inheritance. The widow is thus dehumanized and humiliated by these religious rituals and other practices.

CHALLENGES OF THE WIDOWS AS A RESULT OF HARMFUL TRADITIONAL PRACTICES IN IGBOLAND

The loss of a spouse is recognized as a painful and distressing experience associated with many challenges after bereavement. There are disruptions of widow's social relationships, deteriorating health and physical capacity, as well as declining financial resources that compound the loss of a spouse, these challenges are articulated hereunder:

Poverty: According to Genyi and George-Genyi (2013) in Eze, Egwuatu and Nnamdi, (2024), many Nigerian widows are pauperized by widowhood practices. These practices drastically reduce the economic status of widows upon the death of their husband. According to United Nations (2011), poverty is beyond income and it includes wellbeing or good life in a multidimensional sense that comprises both material and psychological components. Wellbeing on the other hand encompasses peace of mind, good health and safety, freedom of choice and action and being able to associate in a community. Wellbeing means also a dependable livelihood and a

steady source of income. All these can by no means contribute to community development when they are lacking.

Physical and Psychological traumas:

Widowhood practices cause physical and psychological traumas on the widows. When widows are deprived of their autonomy and their right of creativity and productivity in life, and also denied the opportunity to social and economic development of themselves, their families and their communities, they are likely to have both physical and psychological traumas.

Violence: Widow's rights are being violated which could cause them physical, sexual, psychological and economic harm, including the threat to take arbitrary restrictions on or deprivation of fundamental freedoms in private or public life. When such violence which includes inflicting physical, mental or sexual harm, threats of such acts, coercion and deprivations of liberty is directed against a woman because she is a woman or where such violence affects women disproportionately, they are bound to lose their liberty

Pressure to Amorous Relationship: Men courageously make sexual advances to the widow, especially males from the husband's side. They use it as a yardstick to protect their interest when the need arises as fondly serve to the bereaved. Many widows generally attach more significance to physical appearance than men do, so they are reluctant to expose their aging bodies to sexual relationship. There are men who think that what a widow needs is sex. They pursue a widow and offer her their sexual services. They think she is anxious and so will be a pushover. Widows

should know that there is no way out of sexual immorality without consequences like abortion, STDs, HIV/AIDS.

Strategies For Elimination of Harmful Widowhood Practices in Igboland

Elimination of the Age Long Traditional practices:

According to Eze, Ekwuatu and Nnamdi, (2024), the age long practice in our traditions should be modified by educating the traditional rulers and elders on the consequences of these practices and how they affect the children, who are the growing society. The committees should be formed in localities to review and eradicate these obnoxious practices, and replace them with the modern trend of law. Patriarchy should be eliminated to achieve the gender equality over the years.

Child up-bringing:

Omartain (2001) noted that parenting can be the best of jobs and can also be the most difficult of jobs. It can bring joy; it can cause the greatest pain. It can be fulfilling and exhilarating. It can be depleting and exhausting. It can make one feel like a success when all is going well or like a failure when things go wrong. As a result of changes in life especially after the loss of a spouse, widows sometimes feel like giving up and at others are encouraged. A widow needs God's help to bring up her children God's own way. It is the power of God that penetrates a child's life when the mother prays. The continued permanent absence of the father places on the mother the principal responsibility for the child's socialization especially in the face of bereavement. The single parent child concentrates on the mother first before

interacting with others. Because he lacks father figure, sex-typing and sex identification may be lacking. The child may be less assertive and more dependent on peers. The single parent child is often at cross roads in terms of discipline because some widows are afraid of their child's anticipated misbehaviour and tend to be too hard on the child, thus creating friction. Some other widows in contrast may be permissive. In some cases, the child may feel rejected and develop inferiority complex. This may affect his academic achievement. The child may also be aggressive because anytime others talk about their fathers, he/she becomes angry (Eze, Egwuatu and Nnamdi, (2024).

In-laws: Despite one's mode of marriage in Igbo land, it is believed that a woman is not just married to the man but to the family. To a large extent in-laws have influence on the widow at the time of her bereavement. They are the perpetrators of widowhood practices. Widow of the 21st century in Igbo land has greater advantage and opportunities of receiving justice than her counterpart a couple of years back. Widows should assert their rights in a most civilized manner.

