A CROSS-ETHNIC STUDY OF STRESS LEVELS, SUPPORT SYSTEMS AND ADJUSTMENT STRATEGIES AMONG WIDOWS IN NIGERIA

BY

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CERTIFICATION

This is to certify that this research study was conducted by ONIYE, Olayinka AbdulRazaq (Snr.) and had been read and approved as meeting the requirements of the Department of Educational Guidance and Counselling, Faculty of Education, University o Ilorin, Ilorin

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DEDICATION

This project is dedicated to all Nigerian widows and all other disadvantaged groups' world-wide in recognition of their sufferings and untold hardship.

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ABSTRACT

The study investigated stress levels, support systems and adjustment strategies among widows in Nigerian from a Cross-ethnic perspective. Five factors were of interest in the study Viz: ethnic background, educational level, age at bereavement, religious affiliation, and duration of bereavement.

865 widows were purposively selected from the three main ethnic group of Nigeria, i.e Hausa Igbo and Yoruba. The respondents were administered the three instruments developed for their purpose i.e Stress Rating Scale for Widows (SRSW), Widows Adjustment Strategies Questionnaire (WASQ), both developed by the researcher, and Widows Network Support Rating Scale (WNSRS), developed by Abolarin (1997). The data collected were analysed using the Analysis of Variance (ANOVA).

The result of the study show that 258 (or 29.8%) respondents experience stress at low level; 518 (or 59.9%) at medium level; and 89 (or 10.3%) at high level. Almost all the respondents reported enjoying emotional support system (856 or 99.6%), economic support system (853or 98.6%), service support system (850 or 98.2%), and social support system (845 or 97.7%). The five broad categories of adjustment strategies identified by the widows in order of their importance are cognitive-oriented behaviour (856 or 99.0 %), self-care-oriented behaviour (852 or 98.4%), time management-oriented behaviour (850 or 98.2%), solitary-oriented behaviour (848 or 98.0%), and interpersonal-oriented behaviour (845or 97.7%). The results of the study also show that Nigerian widows differ significantly in their stress level, support systems, and adjustment strategies based on their ethnic background.

However, they do not differ in their stress level on the bases of age, educational level and duration of bereavement. On the basis of religious affiliation, they differ significantly in both stress level and support systems. They do not differ significantly in their adjustment strategies and support systems on the bases of age and duration of bereavement.

Based on the findings, it was recommended among there things that all holders in the affairs of the widows e.g the government, the society, relatives, and counsellors should note the impact of ethnic background, age at bereavement, educational level, religious affiliation and duration of bereavement on widow's stress, support systems and adjustment strategies. They should mount intervention strategies like abolition of retrogressive widowhood practices, provision of reliabilitative counselling and establishment of National Commission for widow Affairs aimed at making widowhood less traumatic and less stressful for its victims: the implications of these findings for widows, government, the society and counsellors as professional help-givers include the fact that widowhood practice as presently obtained in Nigeria is generally stressful to the widows, that there is need for the introduction of widowhood and bereavement counselling into the syllabus of counsellor training in Nigerian.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Background to the Study

The human society is an interactive community of people joined together by various ties meant to ensure the preservation, survival and propagation of the human race. One of these ties is the marriage institution which is generally sanctioned in the African society as the basis for the establishment of a family.

Marriage is a socially sanctioned sex relationship involving two or more people of the opposite sex, whose relationship is expected to endure beyond the time required for gestation and the birth of children (Mitchel, 1979). It is a delicate social relationship between a man and a woman that involves permanently living together with a contract that defines the obligation between the two and any children that may emerge (Olusanya, 1970). According to Falola (1991), marriage is the union sanctioned by the society, of man and woman as husband and wife with social obligations recognised as accepted modes of conduct and ways of life. He observed that the more two spouses share common value, the greater their probability of living harmoniously.

In the opinion of Legbara (1991), the relationship in marriage is for the purpose of sexual satisfaction, procreation, child rearing, companionship and assistance. Thus, Fakunle (1992), noted that marriage as an institution is common to all human societies with lots of cultural influences in the area of choice of partners, the role of families of the spouses, the concern for the

assistance. Thus, Fakunle (1992), noted that marriage as an institution is common to all human societies with lots of cultural influences in the area of choice of partners, the role of families of the spouses, the concern for the children and the role performance of the spouses. The family, which is a universal institution is the first manifestation of marriage. In the view of Gbenda (1997), the family is founded on an alliance between a man and a woman (in most cases), an alliance that is characterised by love and the desire to spend life together. Everywhere, the family evokes the idea of a home. It is a place where the members assemble together, protect one another and enjoy gay chanting, merry making, drinking, etc.

The family is also a place for feasting, marriage, celebration of birthdays, anniversaries, jubilees, initiations, death and so on (Gbenda, 1997). In Nigeria, there are at least five (5) types of marriage namely: traditional marriage, court marriage, church marriage, Muslim marriage, and marriage by contract, while the two commonest forms of families are the polygamous and monogamous families. These family systems are a true reflection of the African custom and tradition about the constitution of family. According to Nwobi (1997), the African family is wider in connotation. In fact, it has sometimes been described as the "extended family". Usually the African family is enlarged to include others who are ordinarily not part of the simple nuclear family.

The practice of polygamy (i.e. polygyny) is a further manifestation of marriage in African societies and Nigeria in particular. A polygamous marriage is the common indigenous system of marriage in most, if not all, indigenous African societies (Nwobi, 1998). For example, in the olden days, among the Igbo societies of Eastern Nigeria, it is traditionally obligatory on a father to marry the first wife for his sons. The sons in turn are expected to marry additional ones up to three wives for themselves. This situation has however changed now, owing both to the advent of Christianity and widespread western education in the area. However, among the predominant Muslim communities (of Northern Nigeria), the practice of polygyny/polygamy is a common place occurrence. According to Muslims, this is embedded in the Islamic injunction on marriage wherein a Muslim man is permitted to marry (for various reasons) between at least one to four (1 – 4) wives, provided he would be able to deal justly and fairly with them (Q4: 3). Apart from the above, some Muslims claim that they embraced the idea of polygamy in order to pattern their lives after that of Prophet Mohammed (P.B.U.H), who for a myriad of reasons married more than one wife.

As for the Yoruba people of the south-western part of Nigeria, there appears to be a mixture of both polygamous and monogamous marriage/practice. For instance, while monogamy (especially in the

contemporary society) is more common among Christians who strive to pattern their lives in line with the dictates of the new testament, which prescribes monogamy as the normal form of marriage, polygamy is embraced by many Muslim and also few Christians. Thus, it could be inferred that in Nigeria today, the two commonest forms of families are the monogamous and polygamous families.

The family set up in Nigeria ranges from the nuclear family to the extended family. The first is usually made up of a father, mother and their unmarried children, while the second ideally contains at least three generations of married brothers and sisters. Where polygamous marriage is the norm, a complementary feature is the extended family system, wherein the man and his wives live together with their children, the adult ones and their wives and possibly the wives of their grandsons. Fadipe (1970) noted that, intra ethnic marriages and extended family system are the common forms of marriage and living in the olden days. This system, he observed, allows for an establishment of rapport, conviviality and mutual acceptance between every member of the family, like the brothers, children, co-wives and especially among the wives and brothers of their husband. Consequently, upon the death of their husband, the initial or existing rapport between a wife and the kinsmen of her husband makes it easy for the wife to accept her late husband's kinsman as her inheritor.

However, today under the influence of religion, western education, wages, employment and inter-ethnic marriages, component family groups have become individualised and independent of the larger extended family. Fadipe (1970), observed that the former family ties have become seriously weakened, and every family unit has been set free from the tie to do things the way it deems it fit. Coupled with this problem are other problems associated with inter-ethnic, inter-religious and polygamous marriages. For instance, it has been maintained that while intra-ethnic marriage promotes marital adjustments because the couple are likely to share a common understanding, language, socialisation process or value system, inter-ethnic marriage is considered problematic in situations where the partners speak different languages and follow different customs (Denga, 1986). Inter-religion marriage is also regarded as an handicap, because the couple may have opposing orientation, religious belief and conflicting general outlook of life and living. Where this has not been amicably resolved, these differences may continue to haunt their marriage, the stability of their relationship and the childhood experience of their children.

Other problems likely to confront couples in marriage are educational difference, age difference and difference in financial capability. According to Peil (1977), educational equality allows the couples to interact together freely not only during working hours, but also during their leisure time. However, educational in-equality among couples has been noted to be capable of

affecting the socio-economic status of the couple, since educational attainment or qualification is a major predictor of job opportunity or socio-economic status. It is, therefore, probable that lack of educational equality or equity will create disparity in the earning, socio-economic status, social contact and interest of the couples. This is bound to create some problems in their marital relationship especially if the wife has to rely completely on the husband's earning for her every need.

A well adjusted marriage is the dream of every couple and it is one in which each spouse is a source of emotional and economic support, companionship, sexual gratification and physical protection for the other (Rice, 1980). The man and the woman in the family co-operate through a division of labour, based on gender. Again the gender division of labour (and responsibilities) varies in rigidity and the task performed. For example, child care, household tasks and crafts closely connected with the household, are mostly to be done by women, while provision of money for feeding, payment of school fees, settlement of medical and other bills for essential facilities like electricity bills, protection of the family among others are assignments traditionally allocated to men. Marriage thus, exists as a socially recognised, durable, although not necessarily life-long relationship between the individual man and woman.

Another factor that affects the marital adjustment / happiness of couples is death. Death, especially that of a very close person, is often seen as an

ultimate loss, which invariably is accompanied by grief. Thus, the death of a person most times constitutes a great loss to the deceased person's immediate family, his/her society and at times the nation at large. The death of a relation is usually mourned in all cultures in different ways (Ojedapo, 1994).

Cultural variation in mourning in Africa for example is manifested in the form of intense wailing, weeping and hysteria. Other features of mourning in Africa include seclusion and general isolation of the widow from the wider community, restrictions with regards to choice of dressing and socialisation among others. Among the North American community mourning include such practices as laying of wreath on the door, folding of the National Flag, wearing of black costumes by co-workers, neighbours and relations of the deceased, and holding of a solemn assembly etc.

The death of a spouse and its consequences are not the same for males and females. For example, because of some cultural practices and role expectations that prescribe intense wailing, seclusion and general isolation of the widow in Nigeria, the agony of losing a spouse is especially serious for women. Wiebe (1987), while citing her own experience, observed that the widow faces a lot of problems after the death of her husband. These problems include the fact that, recent socio-economic changes and family system have aggravated the widow's loneliness. This is especially true for widows of nuclear family system, because after the funeral, the relatives,

friends, and siblings often return to their personal and individual responsibilities, leaving the widow to face the stress and emptiness of widowhood alone.

In the contemporary society, the plight of widows has become the focus of modern social psychology. Infact, the question being asked is how do widows cope with life in a society which is ordinarily 'Cruel' to the weaker sex of which is widows are one (Abdulsalam, 1995). Based upon the cruel treatment of widows by the society, it is now believed that widows are not well treated by the Nigeria society compared to widowers (Olusakin, 1998). The plight of Nigerian widows seems to be naturally embedded in the culture that preaches gender inequality. For example, the typical widow in rural Nigeria is taken through harmful widowhood rites by older women in her husband's family in the belief that she has to do these rites to safeguard herself, her children and her husband (Olusakin, 1998).

Apart from the stressful widowhood rites with which the widow has to contend with there are other issues that naturally make widowhood stressful for a typical widow. In the opinion of Abdulsalam (1995), the widow after the burial of her husband has two difficult tasks at her hands. The first is how to go through the mandatory mourning practices and widowhood rites while the second is making a choice between getting remarried or allowing herself to be inherited by a member of the husband family. Where neither of these two applied to her, she may decide to stick to widowhood just for the sake of the

kids. While the idea of remarriage appears comforting for the already stressed widows, its comfort ability is at the same time threatened by a number of factors. As for sticking to widowhood for the sake of the children, this has been known to be a noble idea fraught with lots of difficulties (like financial constraints, lack of sexual partner for sexual gratification, lack of emotional support) that consequently make widowhood stressful to the widow.

Similarly, the death of a spouse is regarded as the most devastating source of domestic stress for the widow. In the submission of Ekennia (1998), the death of a spouse initiates for the widow social, psychological and physical separations of a long standing human attachment. As a result of the multiple economic, social cultural, physical and psychological implications inherent in widowhood, this phenomenon is invariably considered a major stressor for the widow whose general being is made pathetic by our cultural inequality (Imam, 1991).

At the initial stage of widowhood, most widows face the problem of going alone to the cold shell of their home, to fight loneliness (their major enemy for a long time to follow). Unlike in the olden days African society, when extended family system and the strong support systems are the practice, the African traditional widow support system has been eroded with the de-emphasis of extended family system and the tendency towards the nuclear family system (Gbenda, 1997). Consequently, to lessen a widow's

grief, a widow needs to get enough money and energy for herself and her children (if any) for them to survive. The widow equally faces the problem of psychological warfare often experienced due to lack of emotional support, warmth, companionship, and sexual gratification previously provided by the deceased husband, on such days when nothing would seem to work right.

The implication of the above is that the widow is bound to experience various dimensions of stress, which invariably constitutes stress level in her life from then on. The cultural rules governing the age at which one can marry is the first source of stress for women in almost all cultures of the world. While it is perfectly acceptable for men to marry women as much as fifteen or twenty years younger than they are, it is generally unacceptable (especially in African culture) for men to be married to women a little older than they are, even if the margin is one or two years. The difference in life expectancy between the two sexes make the women to be at a disadvantage in a number of ways. For example, if a couple with a life expectancy of 73 & 74 years for the husband and wife respectively, marry each other at fifty and thirty-three years, at his death the husband would be leaving the wife to face widowhood for twenty-three years. While the wife would be widowed at fifty one, she is not expected to remarry, she is expected to single handedly face the task of rearing the children left behind by her deceased husband. Thus, another source of stress for her would be lack of necessary emotional

support and financial assistance at an age when her earning power is gradually on the decline.

