

## Assessing the Effects of Widowhood on Children Education in Southwestern, Nigeria

Adeyemo C. W.

Department Of Educational Foundations And Management, Ekiti State University, Ado-Ekiti

E-mail: [cwyemo@yahoo.com](mailto:cwyemo@yahoo.com)

### Abstract

Widowhood has been found to have negative effects on widows and their children all over. The state of widowhood, most especially in Southwestern Nigeria is characterized by poverty, insecurity, disinheritance, ignorance and superstition. The unemployed widows are particularly vulnerable and are deprived of moral and financial supports when they need such most. It is therefore not surprising as they feel inadequate to cope with the responsibilities of providing good and qualitative education for their children. This study therefore, investigates the plight of unemployed widows in Ekiti-State and the effects of this on their children education. The study employed the descriptive research design. A multi-stage sampling technique of stratified and simple random sampling technique was used to select 150 respondents for the study. A self-structured questionnaire and Key Informant Interview were used to collect relevant data which were analyzed through simple percentages. The study revealed that children of widows are usually neglected abandoned and uncared for. It therefore calls on the governments, N.G.O, and the society to assist such children with scholarship towards the attainment of good and qualitative education. It also recommends that widows should engage in various vocational skills to have a sustainable income that can help meet the needs of their children.

**Key Notes:** Widowhood, unemployed widows, Children education, Vocational skills.

### Introduction

Widowhood has continued to bring great hardship to widows and their children all over the world, particularly in South-western Nigeria. Widows are impoverished by the demise of their husbands who are the major contributors to household income. Studies have shown that when the father as the head of the family died, the source of provision for the family is closed and widows and the children begin to suffer from financial hardship, (Okoye 1995 ; Oloko 1997 Anyanwu, 2005; (Ogundipe, 2009 and Olaniyi, 2010). From that point, widows are face with lots of problems which includes: poor financial status, low standard of living, disinheritance, frustration, loneliness and poverty. This involves the women now taken over roles that are traditionally carried by men, such as feeding, clothing, Payment for house-rent, electricity and the general household maintainance, etc. The difficulty of paying the school fees and providing essentials school materials have been found to be more stressful for widows. In addition to coping with the increased burden of raising children without the help of the husband, widows are often deprived of moral and financial support when needed. Ogundipe, (2009) stressed that the economic hardship of widows include; loss of marital expectations and security, especially with respect to maintaining and raising the children, which should have been a joint responsibility of the couple.

### Factors responsible for poor socio-economic condition of widows

Many factors have been attributed to the poor socio-economic conditions of widows in Southwestern Nigeria. The major factor observed in this study is the Socio-cultural factor preventing women from having a direct access to the husband's property. In Yoruba culture, women are considered as part of the estate of their husband who are to be inherited by relatives of the husband, Bamgbose, (2005). Therefore, the disinheritance of widows has prevented them from having access to materials and financial resources and has further incapacitated them in their bid to ensure the general wellbeing of their families. Another factor responsible for the poor socio-economic condition of widows is the issue of poverty. In most cases, poverty gives rise to the scandalous scramble for the dead man's property by the poor relation sees the death of their rich relation as a good opportunity for elevating themselves from abject poverty. With this, the widow may as a result lose all her husband's property to them. Oloko (2001) reported that as soon as a prosperous husband dies, his relatives descend on the grieving widow, carting away important assets and even chasing her out of the matrimonial home.

Similarly, (Ogundipe, 2009 and Olaniyi, 2010) also reported that the poor socio-economic status of widows is as a result of the long period of incarceration during widowhood, in which a widow cannot engage in any economic venture nor do any personal work to earn an income. They stated further that during the outing ceremony, a widow may have to spend all she had left in shouldering the responsibilities, most especially if the children are still young. Similarly, Okoye (1995) and Oloko (1997) have earlier pointed that the socio-economic activities that are associated with the final burial make it harder for widows to provide for their children. Anugwom (2011) also confirmed that widowhood rites enforced on widows result in different kind of losses

which invariably exposed them to economic hardships, confinement and ill-treatment. Moreover, this study also established illiteracy and unemployment as other factors responsible for the poor socio-economic conditions of widows in Southwestern Nigeria. Adeyemo, (2010) observed that illiteracy and joblessness were responsible for widows lack of access to materials and financial resources. Confirming this, Anyanwu, (2005) stressed that, women generally depend more on their husband's earning and the death of the spouse marks the beginning of a terrible crisis for such women. Babalola, (1997) also confirmed that unlike the uneducated widows, widows who are educated and gainfully employed have sufficient financial resources to cushion the effects of economic hardship brought about by widowhood,