Financial Challenges: A widow as a result of changing times and expectations, is expected to take care of herself without the work experience and the financial knowledge to do so. The reasons are that some deaths occur suddenly while others follow a long illness. Some marriages are short and sweet while others are long and bitter. Some couples had discussed financial matters while others did not. No matter the widow's particular circumstance(s), financial challenges must arise and must be addressed.

Causes of financial challenge abound and may include: Prolonged and extravagant funerals, Low income or earning by the widow, Fines imposed on the widow by "Umuada", Disinheritance of the widow of her husband's estate by the in-laws. Widows are advised to begin early to prepare for the rainy days because no rainy days can be worse than the days of widowhood.

21ST CENTURY WIDOWS

1. 21st century widows have greater autonomy and independence.
2. They have increased access to education and employment opportunities.
3. They have more financial security and control over resources.
4. They have access to support groups and online communities.
5. Greater acceptance of widowhood as a natural life transition.
6. Increased recognition of diversity of widowhood experiences.
7. Greater emphasis on personal growth and self-discovery.
8. Increased focus on mental health and wellness.
9. More opportunities for social engagement and community involvement.
10. Changed social norms and reduced stigma around remarriage.

Cultural or Traditional Widows

1. They often face strict social and cultural expectations.
2. Have limited opportunities for personal growth or self-discovery.

3. Face pressure to preserve family honor or reputation.
 4. Be expected to maintain traditional gender roles and responsibilities
 5. Have limited access to education, employment, or financial resources.
 6. Face stigma or discrimination based on their status.
 7. May be viewed as vulnerable or in need of protection.
 8. Often rely on family and community support for financial and emotional needs.
 9. Face restrictions on remarriage or social interactions.
 10. May be expected to wear mourning attire or follow specific rituals
 11. Often face strict social and cultural expectations.
4. Everybody in the public should be enlightened on the harmful effects of these rituals and their eradication. This is possible by raising awareness about widowhood challenges and promote education on women's rights and empowerment.
 5. Encourage community participation in supporting widows and their families. Handbills should be printed and shared out, so that the literate and semiliterate ones can read.
 6. Some churches should assist in this drive by carrying out enlightenment campaign to eradicate obnoxious widowhood practices. Religious worshippers should also be taught the need for the eradication of such practices.
 7. Every state in Nigeria should form Non-governmental organization to take care of the plights of widows. They should fight against the harmful, obnoxious, inhuman and degrading treatment against widows; making sure that widows are protected always and the property of their husbands given to them for their upkeep and the training of their children, especially the very young widows, whose husbands died early in their marriages.
 8. These commissioned NGO's should establish Widows Centres and Associations, where all widows should meet on monthly basis to report and discourse any ill treatment and harmful cultural practices against them in the villages and their late husband's family. These centres and associations according to Eze, Egwuatu and Nnamdi, (2024) are expected to fight for the widows' right,

Solution / Way Forward

The following solutions can help alleviate the challenges faced by widows and support their overall well-being.

1. Widows should rely on God as their husband and God is ready to grant their request to protect and fight their enemies.
2. A widow should be busy in order to help her think less about the bereavement especially now that she is alone to shoulder the economic responsibilities of the family, this can be possible through giving the widow full employment to keep the family moving economically
3. Offer skill training and capacity building programmes to enhance widows' economic opportunities.