Another issue for widow's stress level is lack of suitable partner, at such an age, to provide her with the necessary emotional support, warmth, companionship, sexual gratification, and physical protection, especially if she belongs to the nuclear family system. While it is true that her children may provide some sorts of emotional support, companionship and security, there is a limit to such supports. Coupled with this is the problem of financial handicap, which the widow now has to grapple with. Hitherto, she is expected to be assisted (if not totally provided for) by her husband in taking care of financial responsibilities in the house. However, with the death of her breadwinner, she is left to fend not only for herself, but also for their children (especially if she is not within the remarriage age bracket).

Loss of identity is another issue for widow's stress level. While her husband was alive, she had invested her identity in her marriage as a faithful housewife to her husband. Unfortunately with his death, she loses not only her spouse but also her marital vocation and identity. This is more pathetic when the woman cannot remarry, and has no gainful employment in which she could invest her time and energy (Gbenda, 1997, Goldman & Lord, 1983).

The stress level of the widow could also emanate from her feelings of loss of self-esteem. This is because while alive, her spouse gave her

vicarious power or status. This is especially true of widows of the ruling class and wealthy husbands. For example, a widow accustomed to being treated with a deference because of the position or social status of her husband, would suddenly become a nobody once the husband is no more (like the Abacha family saga, see Sunday Punch, November 7, 1999, pp 1 & 9). The loss of self-esteem confronting widows is further exemplified in the narration of the widow of a one time high ranking officer as reported by Stillion (1979) thus:

> "I always had people around me. All the younger officer' wives seemed to enjoy my company. I was included in every women's group there was. Our social life was, if anything, too full. I never question the invitations. I was sure it was my great personality and my willingness to help younger wives that made me so welcome. As soon as Tim died, I found out what was really going on. Many of the younger officers' wives disappeared from my life entirely. They had been using our relationship as a way to try to help their husbands' career. I am afraid the whole experience has left me a little bitter. (P. 287).

It can, thus, be seen that the stress level of the widows, as they go through the widowhood affect such areas as psychological, physiological, and social-economic aspects of their lives.

In order to overcome the stress imposed by the death of their husbands, widows have had to rely on certain support systems provided by a host of people, networks and organisations. The support systems available to widow

are predicated upon a number of factors. According to Abolarin (1997), the factors influencing the giving of any support system to the widow include widow's age, her marital status, ethnic group, intra and/or inter marital ethnic group, duration of widowhood and child-bearing status.

It has been observed that the types of support systems available to widows especially in Nigeria are mainly four viz.: economic, service, social and emotional supports (Abolarin, 1997). However, there are at least nine broad support networks for widows namely: husbands' community group; widow's siblings; parents; children; widow's extended family; her religious group; husband's friends; widow's female friends; and husband's relations. While the majority of the widows receive general support from all the networks, a few others receive specific supports from most of the networks. It has been observed that most widows receive economic support from their siblings, female friends and husband's friends, while service support are being given by siblings, children and female friends of the widow. The same support networks are responsible for the provision of social and emotional supports for the widow (Bankoff, 1991).

Ethnicity in marriage is a major factor, which determines both the degree and type of support given and received by a widow. For example, widows who married within their parental ethnic group were mostly supported by their children, extended family members and husband's relations, while siblings, parents and religious groups support a higher percentage of widows married

outside their parental ethnic group. Age, duration of widowhood and childliness or childlessness are partly related to the supports she receive. For instance, it has been revealed by research findings that while younger widows are mostly supported by their husband's relations, older widows are mostly supported by their siblings and children, the childless widows highly depend on their relations for most of their own support. The study by Bankoff (1991), pointed to the fact that as the duration of widowhood increases, the economic support given to the widow decreases; pointing to the fact that recently widowed women are more supported economically than their counterparts who might have been widowed for a considerable length of time.

According to Rook (1987), the support given to widows serves a variety of functions such as inculcating the sense of belonging, which is accomplished through a close and intimate relationship; providing companionship, which implies social exchanges, providing recreation, humour and affection; contributing to widow's sense of well-being as well as providing a mechanism for social comparison. Rooks (1987), asserted that while verbal and financial support may protect widows from the debilitating effects of life stress, companionship protects them from the emptiness and despair associated with loneliness. McGlosen and O'Byrant (1988), submitted that support for widows, helps in the development of positive affect and this is determined by widow's religious involvement, number of siblings, and support from children and their families.

However, Bankoff (1983), cautioned against total/over reliance on support network by widows. This according to the findings of her study is because of the complex nature of these support networks. In her view, whether social support is helpful or not depends on a number of factors, such as where the widows are in the adjustment process, and the type of support given. Thus, Abolarin (1997) observation that there is time variability in the type of support system useful to the widow is valid. For example, early in the bereavement process widows need empathy and support while later in the process they need assistance in re-integrating into normal social life.

The appropriateness and adequacy of support system are on the one hand crucial to the overall adjustment of the widow to bereavement, and on the other hand dependent on a number of factors, such as adequacy of support given, appropriate timing, genuineness of its source and practical usefulness. The realisation of these factors may be difficult, since the support system is "other – initiated" and not the product of personal initiative of the widow, who practically is in the best position to determine what she needs or what is useful to her, considering her particular need at a given time (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984).

In the light of the shortcomings of support systems, it has been advocated that widows develop more practicable, durable and 'self-initiated' adjustment strategies (or coping strategies / behaviours). According to Lazarus and Folkman (1984), people often develop coping strategies, after

asking themselves certain questions viz.: 'What type of action do I need for this circumstance, and what resources do I have? Whether an individual felt alarmed and to what extent he/she feels alarmed, depends on his/her ability to handle or manage the threatening encounter. In the case of a widow, the adjustment strategies to be developed would be in response to the disruption of the social ties between couples, brought about by the death of the husband. Stroebe and Stroebe (1987), maintained that widowhood usually brings about a situational demand, which often threaten to exceed the widow's coping resources. However, the availability of appropriate adjustment strategies has been found to lessen the impact of bereavement as well as provide deep insights into the ways in which social roles, life style and self-concepts of widows develop and change positively.

The development of useful adjustment strategies has been found to be dependent on certain factors. These factors, include the age of the widow, her religious background or inclination, social-economic status and level of educational attainment among others. For instance, Pfeiffers (1977) had maintained that widowhood has more and immediate negative effects on the health, social status and psychological state of young widows than older ones. However, recent study by Zable (1991), has revealed that on the contrary older women did not tolerate or adapt to bereavement more successfully than younger women. This tends to imply that age at

bereavement is a crucial predictor of ability to develop useful adjustment strategy.

Sanders (1980) also found that, there is a constant grief intensity among elderly widows unlike the younger widows who initially manifest greater intensity of grief and a steady reduction thereafter up to two years after bereavement. He thus, hypothesised that major problems aggravating the intensity of grief among the more elderly widows are loneliness, anxiety and feelings of helplessness without any desire for remarriage.

The use of religious inclination has been observed to be crucial to widow's ability to adapt to the stress of bereavement. According to Rosik (1988), the extrinsically religious widows, reflected a tendency to endorse religion for social support and emotional benefits such as security and comfort. This, he noted, is likely to lead to greater distress for the widow. On the contrary, widows who (intrinsically) are committed to religious activities have been noted to have strong confidants, with whom they share the same faith. Jernigan (1976), posited that such confidants could be closer to the widow than even the primary support networks (i.e. siblings, children or parents). Thus, there is the belief that adaptation to loss is going to be less difficult when a widow has other individuals in whom to confide. Because of the opportunity she has of unburdening her mind to some one very close.

Socio-economic status of the widow is a major determinant of the impact of bereavement on the widow. Bahr (1974), maintained that most negative

impact sometimes attributed to widowhood results more from widow's socio-economic status rather than from the widowhood process itself. This socio-economic status, observed Choi (1992), is a function of the widow's level of education, work history and social security. The more common low morale and decrease in affiliation leading to isolation and low self-esteem among widows are more a function of change in the widow's income rather than change in marital status (Bahr, 1974). It has thus been posited that attainment of life satisfaction by a widow depends, among other things, mainly on her income, attitude toward her present living situation, perceived health status and presence of confidants (Tate, 1981).

Closely connected to the above is the revelation that the support and interaction with children has a limited relationship with life satisfaction. This implies that for optimal adjustment to bereavement, the widow's socio-economic status (including her level of education, standard of living, etc.) matter much in ensuring her satisfaction in life. It could be hypothesised that the higher the widow's socio-economic status, the easier her adjustment to bereavement. Availability of gainful employment is in itself an automatic stress reliever. According to Morgan (1980), an unemployed widow has more time for grief and depression, unlike the employed widow whose time is occupied with other activities which in turn ensures improvement in her life.

In their attempt to cope with the stress imposed by the death of their spouses, widows have been observed to use diverse adjustment strategies.

Dependence on children is an age-long adjustment strategy adopted by widows especially in African culture, where the success or otherwise of a marital relationship is foremost considered by the availability of children for the couples. Hake (1972), maintained that much importance is attached to having children, especially in the African setting to the extent that a childless marital relationship is susceptible to breaking up. This, he noted, is due to the consideration for children as means of social security, emotional support and economic assistance during old age and on such trying periods like during bereavement and its attendant widowhood. The main factor influencing the effectiveness of reliance on children are children's proximity and marital status (O'Byrant & Shirley, 1988).

Participation of widows in Bereavement Support Group (BSGs) is another adjustment strategy employed by widows to cope with stress of bereavement. This strategy according to Levy, Derby and Martinkowsky (1993) has been found to bring about a considerable reduction in the level of depression, anger, anxiety and subjective stress for widows. On the Nigerian scene, participation in widowhood support group is a corner stone of the family support programme for widows. Consequently, widows in Nigeria are now encouraged to join Widows Association in order to enjoy such benefits as attendance of workshops, seminar, skill training sessions, and loans from such bodies as the Family Economic Advancement Programme, Multi-purpose Co-operative Society and People's Bank, etc.

Re-marriage is another adjustment strategy used by widows to cope with deprivations arising from bereavement and stress associated with the process of widowhood (Henderson, 1977; Staple, 1986). The use of second marriage by widows has been found to be within the context of support system offered by the relatives of a deceased husband to enable the widow adjust to widowhood life within the extended family of her late husband. This practice has been noted to be common to the three major ethnic groups in Nigeria, i.e. Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba, with each ethnic group advancing reasons for the practice. Some of these reasons include (i) provision of care for the widow (as well as inheritance) to protect her entitlement to her husband's wealth and possessions, and (ii) care and protection in order to guarantee the widow the custody of her children till they attain maturity (Abolarin, 1997). It is believed that this arrangement will go a long way to enable the widow share her widowhood responsibilities and experiences with another person in a relationship with features of marriage (Stapler, 1986).

According to Gbenda (1997), widowhood affects more women than men financially, psychologically, sexually and socially. Traditional socialisation for dependence and passivity hinders women's attempt to adjust to widowhood and create new lives for themselves. Coupled with this is the fact that modern family system of maintaining nuclear family, educational advancement and wage employment has eroded the traditional African support systems for the widow (Gbenda, 1997). While recent achievements

in educational advancement and wage employment have increased the socio-cultural features of Nigerian women, these achievements, though substantial, seem not enough for a typical Nigerian widow to ordinarily cope with the stress of bereavement and widowhood. It is therefore pertinent that widows be enlightened on the benefits of developing appropriate, adequate and practicable adjustment strategies (which would be personal-initiated) in their attempt to adjust to widowhood life (Odu, 1986).

Statement of the problem

The process of widowhood is seen as pathetic, because of certain deprivations inherent in it. This situation, in the view of Lopata (1979) imposes on the widow, the loss of a valuable social status that leaves her in an uncomfortable situation. Osarenren (1998), believed that the pathetic state of widows is made difficult by some cultural expectations associated with the phenomenon.

Research findings (e.g. Lopata, 1979; Bankoff, 1983; Osarenren, 1998) have shown that widows generally experience stress following the death of their husbands. The stress sources range from physiological, psychological to economic stresses (Gbenda, 1997). Worthman and Silver (1987) explained that the stress result from the loss of a unique partner, friend and confidant (i.e. spouses) with whom the widow hitherto shared ideas, values and characteristics, thereby making the widow to feel incomplete. Fadipe (1970), and Parkes (1988), however attributed the resultant stress by a

widow to the strong pair bond relationship that existed between the man and his wife, which following the death of the spouse, now makes the widow to lose not only her husband, but also her income or social status. Thus, the after effect of widowhood practice in Nigeria, to some is a case for concern and to a great extent responsible for the stress felt by the widow (Ozoagu, 1993).

The importance of support systems in alleviating the sufferings of widows have been emphasised by researchers like Abolarin (1997), Wiebe (1987), and Lopata (1979). For instance, Abolarin (1997), identified four main support systems available to Nigerian widows from nine support network. The provision and reception of these support systems is contingent upon many factors. These factors as highlighted by Rowe and Khan (1987), include widow's age, her religious inclination, socio-economic status among others. However, it has been cautioned that even where these support systems were provided, they would be meaningful only if they satisfy certain conditions. The conditions are, adequacy, appropriate timing, genuineness of its source, practicability as well as adequate balance between the amount of support offered and the perceived threat engendered by a particular situation. The implication of this is that, since the support system is usually "other initiated", satisfying the conditions may be too difficult if not impossible outright.