#### **Effects of poor socio-economic condition of widows on children education**

Widowhood has a brutal and irrevocable impact on widows and their children in Nigeria. Things became particularly hard for widows as they are left alone with the responsibilities of catering for the children singlehandedly. The case of unemployed widows is particularly pathetic as they have to engage in petty trading and menial jobs to sustain themselves and also take care of the children education. Many of them do not have any educational background that qualify them to look for jobs, neither do they have the opportunity of inheriting any property due to injustice, ignorance, superstition and poverty. It is therefore not surprising that most widows feel inadequate to cope with the increased responsibilities resulting from their status as widows. Moreover, observations have shown that children of widows are often rejected and neglected by relatives and friends of the deceased. This situation becomes worst when the in-laws withdrawn all material and money left behind by the dead husband, which makes it difficult for widows to cope. Thus, most widows end up withdrawing their children from schools. The children along the line often become indisciplined and school dropout. The girls may resort to prostitution to support themselves and the family, while the males may take to drugs, robbery, etc.

Further, lack of public concern for the suffering of widows and their children on the part of governments, non-governmental organizations and the society has further compounded the suffering of widows. Public policies have not been sufficiently developed to protect widows' inheritance right as well as well as protecting them against all forms of abuses. Also the financial assistance from the government, non-governmental organisations as well as from individual that could have provided succor for widow's children education was not forthcoming and adequate. Ilemobade (2005) observed that lack of widow's supports often forced the young children of most widows, particularly the females among them to drop out of school in order to cater for other siblings, while the males becomes truants in the course of fending for themselves or putting bread on the family's table.

The above facts therefore depict the characteristics of the socio-economic status of widows in Southwestern Nigeria. It is therefore important that efforts are geared to reduce these problems in order to take care of the children's education and improve the overall welfare of widows. To this end, this study has established that a lot of problems facing widows can be solved if they are gainfully employed. Vocational skills acquisition has therefore been considered in this study as a major economic activity that can guarantee and empower widows to have a better future for themselves and their children. It involves the acquisition of skills, abilities, values, attitude and competencies essential for employment, on the job improvement as well as poverty reduction. Corroborating this, ( Oni, 2007; Adeyemo, 2010 and Aromolaran, 2011) have described vocational skills as an aspect of training that gives its recipients an opportunity to acquire practical skills and knowledge needed for entry into the world of work as self-employed. Also, Bhola (1994) sees vocational skills training as that which can liberate women, particularly, widows from unemployment, economic dependency and poverty. Supporting this, Akpama and Andong (2008) also describe vocational skills acquisition as a tool for economic empowerment that can sustain widows and her children and expose them to all necessary economic opportunities, leading to supportive services that can liberate them. Therefore, widows need to engage themselves in these economic activities to enable them meet the various challenges of widowhood and there is no doubt that vocational skills will empowered them to train their children to any level.

#### **Statement of the problem**

The facts from above as well as personal observation have shown that widows and their children suffer great hardship at the demise of the husband and besides, financial constraints and economic responsibilities of children education is quite demanding and heartbreaking. This therefore raises salient questions as to what happens to the education of widow's children. How would widows they take care of them? How would they acquire good education to any level? This study therefore considers financial assistance from relations, friends, government, non-governmental organization and concern individuals as well as engagement of widows in Vocational skills acquisitions such as tie and dye/batik, cloth weaving, soap making, sewing/fashion design, hair dressing, beads making, cream and cosmetics, cakes and confectionaries and availability of Micro-credit loans as ways of enhancing the education of widow's children in Nigeria.

### Purpose of the study

The central concern of this study is to determine how the death of the father has affected the children education. It is also out to assess the role played by relations and friends, governments at all levels, NGO, Religious bodies and individuals in assisting widow's children in their educational achievements. It also examines the efforts made by widows in training their children.

### Research Questions

- 1 In what ways can father's death affect the educational achievements of children?
- 2 What are the roles played by the Government, NGO's and Individuals in assisting widows children?
- 3 What are the efforts made by widows in educating their children?

### Research Method

The descriptive research design of the survey type was adopted for the study. The respondents consist of students in tertiary institution, lecturers, civil servants, businessmen and widows in Ekiti-State. The simple random sampling technique was used select 150 respondents consisting of 50 students, 25 lecturers, 25 civil servants and 50 widows from selected vocational skills centers. A self-constructed questionnaire and Key Informant Interview sessions were used to collect relevant data which was analysed through simple percentages.