- take the culprits to court and pay the litigation fee if need be. The widows should always speak out and lodge complaint with the centres and associations.
9. Women should have quality education, and study professional courses so as to know their rights and enforce it, and also to be employed in lucrative jobs for fat remuneration to take care of their needs, like having money to enforce their rights in court, taking care of their children. Also, the essence of empowering women academically will abolish these harmful practices against poor widows. In other words, provide financial support, education, and job training to help widows become self-sufficient.
 10. The spouse in their lifetimes should endeavour to make valid wills. The husband in the marriage should make a will bequeathing his property to his wife to avoid obnoxious custom and tradition to his hard earned property. This property is often acquired with the active support of both spouses.
 11. All schools should be involved in war against obnoxious widowhood practices. This should be drawn in secondary and university curricula under civic education and humanities as GS for all. The students should be aware on the effects of these rituals and the need to eradicate them.
 12. Ensure that widows have access to healthcare and mental health services.
 13. Foster collaboration among organizations, governments, and communities to address widowhood challenges.
 14. Support community-based initiatives that address specific needs of widows.
 15. Offer legal aids to help widows navigate inheritance, property rights, and other legal issues. The judges should look into the plights of the widows, when cases are brought before them in court. The judiciary arm is meant to interpret law; the courts are the custodian of these interpretations. The laws should be interpreted to be in line with the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. This will lead to making of decisions that are constitutional, and in the respect of the rule of law and the widows' human rights to enthrone equality; the widows will be happy for equality is equity. If these right judgments are pronounced by the courts, this will ensure enforcement, consequently the polity will be free from these harmful practices and the inequality and discrimination against widows will be laid to rest.
 16. Provide access to counseling and therapy to help widows cope with grief and trauma. Also conduct research and collect data to better understand widowhood challenges and inform solution.
 17. Women or daughter should inherit from her father's property and wife inherit from her husband's property for this is in line with the equality and non-discrimination provided in the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Widowhood laws and international regional norms.
 18. Advocate for policy changes that protect widows' rights and provide support. The

custom that disinherits a woman of property should be declared repugnant to natural justice, equity and good conscience.

19. Create social support networks by creating support groups and community programmes to connect widows with others who share similar experiences.

Biblical Views on Widowhood

Some key Biblical views on widowhood are:

1. Care for widows: God commands the Israelites to care for widows and fatherless children. “He doth execute the judgement of the fatherless and widows, and loveth the stranger, in giving him food and raiment” (Deuteronomy 10:18, see also Deuteronomy 24:17-22 KJV).
2. Early Christian church prioritized caring for widows: “And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministrations....” (Acts 6:1-6 KJV).
3. Protection and provision: God promises to protect and provide for widows. “A father of the fatherless and a judge of the widows, is God in His holy habitations” (Psalm 68:5, see also Isaiah 54:4 KJV).
4. Bible encourages believer to provide for widows and support them financially. “Honour widows that are widows indeed. But if any widow has children or nephews, let them learn first to shew piety at home, and to requite their parents; for that is good and acceptable before God...” (1 Timothy 5:3-16 KJV).
5. Honour and respect: Widows are to be honoured and respected “Honour widows that are widows indeed” (1 Timothy 3 KJV).
6. The Bible also emphasizes the importance of treating widows with kindness and dignity.
7. Remarriage: The Bible allows widows to remarry. “For the woman which hath a husband is bound by the law to her husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband... she is free from that law... she be married to another man” (Romans 7:2-3, see also 1 Corinthians 7:8-9 KJV).
8. Bible encourages widows to consider their spiritual well-being and potential impact on their faith. (see 1 Corinthians 7:39-40).
9. Spiritual significance: widowhood can be a catalyst for spiritual growth and dependence on God (2 Corinthians 1:8-10). In this passage of the Bible, the Bible highlights the importance of trusting in God’s sovereignty and provision during difficult times, including widowhood.
10. Community responsibility: The Biblical community is responsible for ensuring the well-being of widows. (Acts 2:44-47, Galatians 6:2). Believers are encouraged to support and care for widows as an act of service to God

Biblical Admonition

However, the Bible admonished widows as follows:

Widows should remember: a) Isaiah 58: 8 – Your maker is your husband, so be faithful to him. b) I Peter 2: 11 – Abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul. c) I Corinthians 6:18 – Flee from sexual immorality. Every sin that a man commits is outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body. d) 1 Cor 6:13 – The body is not for sexual immorality but for the Lord and the Lord for the body.

Widows should be guided by the following Scriptures: a) Proverbs 22: 6 – Train up a child the way he should go, when he grows up he will not depart from it. b) Proverbs 23:13 – Do not withhold discipline from a child; if you punish him with the rod he will not die. c) Proverbs 29: 15 – The rod of correction imparts wisdom, but a child let to himself disgraces his mother (Eze, Egwuatu and Nnamdi, 2024).

Conclusion

Conclusion from the findings of this study, it can be deduced that widows in Igboland suffered discrimination, dehumanization and destitution as a result of cultural widowhood practices. Based on the above findings: a) government should enter into dialogue with stakeholders to remove or stop the obnoxious negative cultural widowhood practices. b) rehabilitation centres can be created for widows where they can learn self-help skills and receive free counselling services.

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