In order to find alternatives to the unpredictable support systems, some works have been done on adjustment strategies, sometimes used by widows. Levy, Derby and Martinkowsky (1993) examined the relationship between widow's participation in bereavement support groups and reduction in stress level, while Hake (1972), stressed the importance of reliance on children for emotional support. Staple (1986) emphasised the use of re-marriage as another coping skill sometimes considered by widows in dealing with stress. However, certain factors have been noted to influence the effectiveness or otherwise of these adjustment strategies. These factors include widow's personality, her socio-economic status, religious involvement and time-lag as well as age of the widow (Zisook, Shuctitier, Sledge & Mullvill, 1993).

The first gap in the previous studies is that while series of work have been done on the variables of stress level, support systems and adjustment of strategies of widows, there seem to be no single particular work that focuses on all the three variables put together. The second gap in the previous studies lies in the fact that certain factors seem to be in common in manifestation of these variables, by widows which include the age, socio-economic status, personality and religious inclination of the widow. However, while past works tend to emphasise the specific roles of the factors mentioned in the manifestation of these variables, none seems to have considered the relative influences of these factors in relation to all the three variables for instance, the work of Abolarin (1997). A third gap in the

previous studies lies in the fact that while most of them are foreign based, the few ones conducted in Nigeria have not addressed the difference or otherwise of these variables put together, as they affect Nigerian widows. By implication, therefore, because of cultural variation in human reaction to variables like those in this study, it would be inappropriate to generalise that the results obtained from foreign-based studies would be the same for Nigerian widows.

Specifically, therefore, it is the main focus of this study to examine firstly the difference in each of these variables as they affect Nigerian widows. Secondly, the study is to examine the relative influence of the factors mentioned earlier as they relate to these variables with Nigerian widows, from the three major ethnic groups viz.: Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba. Thirdly, this study intends to determine which of these factors best differentiates Nigerian widows in respect of the three variables put together.

Research Questions

In order to find answers to the problem situations highlighted here in, the following research questions have been raised:

1. What are the stress levels of Nigerian widows?
2. What are the support systems received by Nigerian widows?
3. What are the adjustment strategies used by Nigerian widows?
4. Is there any significant difference in the stress level of Nigerian widows from the three major ethnic groups?

5. Is there any significant difference in the support systems enjoyed by Nigerian widows from the three major ethnic groups?
6. Is there any significant difference in the adjustment strategies of Nigerian widows from the three major ethnic groups?
7. Is there any significant difference in the stress level of Nigerian widows on the basis of their age at bereavement?
8. Is there any significant difference in the support systems enjoyed by Nigerian widows on the basis of their age at bereavement?
9. Is there any significant difference in the adjustment strategies of Nigerian widows on the basis of their age at bereavement?
10. Is there any significant difference in the stress level of Nigerian widows on the basis of their educational level?
11. Is there any significant difference in the support systems enjoyed by Nigerian widows on the basis of their educational level?
12. Is there any significant difference in the adjustment strategies of Nigerian widows on the basis of their educational level?
13. Is there any significant difference in the stress level of Nigerian widows on the basis of their religious affiliation?
14. Is there any significant difference in the support systems enjoyed by Nigerian widows on the basis of their religious affiliation?
15. Is there any significant difference in the adjustment strategies of Nigerian widows on the basis of their religious affiliation?

16 Is there any significant difference in the stress level of Nigerian widows on the basis of duration of their bereavement?

17. Is there any significant difference in the support systems enjoyed by Nigerian widows on the basis of duration of their bereavement?

18. Is there any significant difference in the adjustment strategies of Nigerian widows on the basis of duration of their bereavement?

Research Hypotheses:

1 There is no significant difference in the stress level of Nigerian widows from the three major ethnic groups.

2 There is no significant difference in the support systems enjoyed by Nigerian widows from the three major ethnic groups.

3 There is no significant difference in the adjustment strategies of Nigerian widows from the three major ethnic groups.

4 There is no significant difference in the stress level of Nigerian widows on the basis of their age at bereavement.

5 There is no significant difference in the support systems enjoyed by Nigerian widows on the basis of their age at bereavement.

6 There is no significant difference in the adjustment strategies of Nigerian widows on the basis of their age at bereavement.

7 There is no significant difference in the stress level experienced by Nigerian widows on the basis of their educational level.

8 There is no significant difference in the support systems enjoyed by Nigerian widows on the basis of their educational level.

9 There is no significant difference in the adjustment strategies of Nigerian widows on the basis of their educational level.

10 There is no significant difference in the stress level experienceds by Nigerian widows on the basis of their religious affiliation.

11 There is no significant difference in the support systems enjoyed by Nigerian widows on the basis of their religious affiliation.

12 There is no significant difference in the adjustment strategies of Nigerian widows on the basis of their religious affiliation.

13 There is no significant difference in the stress level experience by Nigerian widows on the basis of duration of their bereavement.

14 There is no significant difference in the support systems enjoyed by Nigerian widows on the basis of duration of their bereavement.

15 There is no significant difference in the adjustment strategies of Nigerian widows on the basis of duration of their bereavement.

Purpose of the study

The main purpose of this study is to find out specifically the stress levels, support systems and adjustment strategies of Nigerian widows from the three major ethnic groups (i.e. Hausa, Igbo, Yoruba). It is also the purpose of this study to establish the nature of the difference existing among these variables in relation to Nigerian widows. Furthermore, the study seeks

to determine the relative influence of factors such as widow's age, her educational level, ethnic background, religious inclination and duration of bereavement on the variables under examination i.e. stress level, support systems and adjustment strategies. In essence, the study is concerned about establishing:

1 Whether or not there is significant difference in the stress levels of Nigerian widows from the three major ethnic groups.

2 Whether or not there is significant difference in support systems enjoyed by Nigerian widows from the three major ethnic groups.

3 Whether or not there is significant difference in the adjustment strategies of Nigerian widows from the three major ethnic groups.

4 Whether or not there is significant difference in the stress levels of Nigerian widows on the basis of their age at bereavement.

5 Whether or not there is significant difference in the support systems enjoyed by Nigerian widows on the basis of their age at bereavement.

6 Whether or not there is significant difference in the adjustment strategies of Nigerian widows on the basis of their age at bereavement.

7 Whether or not there is significant difference in the stress levels of Nigerian widows on the basis of their educational level.

8 Whether or not there is significant difference in the support systems enjoyed by Nigerian widows on the basis of their educational level.

9 Whether or not there is significant difference in the adjustment strategies of Nigerian widows on the basis of their educational level.

10 Whether or not there is significant difference in the stress levels of Nigerian widows on the basis of their religious affiliation.

11 Whether or not there is significant difference in the support systems enjoyed by Nigerian widows on the basis of their religious affiliation.

12 Whether or not there is significant difference in the adjustment strategies of Nigerian widows on the basis of their religious affiliation.

13 Whether or not there is significant difference in the stress levels Nigeria widows on the basis of duration of their bereavement.

14 Whether or not there is significant difference in the support systems enjoyed by Nigerian widows on the basis of duration of their bereavement.

15 Whether or not there is significant difference in the adjustment strategies of Nigerian widows on the basis of duration of their bereavement.

Significance of the study

Research findings (e.g. Gbenda, 1997; Lopata, 1979) have shown that the circumstances surrounding death, the time at which it generally occurs, and the consequence of death to the living are not the same for males and females. This is especially serious bearing in mind that the African traditional widow support system has been eroded by the de-emphasis on the practice

of extended family system. This study is crucial, first of all, in order to identify the nature and levels of stress source confronting Nigerian widows. This is essential, realising that no two people react to the same experience the same way. Apart from this, the finding of this study will enable widows, their relatives and professional help givers (e.g. counsellors) to understand the nature, sources and level of stress confronting the widow with a view to seeking solutions to the threat they constitute both to the widows and the society.

Similarly, it has been established that a number of factors influence the nature and type of support systems offered to the widow. Apart from these factors, it has also been suggested that certain conditions must be present for the support systems given to be meaningful. By implication, therefore, there is the need to re-examine the relative importance of these factors and conditions vis-à-vis the support system given to Nigerian widows. Thus, the outcome of this study would be useful in enlightening the widows about their position in relation to the support system to be expected. The findings of this study would help to increase awareness about the effects of certain factors and conditions on the effectiveness or otherwise of any support system to be offered. Consequently, this awareness would go a long way toward removing or amending some age-long retrogressive practices associated with support system for the widows for instance, concentration of attention on widows with children at the expense of the childless ones.

Furthermore, the findings of this study would enable professional counsellors to appreciate the relative effectiveness of the various support systems available to widows as well as factors influencing the giving and receiving of such support systems. With this understanding, the counsellor would be better placed to counsel not only the distressed widows, but even the traditional support givers with a view to solving the widow's problems on the one hand and making the support to be given effective on the other.

Moreover, the findings of this study especially as regards adjustment would be of immense use to the widows who are in need of every practicable opportunities to alleviate their sufferings. This is because, through the findings of this study, widows could be fortified with adequate information on the available adjustment strategies capable of re-integrating them into the psychosocial and economic stream of things. This is even more necessary bearing in mind that the age-long cultural conceptions of marital role expectations seem inadequate for present day widows who have to grapple with new social and economic problems like caring, feeding and educating their children (most time all alone). Thus, through its findings, this study will provide widows the opportunity to make a better use of their widowhood lives.

Generally, the findings of this study will serve as useful reference point for professional counsellors, who by virtue of their training are supposed to be managers of crisis, providers of relief, to the distressed and those in stress. This is because, the findings of this study will provide counsellors with

up-to-date information on the nature, scope and magnitude of stress confronting the widow, the support systems available to them and the effectiveness or otherwise of the adjustment strategies developed. These information could be shared with the counsellors during conferences workshops and seminars. Consequently, counsellors would be adequately prepared to counsel not only the widows but also their relations on the general process of adjusting to the problems of social life and social role reorganisation after the death of their dear ones.

Definition of Terms

The following terms and expressions are operationally defined as they are used in this study:

- Adjustment Strategies: The term refers to individual's coping strategies behaviours, which are consciously used by an individual (e.g. widows) to handle or control the effects of anticipated or experienced stressful situations.
- Bereavement: This is the state of losing someone that is significant/dear to one. This state of being has two common features associated with it, and these are expression of grief and observance of mandatory mourning process.
- Ethnic Group: This refers to the predominant and indigenous population of such Nigerian cities of Ibadan, Kaduna and Enugu as

represented by the Yoruba, Hausa and Igbo that were used for this study.

- Marriage: This is a socially sanctioned sex relationship involving two or more people of opposite sex whose relationship is expected to endure beyond the time required for gestation and the birth of children (Mitchel, 1979).
- Mourning: The observance of cultural practices of expressing grief, distress, frustration etc. over the death of one's spouse.
- Stress: This is the state of being, manifested by an individual (especially widows), as a result of perceived inability to cope with demands of living or other life situations following the death of a spouse.
- Stress Level: This refers to the amount of perceived inability to cope with demand of living (manifested by widows) as contained in the Stress Rating Scale for Widows (SRSW) developed by the researcher.
- Support: This is any object or action or instruction that the receiver and/or the giver accepts as being necessary or helpful in maintaining a life style (Lopata, 1988).
- Support Network: This refers to all those people and groups who provide support to the widow.
- Support System: This refers to a set or group of support of similar type given to a widow in order to maintain her life. E.g. service is a support

system, and this includes services like transportation, house repairs, house keeping, shopping, child care etc.

- Widow: A woman who has lost her husband through death and has not remarried, in its stead it means the surviving wife of a deceased husband.

Scope of the Study

This study covers all Yoruba, Hausa and Igbo widows in Nigeria. The sample for the study was drawn from the three major ethnic groups of Nigeria i.e. Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba, while the sample was drawn from the three former regional headquarters of Nigeria, namely: Kaduna, Enugu and Ibadan.

The main thrust of this study was to establish the nature, scope and level of stress, support systems and adjustment strategies of Nigerian widows. The study also tried to find out whether or not there are significant differences among stress level, support systems and adjustment strategies of Nigerian widows compared on the basis of their ethnic group, age at bereavement, educational level, religious affiliation and duration of their bereavement. In essence, this study has attempted to determine the relative role of age, educational level, religious affiliation, ethnic background and duration of bereavement on the stress level, support systems and adjustment strategies of Nigerian widows.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Introduction

This chapter deals with the review of existing literature related to the topic of this research work. Some of the areas addressed in this review include the following:

- Marriage and marital role expectations;
- Bereavement: Nature and scope;
- Widowhood: Concept and implications;
- Cultural practices of widowhood in Nigeria;
- Stress and stress sources in widowhood;
- Nature and scope of support system for widows;
- Nature and scope of adjustment strategies for stress management;
- Adjustment strategies of widows;
- Factors influencing the use of adjustment strategies by widows; and
- Summary of the review of related literature

Marriage and marital role expectations.

Marriage is a socially sanctioned sex relationship involving two or more people of the opposite sex, whose relationship is expected to endure beyond the time required for gestation and the birth of children (Mitchel, 1979). According to Olusanya (1970), it is a delicate social relationship between a

man and a woman that involve permanently living together with a contract that defines the obligations between the two and any children that may emerge. By implication therefore, marriage has a number of functions which according to Wortman and Silver (1987), include ensuring the continuation of human existence, through procreation which in turn brings about the growth of the family; ensuring a place for companionship, warmth, love, production and consumption. They opined that co-operation among couples is necessary for the maintenance of the unique nature of the relationship. In the light of this assertion Fakunle (1992), concludes that marriage as an institution is common to all human societies with lots of cultural influence in the areas of choice of partners, the role of families of the spouses, concern for the children and the role performance of the spouses.

The interaction between the couples in a marital relationship often takes place in the family setting. Thus, the belief that the adequacy or otherwise of a family's adjustment is a direct function of its ability to meet the changing developmental needs of its members (Wright & Weiss, 1980). The ascribed functionality of the family is a reflection of its composition as a social unit that brings people together by common ancestry and marriage (Weiss, 1980). However, Wernick (1974), had earlier on postulated that relationship is the meeting of a small group of people who see themselves as individuals bound together by some ties, accept responsibilities for bringing up children and transform their young ones from more biological organisms into human

beings who can function as members of the community into which they are born.