### Results and Discussion

**Research question 1:** What are the effects of father's death on children's children?

**Table 1:** Effects of father's death on children education

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	D	SD
1	The death of a father affects the education of the children.	67	21	18	
2	Children of widows pays their school fees and other levies as at when due.		13	42	45
3	They also possess adequate text books, uniform and other school materials as students with both parents		26	42	32
4	Students who are fatherless engage in truancy and other social vices in school.	36	30	34	

Findings from the above table revealed that the death of a father has negative effects on the standard of living of widows and the children education. Item 1 shows that 88 respondents agreed that the death of the father affects the children's education, while only 18 respondents disagreed. On whether the children of widows pay school fees and other levies as at when due, 87 respondents disagreed with the statement, while 13 respondents agreed. Also, on whether widow's children possess adequate text books, uniform and other school materials as children with both parents, 74 respondents disagreed with this, while 26 respondents agreed. In the same vein, 66 respondents agreed that widow's children are usually engaged in truancy and other social vices which may lead to their dropping out of school and while 34 respondents disagreed with this statement. This study has thus established that with the death of the father, it becomes uneasy and inconvenient for widows to take up the responsibility of educating her children all alone. This supports the findings of Anyakahola (2008) who reported that the death of the bread-winner could mean the loss of hope for children's education. The reason according to him is that the income of an average widow could not adequately cater for children education from primary to university level.

**Research question 2:** What are the roles played by the Government, N.G.O s. and Individuals in educating widow's children?

**Table 2:** Roles of Government, NGO and Individual in educating widow's children

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	D	SD
1	Widows children get adequate financial assistance from relatives and friends of the deceased	-	5	44	51
2	Federal Government made adequate provision for the education of widow's children.	-	10	36	64
3	Both the State and Local government have provision for the education of widow's children	-	4	53	43
4	NGO and Religious bodies are always ready to assist widows in educating their children.	32	40	28	-

Item 1 above shows that 95% of the respondents disagreed on the fact that children of the deceased get adequate financial assistance from relatives and friends of the deceased. Only 5% agreed with this. Item 2 also indicate that 90% respondents agreed that Federal Government made adequate provision for the education of widow's children, while 10% disagreed with this. In addition, 96% also disagreed with the fact that both the State and Local governments have provision for the education of widow's children, while only 4% agreed on this. Lastly, 72% of the respondents agreed that non-governmental organisations and religious bodies are always

ready to assist widows in educating their children, while 28% disagreed with this.

The above results revealed the negative attitudes of the deceased families and friends towards his immediate family. It is pathetic that the concern of the deceased families is usually on how the property of the latter will be shared among them without due consideration for the welfare of both the widow and her children. It was also revealed that the efforts of the government at all levels on widow's children are grossly inadequate. There are no concrete policies concerning the welfare of widows and their children as it is done in developed countries. In addition, the constitutions have not developed fully to protect the inheritance rights of widows that can enable them fend for their children. This corroborate the findings of Ilemobade (2005) who reported that lack of supports for widows has often force the young children of most widows, particularly the females among them to drop out of school in order to cater for other siblings, while the males becomes truants and criminals in the course of fending for themselves.

**Research Question 3:** What are the efforts made by widows in educating their children?

**Table 3: Efforts made by unemployed widows in educating their children**

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	SD	D
1	Unemployed widow engages in petty trading to take care of their children education.	45	32	25	
2	They acquire vocational training skills to train their children in school.	38	43	19	
3	Widows join cooperative societies for financial assistance to support their children education.	-	36	8	56
4	The income of an average widow can conveniently educate the children to any level.	-	-	-	100

From the table above, 77% of the respondents agreed that widows engage in petty trading to take care of themselves and the children education, while 23% disagreed with this. Item 2 also indicates that 81% agreed that non-career widows acquire various vocational training skills to enable them meet up with the demands of children education, while 19 % disagreed. In addition, 64% agreed that widows join cooperative societies for financial assistance to support their children education, while 38 % disagreed with this. Above all, 100% disagreed with the fact that the income of an average widow can supports the education of her children to any level, while 0% agreed with this. The result showed that majority of widow care for their children single handedly and that the unemployed widows are more vulnerable when it comes to the issue of widowhood. As a result of this, many of them engage in petty trading and menial jobs so that they can stand on their own and meet the needs of the family, particularly, children education. They also engage in vocational skills activities to enable them meet up with challenges of children education. Moreover, the study revealed that widows needs to have access to micro-credit loans to support their businesses so as to enhance the education of their children. Those who have guarantors are able to join one cooperative societies or *esusu* to have access to loan facilities.

### Conclusion

This study has revealed that the death of the husband led to poor socio-economic condition of widows and affects children education a great deal. It also showed that friends and relations of the diseased would not do much to assists widows in training the children because of their individual commitments. She is also left at the mercy of the relatives who are always looking forward to grab the deceased properties and not having concern for the education of the children. Moreover, the governments at all levels are more tied to political activities that they do not recognize the plight of fatherless children in the society. The study revealed that some NGO and religious organisations are out to support widows and their children. On this note, the study considered vocational skills acquisition as an antidote to economic hardship of widows. Skills, Such as: tie-dye/batik, cloth weaving, soap making, sewing/fashion design, hair dressing, beads making, cream & cosmetics, cakes & and confectionaries was found to be a major economic activities that will guarantee and empower widows to have a better future and guarantee qualitative education for their children.

### Recommendation

The study therefore recommends that for effective enhancement of the educational achievement for widow's children, the following suggestions should be considered:

1. Establishment of effective policy by the government to protect widows and their children.
2. Government, NGO, religious bodies and individuals should assist the children of the deceased by giving them scholarship to enable them get adequate and qualitative education.
3. Relatives, friends and the society in general should have a change of attitudes to that of willingness to assist widows and their children instead of scrambling for the deceased property.
4. Community should put more efforts in giving financial and moral supports to widows and their children in order to keep them in good spirit.

5. Vocational training centre should be established by government at all levels to assist widows in acquiring skills for economic empowerment.

### References

- Adeyemo C. W. (2010) Vocational skill Acquisition as Determinants of socio-economic and physiological adjustment of widows in Southwestern Nigeria. *PhD Propoasal, Faculty of Education, University of Ibadan.*
- Akpama, S.I and Andong, H. A. (2008) Vocational training and women empowerment opportunities in central senatorial zone, Cross River, State, Nigeria. *The Journal of the Nigeria National Council for Adult Education (NNCAE)* vol 16.
- Anugwon, N. E. (2011). *The Socio-psychological impact of widowhood on elderly-women in Nigeria. OIDA International Journal of Sustainable Development, 89-96.*
- Anyanwu, F.C. (1999) *Socio-cultural practices as correlates of psychological, economic and health dispositions of widows in Imo-State. PhD Thesis, University of Ibadan. pg 2.*
- Babalola S. 1997 Discussion on society, culture, and the status of widows in contemporary Nigeria, in B. Owasoye and B. Ahonsi (eds) *A gender analysis* Fredrick Ebert Foundation, Lagos.
- Ilemobade, A. A. (2005) Husband's family/Relatives: A paper presented at the joy bearer's Annual National Conference for widowers and orphans. Akure P. 3-4
- Ogundipe R.A. (2009) Physiological factors as correlates of adjustment among widows in southwestern Nigeria. *PhD Thesis, University of Ibadan.*
- Okoye, P. 1995. *Widowhood: A natural or Cultural Tragedy.* Enugu. *Nucik Publisher, 129-149.*
- Olajide ,O. E. 2004. Effectiveness of micro credit, as instrument for improving the socio-economic conditions of beneficiaries in Southern Nigeria. *PhD Thesis, Ibadan.*
- Olaniyi, C. M. 2010. *Problems of widowhood practice among Nigerian widows.* Unpublished PhD Thesis, Ekiti State University, Ado-Ekiti.
- Oloko, S.B 1997. Discussion on panoramic view of widowhood in Nigeria. "A gender Analysis" in B. Owasanye & B.A. Ahonsi, (ed) *Widowhood in Nigeria, a gender analysis.* Lagos; Joint Publication of Friedrich Ebert Foundation and Human Development Initiatives. OVC Nigeria Ltd.



The IISTE is a pioneer in the Open-Access hosting service and academic event management. The aim of the firm is Accelerating Global Knowledge Sharing.

More information about the firm can be found on the homepage:  
<http://www.iiste.org>

## CALL FOR JOURNAL PAPERS

There are more than 30 peer-reviewed academic journals hosted under the hosting platform.

**Prospective authors of journals can find the submission instruction on the following page:** <http://www.iiste.org/journals/> All the journals articles are available online to the readers all over the world without financial, legal, or technical barriers other than those inseparable from gaining access to the internet itself. Paper version of the journals is also available upon request of readers and authors.

## MORE RESOURCES

Book publication information: <http://www.iiste.org/book/>

Recent conferences: <http://www.iiste.org/conference/>

## IISTE Knowledge Sharing Partners

EBSCO, Index Copernicus, Ulrich's Periodicals Directory, JournalTOCS, PKP Open Archives Harvester, Bielefeld Academic Search Engine, Elektronische Zeitschriftenbibliothek EZB, Open J-Gate, OCLC WorldCat, Universe Digital Library, NewJour, Google Scholar