Furthermore, the family is regarded as a universal institution and the first manifestation of marriage. The family, it is noted, is founded on an alliance between a man and a woman (in most cases). According to Gbenda (1997), the alliance is characterised by love and the desire to spend life together. The family by vocation, he observed, is a place of caring and of communion betweens man and woman. To him, everywhere, the family evokes the idea of a home, it is a place where the member assemble together, protect one another and enjoy merrymaking, feasting, etc. As a matter of fact, the family is a place of feasting, marriage, birthdays, anniversaries, jubilees, initiation, death and so on.

Nwobi (1997), observed that in most African societies and Nigeria in particular, there are at least four types of marriage systems namely: traditional marriage, court marriage, church marriage, and parlour marriage. Other types of marriage recognised by Nwobi (1997) and other researchers include Muslim marriage and marriage by contract. Thus, it could be deduced that there are at least six types of marriage instruments in Nigeria today. With these types of marriage, there are corresponding family types commonly in place. In the view of Abolarin (1997), the two commonest forms of family in Nigeria are the polygamous and monogamous families. These family systems, are a true reflection of the African custom and tradition about

the constitution of family. Thus, in his submission, Gbenda (1997) noted that the African family is wider in connotation. This is because sometimes the family in African context could better be described as the "extended family". This is because usually the African family is enlarged to include others who are not part of this nuclear family. Polygamy was the norm in the African societies with a man married to more than one wife, while monogamy is a recent development in the contemporary African society. Each form has its characteristic features and advantages. For example, couples in the polygamous family set up may not experience deep affection especially from the husband to the wives. On the other hand, couples in the monogamous family set up are likely to be closer, thereby ensuring a more intimate attachment or social bond (Glick & Norton, 1973).

The family set up in Nigeria ranges from the nuclear family to the extended family. The first is usually made up of a father, mother and their children, while the second ideally contains at least three generations of married brothers or sisters. Where polygamous marriage is the norm, a complementary feature is the extended family system wherein the man and his wives live together with their children, the married adult ones, and their children or grand children as the case may be (Gbenda, 1997).

Fadipe (1970), observed that intra-ethnic marriage and extended family system are the common forms of marriage and living in the olden days. These are accompanied by understanding, mutual interest in the welfare of

each other to the extent that should a man die, his wife would not find it difficult to re-marry her husband's kinsman. This is possible because of the familiarity, togetherness and belongingness that existed among the members and which they already shared before the death of her husband.

The status of the individual in a family and his corresponding role expectations could be properly understood within the context of a given culture. For example, in the traditional (and even contemporary) African societies, the men and women of a family co-operate through a division of labour based on gender. This sexual division of labour varies in rigidity and in the task performed. But in no human society, to date, is it totally absent (Gbenda, 1997). Gbenda further noted that in Nigeria, child care, household tasks and craft closely connected with the household, tend to be done by women, while provision of feeding allowance, school fees, medical bills, protection of the family among others are assignments traditionally allocated to men.

The above submission is in line with the observation by Rice (1980) that a well adjusted marriage is the dream of every spouse, and it is one in which each spouse is a source of emotional support, companionship, sexual gratification and economic support for the other. In this regard, marriage exists as a socially recognised, durable, although not necessarily life-long, relationship between the individual men and women.

Bereavement: Nature and Scope

Wernick (1974) posited that no family is immuned against stress, which could be from within or from without. Marital disruption which could be caused by either dissolution of the marriage or by the death of a partner is one source of marital stress. Asonibare (1985), noted that death is seen as a permanent deprivation of relationship and fellowship with a loved one in this world. Thus, the death of a relative or any person in most cases constitutes great loss to his/her family, society, and in some occasions, the nation (Ojedapo, 1994).

Bereavement can be described as the state of being, manifested by an individual (especially widow) who has lost a person who is dear/significant to her. This situation, according to Abolarin (1997), has two characteristic features namely: expression of grief and observance of mourning process. Bereavement has a disruptive nature because it negates God's purpose of ordaining marriage among couples. According to the Holy Quran, the institution of marriage is ordained for believers to provide them opportunity for mutual support, care, and ensurance of all-round well-being through legalised socio-economic and emotional interaction. The same Quranic injunctions expect men to be the provider and bread winners of their family. Thus, Allah in Quran 30 vs. 21 states:

> And of His sign is this: He created for you help mate
> from yourselves that you might find rest in them, and

> He ordained between you love and mercy. Lo! Here in indeed are portents for folk who reflect.

On man's responsibility for his family; Q4: 24 states:

> Men are in charge of women, because Allah hath made the one of them to excel the other, and because they (men) spend of their profit (for the support of women). So good women are the obedient, guarding in secret that which Allah hath guarded.

God's purpose for ordaining marriage for a couple is to enhance companionship and mutual support as evidenced in the Biblical injunction contained in Genesis 2:8 which states:

> And the Lord God said, it is not good that man should be alone, I will make him an help mate fit for him.

Thus from the foregoing, it could be seen that the loss experienced by the widow upon the death of her husband may be related to any of the following: Loss of companionship; loss of sexual partner; loss of a confidant/or confidence, loss of a home and the loss of a father of her children.

Homes and Rahe (1967) found that death of a spouse is a major life stressor requiring more adjustment than any other life events. This is because, the grief that follows bereavement is so devastating to the extent that the bereaved, especially the widows, are often required to withstand the

simultaneous disruption of their financial security, social status and primary support network.

It has been established that people differ in their reaction to bereavement. Thus, Sanders (1980), identified four groups of people and their manner of reaction to bereavement viz.: (i) Disturbed group; (ii) Depressed group; (iii) A denial group; and (iv) A normal-grief contained group. He explained that the last group often make the best adjustment to bereavement. This is possible because of its characteristics which include good emotional control, high ego strength, little expression of confusion or unreality, and seeking external support (only) to work out life changes resulting from role loss and consequent adaptation.

Zisook, et al (1993), has observed that there is age difference in people's reaction and adjustment to bereavement. According to their findings, the older the bereaved, the better the adjustment. They also found that, the oldest widows and widowers suffer less anxiety symptoms and manifest consistent improvement in their levels of stress, over time, compared to their younger counterparts. These findings however, run counter to earlier findings of Sable (1991) who reported that, compared to younger women, older women showed more intense grief and reported more feelings of anxiety and depression following the loss of a spouse. One of the findings of his study also revealed that contrary to expectation, older women did not tolerate or adapt to bereavement more successfully than younger

women. Also in a study by Hill, et al (1988), on the role of anticipating bereavement in older women's adjustment to widowhood, it was found that expectancy of death was not related to adjustment to bereavement. As a matter of fact their study revealed that (older) widows who had rehearsed widowhood fared no better than (younger) widows who did not rehearse. It could thus be concluded that issue of age difference in reaction and adjustment to bereavement in favour of older widows is untenable.

However, it has been postulated that there is gender difference in human reaction to bereavement. According to Markides (1989), O'Bryrant and Morgan (1989), more women are known to express poor financial experience, poverty, features of uncomplicated bereavement like feelings of worthlessness and suicidal ideation among others. Other features manifested by the bereaved women are poor health status and poor sense of job satisfaction (Zisook, & Shuchter, 1993). This finding was affirmed by the submission of Gbenda (1997), that there are more widows than there are widowers. Also widows are far less likely to remarry than widowers (Schneider, et al 1996). He then observed that since women tend to marry men who are older than themselves, the likelihood is that they will spend the last decade of their lives alone. He concluded that far more widows than widower's live below poverty line. Thus, the view by Jacobs, Hansen,

Berkman, Kasi, and Ostteid (1989), that the manifestation of depression as a result of bereavement is more common among widows than widowers.

Reaction to bereavement has also been found to be influenced by the mode of death. According to Cleiven, Dickson, Kerkhoff and Verderwal (1991), three modes of death i.e. suicide, traffic accident and illness were examined in relation to the accompanying reaction among widows. They found that both the psychological functioning and the post traumatic stress manifestation of the bereaved are affected by the mode of death. They noted that depending on the closeness of the bereaved to the deceased, the negative impact of bereavement touches all vital areas of the bereaved like the psychological, physical and social functioning. This finding in a way supported earlier observation by Sheu (1985), that adjustment or reaction to bereavement is influenced by attribution of death mostly to "mischance or forces outside the control of the deceased". These forces include witchcraft, charms, evil spirits, curses e.t.c or influence of the wicked people.

Widowhood: Concept and Implications

Nwachukwu (1993), viewed a widow from the perspective of her plight as a person who, by certain circumstances, is in distress. Thus, to him a widow is one who finds herself in the middle of the ocean of life, struggling to survive. She becomes lost in thought and afraid of what the future holds in stock for her. A widow is a woman who survives her husband and has not remarried.

Abolarin (1977), defined widowhood as the state of mourning the loss of one's husband or wife through death. .The process of widowhood is believed

to represent a life phase which in the opinion of Porcino (1985), depicts one of the fundamental problems or losses which the aged and by, extension, the young people also experience. 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. This according to Ferraro (1985), is because widowhood is known to be responsible for the poor health status of widows and widowers, with a minimal long term consequences.

Widowhood has been discovered to enhance the manifestation of depression and post traumatic stress.. Knoll, Habenicht, Mackenzie, Yang, Chan, Vang, Nguyen, Ly, Phommasouvanh and Nguyen (1989), in their study of depression and post traumatic stress disorder in Southeast Asia, found that, of their female respondents, more than forty percent of those with manifestation of this disorder are widowed. They opined that widowhood and such traumatic experiences were positively correlated with more symptoms of depression and anxiety. Herman, et al (1993), reported that incidence of coronary artery bypass surgery is found to be more common among widowed women. They believed that the delay in going for necessary medical correction by these people, is due possibly to certain factors. One of these factors is the biological arrangement in which women generally outlive their husband by an average of seven to seventeen (7-17) years (Gbenda, 1997). Thus by this arrangement, the widows become the head of their families. And

because of this new position, they are presumed to be reluctant to go for surgical operation.

The above is probably because of their fear for disruption of their new multipurpose role as the family head, bread-winner and care taker. By implication, the high mortality risk reported for more widows is possibly because of such medical problems left un-treated like coronary artery bypass surgery and myocardial infarction. To these researchers, it was an established fact that the recurrence of myocardial infarction is a function of such factors as alcoholism, widowhood (stress), cigarettes smoking and diabetes.

Widowhood is also associated with intense grief and anger expression, especially among more widows than the divorced (when) compared (Kitson& Zyganki, 1987). This is possibly because of deprivation following loss of spousal intimacy through death. This is more common among women in widowhood (Thomas & Sheehan, 1988). The impact of this deprivation is not limited to the widows alone, rather it is extended to the children of such women-headed families.

Apart form divorce, widowhood has been identified as the greatest source of psycho-social deprivation for such children (Ambert,1986). According to his submission, boys from such homes are more disadvantaged than the girls. Salawu (1996), confirmed this position, noting that children (especially boys) reared in single-parent (female-headed) families manifest

personality problems such as low self-esteem, lower achievement motivation etc. It can thus be concluded that widowhood by implication is a stressful life event demanding practicable, effective and durable support systems and adjustment strategies.

Cultural Practices of Mourning and Widowhood in Nigeria.

Studies (Gbenda, 1997; Goldman & Lord, 1987) have shown that issues of mourning and widowhood are opposite sides of the same coin with wide range of implications for those affected. In the United States of America, the census of 1960 and 1983, revealed that about fifty (50%) percent of all women aged 60 years and above were widowed. The headcount also showed that the number of widowed women increased from 8.3 to 10.9% within the period, while those of men decreased from 19 to 13% during the same period. This represents a drop in widowers' number from 2.3 million to 1.9 million within the period. Similarly, it was found that among the people aged 75 years and above, the proportion of the widowed is 60% and 32% for women and men respectively as at 1960, and 68% and 22% for the same group of people by 1981. Again the rate of widowers in the two periods under review dropped by 10%. Although there is a dearth of up-to-date data on exact number of widows and widowers in Nigeria, the situation from available literature does not seem in anyway better. Thus Gbenda (1997), has observed that widowhood is an issue that affects more women than men. Evidence, he noted, indicates that over the long-term women are

affected more severely than men financially, psychologically, sexually and socially.

Issue of mourning and widowhood process in Nigeria is surrounded by a number of cultural expectations (Osarenren 1998; Wiebe, 1987). It has been observed that widowhood is a sordid situation which merely allocates to the widow a position of societal scorn, disdain and permanent membership of the wretched of the earth (Babangida, 1993). Attempt is made in this review exercise to briefly describe the cultural practices of mourning and widowhood among the three major ethnic groups of Nigeria i.e Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba spread across the former Northern, Eastern and Western regions of Nigeria.

According to Afonja and Pearse (1984), there is visible ethnic difference in the grieving that follows bereavement especially among the three major ethnic groups in Nigeria, namely: Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba. The states chosen for examination from each region are chosen because of the perceived similarity in their cultural background and practices as regards mourning and widowhood process.

Northern Region.

Kabir (1991), observed that attribution of death in this region is to God, and the widow traditionally is expected to mourn her late husband (tabaka) for a specified period of time. According to him, all circumstances of death are treated like other compulsory religious obligations especially by the Muslims. He explained further that the mourning period for a widow is four

lunar months plus ten days, where the widow is not pregnant before the demise of her husband. As for the pregnant widow (in line with the dictates of Sharia-Islamic law) her mourning period ends the very day of her delivery (and in some cases till the weaning of her new baby).

Furthermore, the widow after the mourning practices has two options open to her. These are either to remarry one of the relations of her late husband or to go elsewhere for the purpose of remarriage. However, except for the fact that most widows are often neglected during and after mourning together with her children, there is no any other practices of mourning that is physically injurious or degrading to the widow. In order to survive the socio-economic challenge of widowhood, widows who are unsupported financially are known to take to petty trading, begging for alms or other survival strategies to keep body and soul together.

However, among the non-Muslims (especially Christians) the practice of mourning is somewhat similar to the practice in other parts of the country, at least in duration. According to Zeggi (1998), for the Christian widow in this region she is restricted to her house for a period of one to five months. During this time she is expected to wear black or dull clothing without any ornament like jewelries or earrings. The widow during this period traditionally is not permitted to work or attend ceremonies. Consequently, she is financially and materially dependent upon the mercies of her siblings, relatives, relations of her late husband and friends for gifts of food, clothing

and money. During the confinement period, the widow is however permitted to visit the market place once in a while in order to ward off boredom or loneliness especially on such days when the house would be deserted. At the expiration of the five month mourning period, the relatives of the deceased husband plus friends, siblings, parents of the widow gather to offer prayer for the deceased as well as give out bean cake e.t.c. to guests.

Eastern Region.

The underlying assumption concerning the mourning rites dictated by cultural practice in this region is that the wife has been contaminated by the death of her husband. Therefore, she needs to be cleansed before her readmission to full interaction with the normal people (Abolarin, 1997). According to Nwoga (1989), and Ubesie (1978), the cultural practice of mourning in this region expects the widow to wail profusely immediately after the death of her husband, beating her chest, flinging her arms and falling down here and there. In some communities, she is kept with the corpse of her husband before burial to keep away flies from the body of the dead husband. Furthermore, she is expected to wake the household with her wailing which is measured as adequate or otherwise by the junior relations of the dead husband, (the Umuada). Also the widow goes into confinement for between seven to fourteen native weeks to perform the traditional cleansing known as "Ino na nso". Nwoga (1989), noted that the rules of the process do not permit the widow to talk to any man, cook her food or do any work.

According to Nwoga (1989), in some other communities she is not permitted to do her eating by herself. This is supposed to prevent her from contaminating her mouth by putting her hand in her mouth. Thus, in some cases a younger attendant or selected relations are assigned the duty of feeding the widow, who is not also allowed to bath or do her hair. At the end of the period of 'nso', the widow goes through the final cleansing during which she throws away all those things she used in the period of seclusion into designated bush or forest. Afterward, she goes to the stream for specified bathing and shaving before coming back home to begin the prescribed "normal mourning " until the first anniversary of her husband's death. It is only after this has been accomplished that she is regarded as being free of the problem of contact with her dead husband.

Consequently, even should the widow be a young woman in this type of community, the widow could not remarry for as long as the very costly second burial of the husband, intended to ensure that hence forth his spirit rested in peace, remained un executed (Olusakin, 1998). The implication of this mourning practice is that such widowhood practices tend to make already poor women poorer due to the long periods of restrictions on their movement, social and economic activities as well as the expensive feasting associated with the burial ceremonies. Thus in the submission of Okonjo (1992), the poor widows spend all their resources and incur debts in order to give the best possible send – off to their husbands this widow's maltreatment and

impoverishment in contemporary Nigeria is a function of how empowered educationally and economically, the women affected are, as that well as of their age and location.

Western Region

According to Oloruntimehin (1991), confinement is a common feature of mourning practice for widows in the western region. There is a little variation depending on the vocational or occupational status of the widow. He noted that while two-three weeks is the confinement period for a civil servants (widow) that of the non-employed widows is forty days. The relations of the deceased husband are to take care of the widow during this period. In order to protect the widow from being taken away by the spirit of her dead husband, the last night of the confinement is often observed as a night of vigil by the widow, her relation, those of the late husband and other well wishers. Potash (1986), maintained that any widow who died during such a night, is presumed to be responsible for her husband's death.

The widow starts the second phase of her mourning by setting out early the next morning knocking on the door of her neighbours to thank them for their care and concern. By tradition, these neighbours are neither expected to reply nor show their face in acknowledgement. In fact, those already out on different missions are also forbidden by tradition to come face to face with the widow. On her return to the house, the clothes used for this ritual

confinement and those on her are to be removed to be burnt or given to beggars. She then proceeds on the one year long sobriety mourning during which she is permitted to attend selected gatherings, or ceremonies clad in either black or dull colour clothes. Remarriage is often considered in the case of a young widow, which may be to a relation of her deceased husband or to another man who is not a relation of the late husband. As for older widows, they usually dedicate themselves, thereafter, to running their house with the help of their grown-up children.

According to Mordi-Chinnock (1991), in some other parts of the Western region, attribution of a husband's death is culturally made to the wife. Thus to vindicate herself, she is expected to drink successfully from the water used for bathing the corpse of her deceased husband. In such a community, the widow is to remain in confinement for a maximum of seven days during which she wears rag cloth, sits and sleeps on old mat on the floor. Mordi-Chinnock (1991), maintained that during this period, basic personal hygiene rudiments are disallowed to the widow. For instance, she is not to bath or chew stick (brushing of her teeth). The widow is also expected to eat from unwashed earthenware or calabash with unwashed hand. These researchers, observed that the use of left hand is prescribed in some communities during the period of confinement. In some other, the widow is required to hold some objects like stick, knife, e.t.c. Another feature of mourning in this region is that the widow must wail the death of her husband for the relation to hear, otherwise

she faces serious consequences. Coupled with this is the fact that anything touched by the widow is automatically considered contaminated, never to be used again.

Apart from the above, in other communities in this region like Bendel East, widows may not be allowed to see their husband's corpses. For example, the Ishan widow smears her face with charcoal daily and this is a practise designed to wade off evil spirits and husband's ghost while in confinement, a fire into which certain has been added could be raised and kept near her. In some cases, a very smoky and irritating ingredient could be added to aggravate the widows punishment. Once this is completed, on the seventh day, the ritual cleansing is done to set the widow for the "normal mourning " which could last for between 3months to a year or more (Kirwen, 1979).

As a matter of fact, in such communities, during this period, the widows movement are restricted, except for the working – class who are permitted to report for duty. The widow is now not permitted to go to the market, farm or any social outing is frowned at by the community. This "house – arrest" in the view of Abolarin (1997) creates more problems for a widow, who has to fend for herself and children. As for the Igbo speaking areas of Bendel State, a widow suffers more restriction, clothes in black for longer period until her late husband's nature funeral rites are performed. In the submission of Kirwen (1979), it is a bad omen for widow to die during her

confinement .if it happens, her corpse is thrown into the forest for the vultures which is a stigma that could mar her children's progress in the community. According to Owasanye (1997), the trauma associated with widowhood is a well recognised phenomenon especially among women. These practices are by all purposes and intents contrary to universal religions injunctions.

These practices represent another angle to the oppression of widows through discriminatory and dehumanising practices. These practices, regrettably, is another aspect of discrimination against women generally in spite of the growing popularity of the legal principle that "women rights are human rights" (Olusakin,1998).

Stress and Stress sources in Widowhood

The term stress has been a subject of controversy for a very long time. While some viewed it from three perspectives of stimulus, response and cognitive transactions (Matheny, Aycode, Pugh, Carlette and Cannela 1986), others viewed it from its psychological and physiological implications perspectives (Mathew & Steptoe, 1988). According to the proponents of the first view, whatever causes stress may be termed a stressor, and the result is the stress response or experience, which may be manifested in physical, psychological or behavioural symptoms. On the other hand, the proponents of the second view maintained that stress is psychological when it is viewed as a set of stimuli (Calamitous, events, particular life challenges) that is

threatening to an individual. It is however physiological when it is a set of response (i.e. internal adjustment) that might take place in such circumstances. Thus, from these two perspectives, it could be inferred that, stress taken broadly could imply an interactive process, which arises when the demand/or challenge of the environment exceeds the capacity and resources of the individual concerned (Mathews & Steppoe, 1988). In support of this definition Adeoye (1991), described stress as the syndrome which occurs in people as a result of a perceived inability to cope with demands of living, working, or other life situations or events. He reaffirmed the fact that stressor life stress or could manifest itself in psychological, physiological or behavioural symptoms. With respect to widow and widowhood, stress could imply any life situation, event or demand that appears threatening or beyond their innate resource (whether it is) intellectual, emotional and socio-economic ability or resources.

According to Rose-man and Friedman (1974), Type A behaviour pattern is a major predisposing factor for stress. Bakare (1988), listed such personality factors as interpersonal conflicts, mental disorder, hyper sensitivity and hereditary traits as causes or sources of stress. On their own part, Rader and Rose (1978), classified sources of stress into two broad categories (especially for managers) viz.: daily stress and executive stress. Daily stress which by extension applies to widow, they noted, include such finances, property up keep, children, neighbours, in-laws and social

responsibilities. In reaffirming this postulation, Coper (1981) observed that among the causes of stress for people, is the incidence of having too much or two little responsibilities, whether for people or things. For example, a widow with too much or too little responsibilities could become stressed, especially if the new situation looks tasking or challenging to her or appear to be beyond her resources outright.

In line with the above, it has been observed by researchers (Friedman & Roseman, 1974; Howard, Gunnigham & Rechitzer, 1975), that individual personal characteristics are now known to be predisposing factors to stress. This according to them is because different people react differently to different stimuli depending on their generic and environmental influences. Thus, where the challenge is perceived to be great and critical, the individual may become stressed or experience stress. In order to understand the scope and nature of stress as it affects its victims, Selye (1956) proposed a four element paradigm of stress response consisting of (a) an antecedent stress, (b) mediating factors, (c) general/socio-psychological adaptation syndrome, and (d) consequent adaptive or maladaptive responses. This paradigm is represented diagrammatically by Dohrenwend (1961) as follows:

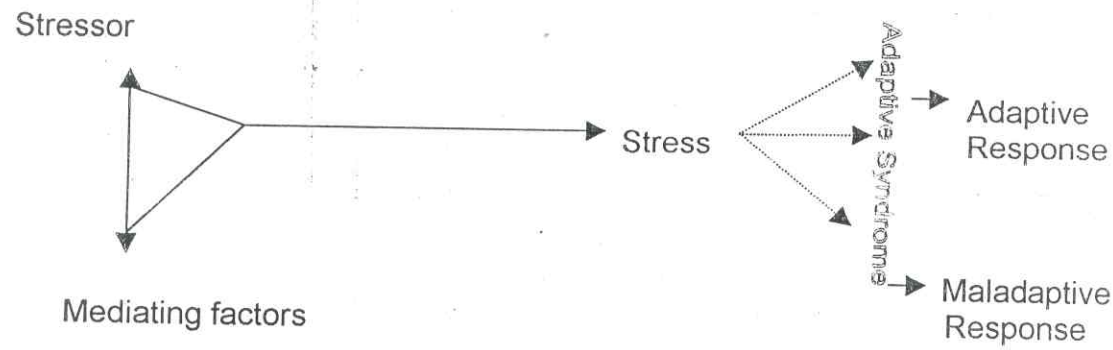


Fig. 1: *General paradigm of the stress response. (From Dohrenwed, B.P. (1961). The social psychological nature of stress: A framework for casual injury. Journal of Abnormal social psychology. Vol. 62: 294 – 302.*

According to Dohrenwend (1961), the interpretation of the paradigm is that a stressor can range from such natural and manmade disaster to more ordinary stressful life events (like the death of one's parent, death of a spouse, serious personal ill-health to things like automobile accident, economic downturn, loss of status, occupational challenge e.t.c). Mediating factors include both inner resources and deficits (e.g. intellectual ability, physical health, inherited vulnerabilities and vulnerabilities acquired as a result of death of a loved one like parent or spouse), wealth, social support in the form of family and friends or the absence of such asset). Socio-psychological adaptation syndrome, he observed, must have effective elements of adaptation rooted in the arousal responses of fear and anger, and conative elements of adaptation involving change or re-emphasis in

activities, abandoning some activities, taking up others, and increasing or decreasing still others. Finally, adaptation according to him, is also likely to involve changes in orientation, alteration of beliefs and so on. However, when adaptation fails or the mechanism underlying it becomes derailed, he posited that maladaptive responses result, which is manifested in form of transient psychopathology, with demoralisation perhaps being constant and by no means exclusive components.

Stress as it relates to widowhood is believed to be caused by a number of factors. For instance it has been noted that the uniqueness of the husband-wife relationship is responsible for the stress experienced by the widow after the death of her husband. Thus Worthman and Silver (1987), have observed that the death of a spouse is most likely followed by years of grief and distress for the widow. Ander, Sindstorm and Tiblin (1974) rated death or loss of a spouse as the most stressful life event. This is because it produces persisting inaccessibility of the deceased to the surviving spouse, while any attempt by the survivor to substitute other figures fail, no matter how ideally the substitute figure behaves.

Fadipe (1970), explained that the stress of bereavement is possibly a result of modern marital and family style. To him, women in the olden days were not learned and their status was not determined by that of their husbands. And because polygamy was the norm then, cases of exceptional attachment to any particular wife was most unlikely. Nowadays, however, it

appears that there is a strong one to one mapping of a husband to a wife. Also, today, more women are learned and are thus in high socio-economic status positions with the influence as that of their husbands. These and some other factors, he stressed, seem to generate a strong pair bond relationship between a man and his wife to the extent that the loss of the husband could mean a loss not only of a spouse, but a loss also of income and/or of status for the wife (Parkes, 1988).

Another contributory factor for the development of stress among widows is the after effect of widowhood practice. In the opinions of Ozoagu (1993), and Ikeh (1993), the living conditions of so many widows become dismal in Nigeria today, after the observance of the mandatory mourning and widowhood practices. They observed that the marital status of these widows pushes them to the bottom of the socio-economic ladder. This in turn leaves some of them lonely, starving, neglected, assaulted and humiliated. This degrading condition, in some extreme cases, are manifested in form of banishment from town, to commission of suicide by the widow out of sheer frustration.

Stress as a phenomenon is considered a disorder whose presence could be identified through symptoms (Chizea, 1988). He posited three broad classes of symptoms for stress detection viz.: physiological, psychological and behavioural Accounting to (Matheny, et al 1988), the physiological symptoms of stress, include ulcers, hypertension, tension,

headaches, rapid pulse rate, tiredness or fatigue, psychosomatic complaints and coronary heart diseases among others. Other symptoms in this category according to Chizea (1988), are various genitourinary problems like failure to menstruate, impotence in men, and in-continence of urine, especially among the aged and children. There are other problems of immunological system like reduced resistance to all type of diseases, skin rashes and asthma, e.t.c.

According to Coper (1981), Matheny, et al (1986), the psychological symptom of stress include low self-esteem, lack of job satisfaction, irritability, narrowed perception, concentration and attention deficits. Other symptoms are anxiety, depressed mood, frustration, anger, guilt feelings, brooding, job tension, job dissatisfaction, and low self-esteem. In the opinion of Schuler (1979), psychological stress can also be identified through such symptoms as apathy, regression, withdrawal, forgetfulness and dissatisfaction. For a female family head (i.e. a widow heading her family) she is likely to manifest such symptoms as nervousness, tenseness, headache and desire to be left alone.

Behavioural symptoms of stress as related by Miller (1988) include such features as lack of concentration, procrastination, and excessive use of drugs. Other symptoms in this category are accident and low performance, speech dysfluences, restlessness, sleep disturbance and avoidance behaviours (Paroasuman & Alluto, 1988; Schuler, 1979). The manifestation of these behavioural symptoms by widowed women was confirmed by

Solomon, Osterweis and Green (1984). They observed that among widows, there is manifestation of excess disability, cognitive impairment, increased symptoms from medical illness, physiological effects, increased utilisation of health care services and increased rate of suicide and non-suicide mortality.

In the submission of Barry and Fleming (1988), widows manifest their physiological and behavioural stress symptoms as well as psychological stress symptoms through increased utilisation of both out-patient and in-patient services more often than married individuals (who are not widows) of the same sex. It is thus, argued that compared with their married counterparts, widows (and widowers), generally manifest lower psychological well being. This, Lubben (1988) believes, is probably a direct outcome of the negative impacts of widowhood.

In order to facilitate understanding of the scope and nature of stress experienced by widows, broad categorisation of the various stressful aspect or impact of widowhood on widows have been developed. This categorisation of main stress factors is otherwise known as stress sources. According to Gbenda (1997), these are physiological, economical, and psychological stress factors. The physiological stress sources in his view emanates from cultural disparity in age for marriage for men and women. He observed that while the society or African culture approves of men marrying women that are as much as fifteen years younger than they are, the man is not expected to marry a woman older than himself, even if the gap is two

years. Consequently, even should both couple live to the end of their life expectancy (which at present is 72 or 75 for male and female Nigerian respectively), the man will ideally offer the woman, fifteen years of widowhood and its attendant problems.

The widow, Gbenda (1997) observed, faces physiological stress because of the problem of finding another suitable marital partner. This is because after the death of her spouse, the widow has limited choice in term of marital partner. This is because, even if she is still young, she could only think of getting either a widower or a man of her age bracket, an age in which most of such men are already married. Thus her stress source could be from lack of suitable marital partner (if any) and contending with problems of co-wives (where the man is already married). The widow is in for more serious problem if she is a little elderly at the time of her spouse's death. This is because African tradition frowns at remarriage by older women. Consequently, her stress sources will emanate from lack of sexual partner (to satisfy her sexual needs) and financial responsibilities.

Gbenda (1997) buttressed the submission of Wiebe (1987) that, a widow's physiological stress could be a result of heart failing rigour which she is likely to pass through at night, when she wakes up and looks for warmth in the cold empty half of the bed. This could be a direct consequence of societal prohibition of remarriage for 'elderly' widows. Gbenda (1997) contended that the society is displaying double standard, because in

forbidding remarriage, the society does not take cognisance of the widow's age at bereavement and by implication her sexual and financial needs. He argued that, while the society expects her to settle down to take care of the (deceased) man's children, the wherewithal to take care of them is taken away from her. This is because in most Nigerian societies, at the death of the man, all his property are inherited by his relatives. In fact, most of the time the "loot" is divided and carted away before the deceased is buried. And to compound her problems, the widow is often left with the stigma that she is instrumental to the death of her husband (Osarenren, 1998).

Sociological stress source of widows relates to the fact that most often, and by orientation, women are reared to think that it is impolite for them to initiate social contacts. Thus, upon the death of their husband, they frequently feel that they cannot initiate new social contacts, especially with members of the opposite sex. This is possibly because of the ingrained passivity or fear that this behaviour might be perceived as "unlady-like". In the opinion of Gbenda (1997), Fadipe (1970), women have been socialised into thinking that it is inappropriate to take the lead in male-female relationship. In African societies, showing too much enthusiasm, even in general social situations, might be interpreted as "being pushy". Thus, where the men folk are not forthcoming with the initiative for social relationship, forming a new one by the widow is likely to be difficult if not impossible.

Psychological stress source for widow has been attributed to the negative societal attitude toward them, especially in term of social relationship and intimacy (Gaenda, 1997). Thus, the widow because of subtle avoidance by male and female friends and relatives of her late husband (at times) often feel unwanted, frustrated, and humiliated. For example, some widows have narrated how they were being comforted by their husband's best married friends, only to have the comforting turn into a sexual invitation (or exploitation) that frightened and depressed them (Gbenda, 1997). It can thus be concluded that the stressors peculiar to widows are many. These include the followings:

(i) Lack of suitable marital partner;

(ii) Loss of personal identity;

(iii) Loss of self-esteem;

(iv) Lack of emotional support; and

(v) Problems of financial constraints.

The loss of identity is another source of stress for widows and its complexity has been known to make widowhood more stressful. This is because women by socialisation, were trained to invest their identity in their marriage, to the extent that before marriage they were overtly encouraged to postpone closure of their identity until they know the person whom they would marry. Thus, with marriage (to a man) they assumed that their real identity has emerged and when the man dies, with him goes the identity. This,

scholars observed could be psychologically distressful. This lack of self-identity after the death of a spouse has been found to be a pre-disposing factor for incidence of low self-esteem. This, as explained by Barret (1978), is due to the fact that their marriage and, by extension, their husband's presence gave them vicarious power or status. He posited that because of societal scorn and apathy towards widows, they are often treated almost in the same manner as divorcees, who appear to be their natural allies.

Finally, it could be inferred that, widowhood is a phenomenon that affects more women than men financially, psychologically, sexually, socially and physiologically. This is especially frightening when it is realised that the traditional socialisation process of women encourages dependence and passivity, which in turn hinder women's attempts to adjust to widowhood and reintegrate fully into the society after the death of their husband.

Nature and Scope of Support System for Widows.

The term support has different connotations to different people. For instance, Wallston, Alagna, Davellis and Davellis (1983), defined support as the comfort, assistance, and information one receives through formal and informal contacts with individuals or groups. However, Lopata (1988) felt that support is any object or action or instruction that the receiver and/or the giver accepts as being necessary or helpful in maintaining a life style. This definition is broad based and all embracing of the various elements of a support programme. Support system on the other hand has been defined as

a set of support of a similar type. For example, support generally has been classified into four main groups namely: economic, service, social and emotional component of similar nature or outlook e.g. service is support system including such things as transportation, house repair, house keeping, shopping, child care, and provision of legal aids e.t.c. As for support network, this is used to refer to all those people and groups who provide support to the receiver of such services/or help e.t.c. With reference to this work, support network is used to refer to all those people and groups who provide support to the widow, such as relatives, friends, co-workers, religious bodies, neighbours of the widow or those of her deceased husband as well as community in which the widow lives.

Biblically, the death of a husband who has the role of provider for the wife automatically exposes the widow to lots of financial difficulties (Abolarin, 1997; Gbenda, 1997). Marital role expectation of the husband, as stated in Act of Apostle 6:1, second Kings 4:1 and the Holy Quran 4:24;, requires the man/husband to provide financial and other supports for the wife to the extent that the wife may be completely dependent on the man. Thus with his ultimate death, a provider's vacuum is created, which in turn necessitates the provision of such supports by well-defined support networks. This, explained, Sanders (1980), is necessary in order to alleviate the suffering of the widow who might, consequent upon her husband's death, become confused, helpless, and frustrated.

The use of support systems has been found to serve a variety of purpose(s). Rooks (1987) observed that the functions of support system to widow include restoring widow's confidence and sense of belonging. This is accomplished through the availability of close and intimate relationship between the widow and the significant others in her life. Companionship is another function of support system and is often obtained through the provision of social exchanges, which in turn provide for recreation, humour, and affection. Other functions of support system to the widow are contributing to the development of her sense of well being, and providing a mechanism for social compassion. Rooks (1987) further explained that while verbal and financial support may protect widows from the debilitating effects of life stress, companionship provides protection against the emptiness and despair associated with loneliness.

According to Greene and Feld (1989), for most widows, there is a positive relationship between the availability of social support and widow's well being or adjustment to widowhood. In an earlier finding, O'Brien (1987), noted that while social support might not be directly connected to enhancing well being, it has a direct relationship with the enhancement of widows' coping behaviour. She then stressed that, positive coping behaviour in turn enhances well being.

It has been observed that any support system to be provided must satisfy certain conditions to be result-oriented. These conditions, in the

opinions of Lopata (1988), and Rooks (1987) include the fact that the amount of support to be given must be adequate and proportional to the perceived need of the widow. Another condition is the timing, which must be appropriate and prompt. The source from which the support originates is crucial. This is the third condition and it has been suggested that in order to be meaningful, it must be genuine, (with no degrading or insultive conditions attached). The fourth condition, according to these researchers, is that of structure. In their views, the structure of the support to be given must be practicable. They equally re-emphasise the need for proportional balance between the amount of support to be offered and the perceived threat engendered by a particular situation.

The various components of the support systems available to the widows have been grouped into four main types especially as they apply to the Nigerian socio-cultural setting. These four main types, in the submission of Abolarin (1997), are economic, service, social and emotional support systems. However, there exists individual difference and socio-cultural variation in the support network providing which support and the type provided or to be provided. For example, nine major support networks for widows have been identified. It is contended that majority of the widows receive general support from most of the networks. Specifically, economic support is given to most of the widows mainly by their siblings, female friends, and husband's friends. On the other hand, service support is provided by

widow's siblings, children and female friends. The same support network provides the widow with social and emotional support systems.

The marital or parental ethnic background of the widow has been observed to be a determinant of the degree and type of support system received or given to the widow (Abolarin, 1997). It has been found for instance, that widows that got married within their parental ethnic group were mostly supported by their children, extended family members and

husband's relation. However, widows who got married outside their parental ethnic group receive most of their supports from their siblings, parents and religious groups. Other factors found to be influential on the degree and/or type of support received or given to the widow are widow's age, duration of widowhood, widow's marital status (child bearing age) and her childliness or childlessness. It has been maintained that younger widows were mostly supported by their husband's relations, while older widows got their own support mainly from their siblings and children. As for the childless widows, they were highly supported by their relations. It has also been found that as the length of widowhood increases, the amount of economic support given decreases (Abolarin, 1997).

Nature and Scope of Adjustment Strategies for Stress Management.

Adjustment strategies and coping behaviours are terms used inter changeably to refer to behaviours which are consciously used by an

individual to handle or control the effects of anticipating or experiencing a stressful situation (Stone & Neale, 1984). They postulated that most of human stressful encounters often elicit multiple coping efforts, thus the use of divergent adjustment strategies. Agboola (1990), described adjustment strategy as the process in which personal resources are used to maintain or enhance feelings of well being. Harburg (1974), suggested four characteristic features expected of any worthwhile adjustment strategy. These are:

(i) Curtailing distress within tolerable limit;

(ii) Maintaining user's self-esteem;

(iii) Preserving inter-personal relationship; and

(iv) Enabling its user to meet the conditions of his/her new environment.

He advocated the use of multiple adjustment strategies in line with the different circumstances surrounding each life threatening situation, as well as cultural influence prevalent at such a time.

The causes of stress for which adjustment strategies are sought are believed to originate from three sources, namely: the individual, influence of his/her environment, and the interaction between the two (Famujiro, 1988). In the opinion of Back (1977), the reaction that follows any stressful encounter, is a function of the degree of stress the individual felt he/she is experiencing. Rummel (1975), has however highlighted eight questions an

individual could ask him/herself in order to determine his/her level of stress. The questions are:

(a) Are minor problems and small disappointment throwing me into a dither?

(b) Am I finding it difficult to get along with people or are people having trouble getting along with me?

(c) Do I fear people or situation that never bother me (before)?

(d) Am I suspicious of people or mistrustful of friends?

(e) Do I suffer from self-doubt?

(f) Do I constantly worry about the future?

(g) Do I accomplish more, but seem less satisfied?

(h) Am I physically exhausted when I have not done any physical activity?

He maintained that one is under serious stress should the answer to most of the questions raised be positive. He thus suggested that any adjustment strategy to be used must take cognisance of the various ways through which the stressful encounter emanates, or its effects on the victim. In relating this with widows, Wiebe (1987) opined that any adjustment strategy to be used must take cognisance of the widow's new roles of the breadwinner, family care giver and (in some case) sole decision maker, among others.

According to Mclaughlin, Cormier and Cormier (1988), the wider the range of adjustment strategy of an individual, the greater his/her well being. Larson and Cook (1985), posited that these coping skills could be learnt through formal and informal approaches and centres like school (or other educational centres), hospitals, psychiatric clinics, churches, mosques and community centres. Other avenue for the acquisition of similar experience or skills are participation in the programmes of supportive groups like the Bereavement support Groups (BSGs), attendance of workshop or seminars for elderly and bereaved members of the populace. The skills so acquired are manifested in a number of ways. According to Hosik (1980), the use of anti-depressive behaviour is one manifestation of adjustment strategy. Examples of these behaviours are:

(i) Talking to friends; (ii) Calling up a friend; (iii) Listening to music

(iv) Watching television (v) Thinking over a problem

(vi) Reading anything that comes handy; (vii) Drinking alcohol

(viii) Engaging in sports; (ix) Running/jogging

(x) Going for a walk/strolling around; (xi) Sleeping it off

(xii) Crying and (xiii) Sitting alone.

Hosik classified these anti-depressive behaviour into four main categories viz.:

(a) Inter personal-oriented behaviour;

(b) Cognitive activity oriented behaviour;

(c) Object-oriented behaviours; and

(d) Solitary behaviours.

He observed that three of these anti-depressive behaviours i.e. eating, crying and being upset are not very helpful while the moderately helpful behaviours are those of exercising, thinking (reasoning about one's problems) and talking about same to friends (and relations).

There is situational variation and individual difference in the choice of appropriate adjustment strategy to combat perceived threat of an environmental challenge (McCare, 1984). For example, adjustment strategies for dealing with bereavement is bound to differ from those for developmental or vocational challenges. In the view of Sanni (1995), there are two main categories of adjustment strategies often used in such a situation, namely: Social adjustment skills and defence mechanisms. In the first group, he highlighted behaviours such as deliberate problem solving skills, changing self-defeatist personal belief, managing internal locus of control, and seeking support or catharsis. Under defence mechanism, the strategies he mentioned include apathy, physical avoidance, distraction, procrastination and chemical abuse (e.g. alcoholic addiction). Other people under this category resort to aggression, repression, suppression, fantasy, denial, identification and rationalisation (Ikhioya & Udeubure, 1995).

Agboola (1990) asserted that adjustment strategies for people include such coping behaviours as relaxation, sharing, flexibility, identification, family support, the use of recreational opportunities, acceptance, stress management counselling and assertive training skill. According to Asonibare (1985), assertive training is good for helping out individual who originally (e.g. widow) cannot:

(a) Ask for what they desire;

(b) Refuse what they do not want;

(c) Cannot express negative feedback, and

(d) Cannot accept negative feedback.

Adjustment Strategies for Widows.

Participation in supportive groups for widows has been identified as one of the adjustment strategies available to widows and the use of which has been found to enhance their well-being (O'Brien, 1987). According to Levy, et al (1993), there is significant relationship between bereaved people (widows) participation in Bereavement Support Groups (BSGs) and their subsequent adjustment to bereavement. Examples of these groups already in existence in developed countries, as cited by Lopata (1988) include Parents Without Partners (PWP), Bereavement Support Group (BSG), Widowed Person Service (WPS), e.t.c. On the Nigeria scene, associations with similar or more broad objectives already in existence are Widowed Group of Nigeria (WGN), Widow Organisation International (WOI), Federation

of Muslim Women of Nigeria (FOMWAN), Association of Northern Women (ANW), National Council of Women Societies (NCWS), among others. According to Lieberman and Sherman (1989), positive change occurred only among widows who have participated actively in the programmes of self-help groups.

Identification with others is another adjustment strategy often used by widows. Abolarin (1997), maintained that the use of this strategy is vital, since a widow without proper adjustment is not only having problems, but could be a problem to herself, her family, and her local environment. Thus, the necessity for reliance on help from others to cope with stress of single parenting was stressed by Salawu (1995). This support system includes those she could get from her parents, husband's relations, friends, other relatives who surround her to help in terms of finance, education of children and provision of emotional support.

According to Schneider, sledge, shuchter and zisook (1996), there is greater expression of psychological well being reported by widowers and widows, who are either remarried or involved in new romantic relationship, compared to widowers or widows who did not get involved in either of the two. In their findings, they reported that there is sex difference in the use of remarriage as an adjustment strategy. It was found that more men than women favoured remarriage or forming new romantic relationship than staying alone, while more women expressed their desire to remain alone than

opt for an outright remarriage or establishment of new romantic relationship. In their study, the rate of remarriage among their research subject was found to be 61% and 19% for men and women (widowers and widows) respectively. The reluctance of women to opt for remarriage or new romantic relationship might not be unconnected with the cultural disdain of remarriage especially by elderly widows or women of somewhat advanced age (Gbenda, 1997).

Reliance on children has been identified as another adjustment strategy, especially by widows with grown up children. Cooney (1989), noted that co-residence with own offspring is the most likely adjustment for recent widows in mid life, while it was an option only considered useful by recent divorcees in their late life. The use of this support system has however been found to be contingent upon such factors as the children's proximity, and marital status as well as gender. In Line with this submission, Wiebe (1987), opined that mother-child reliance is the option for some widows especially when remarriage could not be/or is not used. Getting into this arrangement, she argued, is crucial in order to alleviate the widow's suffering and to lessen her feelings of deprivations. These feelings, it has been observed, often leave the widow confused about living, make her experience loss of self-recognition, feel insecure and uncertain especially in the face of how to accomplish her

financial, social, educational, moral, and psychological need, and those of her children.

Factors Influencing the use of Adjustment Strategies by Widows.

Research findings have shown that a number of factors combined in one way or the other to influence the use and benefit derivable from various adjustment strategies available to widows. In the opinion of Tate (1981), these factors include widow's age, occupation, education, income, children, duration of widowhood, health status and social networks. According to his findings, the major predictors of a widow's life satisfaction are income, attitude toward present living situation, perceived health status and presence of a confidant. Stroebe and Stroebe (1987), highlighted factors such as age of the widow, her religious inclination and socio-economic status as crucial to her positive adjustment to bereavement stress. In the light of these submissions, attempt is made in this research work to examine the relative influence of such factors as age of the widow, her religious inclination, socio-economic status (or educational attainment) and ethnic background on adjustment ability in widowhood.

Pfeiffers (1977) and Ball (1977) noted that widowhood has more and immediate negative effects on the health, social status, and psychological state of young widows than on older ones. The same finding was reported by Sanders (1981). He compared bereavement intensity in a group of 45 young and old widows, immediately after the loss of their spouses and two years

later. He found that the younger widows showed greater intensity of grief initially, and reduction in grief intensity on almost all the scales after two years. While the first part of his findings agrees with Pfeiffers (1977) and Ball (1977), the second part contrasted with it. This is because, while older widows initially manifest a less intense grief response, they later express elevations in grief intensity, especially physical symptoms and denial. These he attributed to persistent loneliness, anxiety and feelings of helplessness common among more elderly widows without any desire for remarriage. He suggested participation in programmes of support relationship to minimise the isolation of elderly widows.

Similar to Sanders (1981) findings, Saple (1991) also found that older widows did not tolerate or adapt to bereavement more successfully than younger widows. This according to her findings is because compared to younger women, older women showed more intense grief and reported more feelings of anxiety and depression, couple of months after they have been bereaved. These findings seem to debunk the assumption that being old and widowed is less traumatic than being younger. It is assumed that older widows would experience lesser

bereavement stress because they must have been anticipating the eventual death of their spouse (due either to old age or ill-health). However, the findings of O'Byrant (1991), debunked the assumption that older women will not fare better in adjustment. According to the findings, forewarning of

spouse's death and couple's discussion of wife's future financial circumstances were related to higher levels of positive affect in widowhood but did not relate to negative effect. This finding re-affirms the submission of O'Byrant and Morgan (1989), that preparation was associated with somewhat better well being among widows. To them, however, financial experience, prior to widowhood has no effect. It can thus be concluded that there exist conflicting findings on the issue of age differences in grieving, the role of preparation and anticipating death in widowhood adjustment.

Religious orientation is another factor believed to be capable of influencing widow's adjustment to widowhood. According to Glick, Weiss and Parkes (1974), Jernigan (1976), religious involvement can constitute an important resource in widow's adaptation to widowhood, especially at the later part of the experience. This is because there is minimal role for religion, at the initial stage of bereavement, when the emotional hurt could be very high, regardless of the extent and nature of ones religiosity (Worden, 1982). However, during the "working through" of bereavement the role of intrinsic orientation is crucial as the widow is trying to accept the reality of her loss, and attempt to locate the loss within a context of meaning. This, Jernigan (1976) observed is essential in order for the widow to be reintegrated into normal life without the deceased. At such a stage, the widow tries to find solace in religious convictions through prayers, rationalisation, e.t.c.

In the opinion of McGlosen (1988), positive effect in widows is related among others to such factors as widows' religious involvement, number of siblings and support from children and their families. Thus, the observation by Rosik (1989) that some widows especially the extrinsically religious-oriented ones, tend to endorse religion for social support and emotional benefits such as security and comfort. He however, cautioned that this orientation might be counter productive, since a faith oriented towards gaining support and comfort has fewer resources to alleviate distress when faced with the loneliness and discomforts of widowhood.

The above notwithstanding, Jernigan (1976), concluded, and this was later buttressed by McGlosen (1988), that widows that are committed to religious activities often have strong confidants with whom they are sharing the same faith. Such confidants could be closer to the widow than her primary support networks (sibling, children, or parents). In line with this submission, Tate (1981), found that the presence of a confidante is a major predictor of a widow's life satisfaction. As a matter of fact, this factor even seems to be crucial than other factors such as education, number of children, duration of widowhood and/or age of the widow. It can thus be concluded that in order to adjust optimally to widowhood, the widow's religious involvement or orientation becomes a crucial factor.

Socio-economic status of the widow, it has been observed, is a function of other attributes or personal resources such as widows' level of education, work history, and social security (Choi, 1992). Socio-economic status of the widow is a vital factor in the overall adjustment of widows to widowhood. Bahr (1974), opined that the negative impact sometimes attributed to widowhood is not derived from widowhood status, but rather from socio-economic status. He noted that lowered morale and decrease in affiliation leading to isolation and low self-esteem from inadequate social role involvement are more directly correlated with change in income rather than change in marital status. Lack of gainful employment by most widows has been suspected to be the major cause of economic problem facing widows. Thus, Lopata (1979), suggested getting employed as a way of ameliorating the financial problems confronting unemployed widows. In the observation of Treas (1979), employment for widows serves two purposes. The first is the provision of immediate financial assistance, while the second is a long-term assurance of duly earned pension.

According to Morgan (1980), while an unemployed widow has more time for grief and depression, the employed or actively engaged widow will have her time occupied; this in turn will bring about improvement in her thought about self. Other benefits derived from this status is a positive change in her perception and orientation to life. This is sequel to the opportunity she has of mixing with people, see the need to improve her

appearance, and to gradually gain consciousness of her lost affect. That is in line with Silverman's (1972) observation, that employment ensures for the widow an automatic reduction in her mourning period from one year to between forty days to three months. Thus, if mourning is characterised with grieving, expression of sorrow e.t.c. lesser period of mourning might logically imply a lesser degree of grief and deprivation.

Summary of review of related literature.

This chapter is concerned with the review of literature (i.e. studies and findings) related to the focus of this research work i.e. stress level, support systems and adjustment strategies among widows in Nigeria from a cross ethnic perspective. It has thus reviewed various definitions of marriage and concept of marital role expectations. The chapter also examines critically the phenomenon bereavement, its nature and scope. It was found from the reviewed literature that there exists a lack of clear-cut conclusion about age difference in grieving as bereavement was found to be traumatic for younger widows as well as older widows compared.

Another concept examined in this chapter is widowhood, with emphasis on its concept and implications. Existing literature in this area however revealed that certain factors do influence widows' experience and adjustment to bereavement during widowhood. These factors include widows' age, child bearing status, socio-economic status, number of children, duration of widowhood among others. Closely related to this concept is the

issue of stress sources and level as they affect widows. According to findings from the reviewed literature, widowhood is fraught with stress and stress symptoms peculiar to widows. These stress symptoms, according to past studies and findings, cut across psychological, physiological, sociological and financial sources. It could be summarised here that the sources of stress confronting widows emanate from the following:

(i) Lack of suitable marital partner;

(ii) Loss of personal identity;

(iii) Loss of self-esteem;

(iv) Lack of emotional support; and

(v) Problem of financial constraints.

Support system available to widows is another concept examined in this chapter. It is found that four main support systems are available to widows from nine broad support networks. These support systems are (i) service (ii) economic (iii) social and (iv) emotional support systems. While the identified networks for their provision include widow's husband community group; siblings; parents; children; extended family members; religious group; husband's friends; female friends; and late husband's relations. It has also been established from the literature reviewed that certain factors do influence the degree and type of support system available to a widow. These factors are: widow's age, duration of widowhood, widow's marital status (child bearing age) and her childliness or childlessness. For example, while

younger widows are supported by their husband's relations, older widows are most often supported by their siblings and children. As for the childless widow, she is at the mercy of her own relations for most of her support system.

The chapter also contained reviewed literature in the area of adjustment strategies, and stress management for widows, as well as factors influencing the use of adjustment strategies by widows. It is found from the literature reviewed that adjustment strategies most often used by widows include participation in bereavement supportive programmes, Leviration (or remarriage), reliance on children, religiosity (devotion to religious beliefs) among others. The use of these strategies however is believed to be a function of so many factors like age of the widow, her religious inclination and socio-economic status (or educational attainment) and ethnic background.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The chapter is concerned with the research design and the methodology used for the conduct of this study. In essence, the chapter highlights the research design, sample and sampling procedure, instrumentation (including their psychometric properties), procedure for data collection and method of data analysis used in this research.

Research Design

The research design adopted for this study is the descriptive survey method. According to Kerlinger (1978), a descriptive survey method is a research approach that focuses on people and their beliefs, opinions, perceptions, motivations and behaviours. Descriptive survey method also attempts to determine the incidence, the distribution and interpretation among sociological and psychological variables. Best (1981), noted that the descriptive survey method enables the researcher to obtain information from a representative sample of the population, to describe the situation as they exist and from where researcher can infer the perception of the entire population.

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Thus, the choice of descriptive survey designed for ethnic they is information by the sire of the researchres to find out the perception of windows about stress levels, support systems and adjustment strategies from a cross-ethnic perspective.

Similar to the above, Oniye (1995), stated that a descriptive survey method deals with systematic description of an event in a very factual and accurate manner. He noted that the survey method is good and appropriate for use in studies like cross-cultural studies, case studies and for thorough understanding of issues like attitudes of a given people toward certain government programmes and other prevailing situations.

Sample and Sampling Procedure

The widows from the three major ethnic groups of Nigeria (Hausa, Igbo & Yoruba) formed the target population of the study. They were sampled across the major ethnic groups from three former regional headquarters namely Kaduna, Enugu, and Ibadan. The sample (865) for the study were thus purposively drawn from the selected cities (former regional headquarters). This was done by scouting for the widows from such places as their working place, religions gathering, co-operative society meetings, individual homes, with the questionnaires to be filled. The researcher liaised with the various women organizations/associations, religious bodies (like Widow Organization International Northern Nigerian Chapter, the Alasalatu

Group of Ibadan, First Baptist Church Ibadan and Ministry of Women Affairs Enugu) in the three chosen cities of Kaduna, Enugu and.

Purposive sampling technique was used to draw out the total number of widows who participated in the study. The use of purposive sampling technique was informed by the desire of the researcher to select widows as respondents for the study because of their relevance to the investigation under consideration. This choice is in line with the submission by Daramola (1995) that a major advantage of the purposive sampling technique is that it ensures gathering of data from respondents who are difficult to locate but crucial to the study of interest. The 865 widows who finally participated in the study were selected purposively from the widows available in the selected cities of Kaduna, Enugu and Ibadan to represent the three major ethnic groups of Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba of Nigeria. The researcher targetted a sample of 1000 respondent. The total number of sample used was based upon the number of widows whose questionnaire were duly filled and returned. (925) widows actually returned the copies of questionnaire to the researcher, but only 865 copies of the questionnaire were duly filled for analysis by these widows. This figure distributed on ethnic basis ran thus: Hausa (307), Igbo (244), Yoruba (314).

Descriptive Data

The research instruments – Stress Rating Scale for Widows (SRSW), Widows Network Support Rating Scale (WNSRS), and Widows Adjustment Strategies Questionnaire (WASQ) were administered on 1000 Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba widows in Nigeria. Out of the 1000 questionnaire forms administered, only 925 (92.5) were completed and returned. However out of this figure, only 865 were duly filled for analysis purpose. The percentage returned was considered high enough for data analysis and other subsequent discussions related to this study. The general characteristics of the respondents of the study are as shown in table 1.

Table 1: Distribution of respondents by Ethnic Group, Educational Level, Religion, Age and Duration of Bereavement.

	VARIABLES	NO. OF RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE
1.	**Ethnic group**	(A) (B)	(B)
	Hausa	350 307	35.5
	Igbo	300 244	28.2
	Yoruba	350 314	36.3
	Total	**1000 865**	**100.0**
2.	**EDUCATIONAL LEVEL**		
	Primary six	355	41.0
	Sec. Sch. – NCE/OND	352	40.7
	First degree and above	185	18.3
	Total	**865**	**100.0**

	VARIABLES	NO. OF RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE (
3.	**RELIGION**		
	Islam	338	39.1
	Christianity	498	57.6
	Others	29	3.3
	Total	**865**	**100.0**
4.	**AGE AT BEREAVEMENT**		
	25 – 35 years	235	27.2
	36 – 55 years	366	42.3
	56 years and above	264	30.5
	Total	**865**	**100.0**
5.	**DURATION OF BEREAVEMENT**		
	2 – 5 years	397	46.0
	6 –11 years and above	468	54.0
	11 years and above		
	Total	**865**	**100.0**

Table 1 shows that of the 1000 widows originally sampled for the study (See A), 350 (35.0%) were of Hausa ethnic background, 300 (30.0%) were of Igbo ethnic background, while the remaining 350 (35.0%) were of Yoruba ethnic background. The table also shows that, out of the 865 widows that eventually praticipated in the study (See B) 307 (35-5%) were of Hausa ethnic background 244 (28.2%) were of Igbo ethnic background, while the remaining 314 (36.3%) were of Yoruba ethnic background. In respect of education level, 355 (41.0%) of the respondents had primary six certificate or less, 352 (40.7%) had at least secondary school qualification but not more than NCE/OND qualifications while 158 (18.3%) possessed either first degree or other higher educational qualifications. In terms of religion, the table reveals that 338 (39.1%) of the respondents are Muslims, 498 (57.6%) are Christians and 29 (3.3%) are adherents of other faiths. The table also shows that 235 (27.2%) of the respondents fall between 25 – 35 years of age, 366 (42.3%) fall between 26 – 55 years of age and 264 (30.5%) are 56 years and above. in terms of duration of bereavement, the table indicates that 397 (46.0%) of the widows lost their husbands within 2 – 5years ago, 468 (54.0%) between 6 – 11 years and above.

Instrumentation

The main focus of this research is the study of the nature of difference (if any) existing among stress level, support systems and adjustment strategies of widows in Nigeria with specific reference to the three major

ethnic groups of Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba. In order to collect data for the study, there was the need to develop or use instruments that are culturally fair to Nigerian widows. This is because, cultural prescription reinforces behaviours that are helpful or unhelpful to widows (Lopata, 1988, Osarenren, 1998). Thus, for this study three locally developed questionnaires (two by the researcher and one adapted from Abolarin, (1997) were used.

The choice of questionnaire is informed by the fact that the subject for the study are scattered across the country, thus conducting personal interview with them or using any other approach might be extremely difficult. Apart from this, because they are widows (who even though large in numbers) may not be readily available or positively disposed towards the use of personal interaction/observation or other approaches. Thus, it is deemed appropriate to seive them questionnaires which would afford them these opportunity to express them selves freely and at own convenience.

The questionnaire used for this study were: (a) Stress Rating scale for Widows (SRSW) developed by the researcher but patterned after Stress Rating Scale for Executives, developed by Adeoye (1991); (b) Widow's Network Support Rating Scale (WNSRS), adapted from Abolarin's (1997) instrument; and Widow's Adjustment Strategy Questionnaire (WASQ) also developed by the researcher. The first and third instruments developed by the researcher were used for the collection of data on stress level and adjustment strategies of widows, while the second instrument, Widow's

Network Support Rating Scale adapted from Abolarin's (1997) instrument was used for the collection of data on the support systems available to widows. The items contained in the first instrument Stress Rating Scale for Widows (SRSW) were generated from three sources, namely: Stress Rating Scale for Executives (SRSE) by Adeoye (1991), Stress Response Questionnaire for Divorcees (SRQD) by Esere (1997) and ideas and information from the literature. As for the items contained in the third instrument, Widow's Adjustment Strategies Questionnaire (WASQ), they were generated from two main sources viz.; the structured interview of Mclaughlin, Cormier and Cormier (1988), designed to measure the coping strategies of multiple role women, and other ideas/information gleaned from related literature for the study. In the case of the second instrument, the twenty five items therein were adapted from Abolarin's (1997) Widow's Network Support Rating Scale.

Description of the Adapted SRSE AND SRQD

The SRSE is divided into three sections. Section A contains demographic data, section B involves organization related variables while Section C is devoted for free response items. The stress rating scale for executive is a rating scale of the five point Likert type, having one and five as the lowest and highest score respectively. The scores are to indicate the amount of stress experienced by respondents. This instrument has 48 items organized into eight sub-section labelled according to each main variable of

stress, as proposed by Bakare (1988), and modified by Adeoye (1991). These sub-sections are organization related variables of (i) work load, (ii) role (iii) career prospect/advancement, (iv) structure, (v) climate, (vi) interpersonal relationship at work, (vii) environmentally related variables and (viii) home life variables.

The Stress Response Questionnaire for Divorcees (SRQD), developed by Ezere (1997), has two sections i.e. A and B. While section A, is designed to obtain demographic data of the respondents, section B elicits responses on sources of stress in the lives of divorcees. Section A, has five items to be analysed, using frequency count and simple percentage. The section B, has 25 items to be scored using five point Likert scale.

Description of Widow's Network Support Rating Scale (WNSRS) by Abolarin (1997)

The instrument contains items generated from two main sources namely: (i) the Social Support Coverage Index (SSCI) by Kahn and Antouchi (1985) and Lopata (1979), (ii) the items of the structured interview conducted by Lopata (1979) in his study of the support systems of Chicago area widows and his examination of widowhood in other parts of the world (Lopata, 1987, 1988). The instrument is made up of two main sections viz.: A and B. Section A is for demographic information about the respondent, while section B contains items on support for widow, and it is grouped into four support

systems in line with Lopata's (1979) classification. These groups are parts A – D viz: (a) Economic, (b) Service,

(c) Social and (d) Emotional support systems.

Reliability and Validity of WNSRS (1997)

According to Abolarin (1997), the test-retest reliability technique was used to establish the reliability coefficient of the instrument. In this regard, the instrument was administered twice to forty widows (10 Hausa, 15 Igbo and 15 Yoruba) in Lagos, with a time interval of four weeks between the first and second administrations. The scores of the two administration were correlated, using Pearson product moment correlation formula. A reliability co-efficient of 0.78 was obtained at 0.05 level of significance. This was considered high enough for use by the author, and thus its adaptation for the present study by this researcher.

In order to validate the instrument it was appraised by some experts in the Department of Guidance and Counselling, University of Ilorin and adjudged to possess both face and content validity. The items contained in the structured interview on support systems developed by Lopata (1979), (the Support Networks of widows,) are very similar in content with Widow's Network Support Rating Scale (WNSRS). On the basis of this validity measure, the instrument was adopted for use in this study since the support systems measured were equally assessed by the adapted instrument.

Description of Stress Rating Scale for Widows (SRSW) and Widows Adjustment Strategies Questionnaire (WASQ)

1. SRSW

The scale was patterned after the Stress Rating Scale for Executives (SRSE) developed by Adeoye (1991) and is divided into two sections, namely A and B, Section A seeks demographic information while section B consists of four sub sections meant to assess level of stress confronting the widows. These sub-sections are labelled: (i) Socio-psychological stressor; (ii) Financial stressors; (iii) Health and Emotional stressors; and (iv) Authority and Responsibility stressors. Each of these sub-headings has five items scored on a five point Likert rating scale ranging from one to five points.

2. WASQ

This questionnaire contained items drawn from the structured interview of Mclaughlin et al (1988) and information from the literature. The instrument (WASQ) elicits information on respondents' adjustment techniques to stress management. It consists of five parts (A - E) also described below:

A = Interpersonal – oriented behaviours,

B = Self care – oriented behaviours,

C = Cognitive – oriented behaviours,

D = Time/management – oriented behaviours, and

E = Solitary – oriented behaviours.

The instrument has items framed to determine the adjustment strategies or coping behaviours of widows in widowhood. The responses are scored using a four point Likert scoring rating scale ranging from Everyday (4), Almost everyday (3), Sometimes (2), Almost never (1), to Never (0).

Validity and Reliability of the Instruments (SRSW & WASQ)

In order to establish the validity of these instruments, the two questionnaires were given to experts for vetting, correction and suggestions. In the light of this, the two instruments were given to seven experts (lecturers), five from the Department of Guidance and Counselling and one each from the Departments of Sociology and Behavioural Sciences of University of Ilorin, Ilorin. As a result of the observations made by these experts, the two instruments were generally reviewed leading to pruning down on the number of items eventually included in each instrument. For example, the items contained in the stress rating scale for widows were reduced from the initial, 57 to 20 while those contained in the Widow's Adjustment Strategies Questionnaire were reduced from the original. 76 to 25 The researcher also eliminated items observed to be ambiguous, vague and irrelevant based on the suggestions of experts on the two instruments.

The reliability of the instruments was established through the use of one test administration with Kuder Richardson formula 21. In this regard, the two instruments were administered by the researcher to 30 widows (10 Hausa, 10 Igbo, & 10 Yoruba) purposively selected from Ilorin metropolis.

The widows sampled cut across different facets of human endeavours like teaching, trading, nursing, banking etc. They were given the two instruments to respond to, one after the other, with brief explanation on the focus of the study. In order to determine the reliability co-efficient of the instruments, Kuder Richardson Formula 21, was used. This was in view of the perceived inability of the selected respondents to respond to the questionnaire a second time. Thus, the idea of using the test-retest, or any other method of establishing the reliability of the instruments was eventually discarded. This is because of the difficulty encountered in getting the needed respondents for the study. (e.g. reluctance of the respondents to participate in the pilot test for a second time). After the application of Kuder Richardson Formula 21, the co-efficient correlation found for the two instruments were 0.67 and 0.73 for Stress Rating Scale for Widows (SRSW) and Widows' Adjustment Strategies Questionnaire respectively. These co-efficients were considered high enough for the instruments to be used in a study of this type.

Procedure for Data Collection

The three instruments i.e. Stress Rating Scale for Widows, Widows' Network Support Rating Scale and Widows' Adjustment Questionnaire were administered personally by the researcher in conjunction with research assistants who have been trained on how to administer the instruments. In order to obtain the support of the widows, the researcher liaised with some women organizations/associations/ religious bodies, etc. Examples of such

bodies contacted for the administration of the instruments include, Widows Organization International, Alasalatu Group of Oyo State, The First Baptist Church Ibadan, and Akinyele as well as the Ministry of Women Affairs Enugu. In the process, the researcher used the letter of introduction from the department to establish contact with widows (respondents).

Thereafter, the researcher and the trained research assistants went round to administer the instruments to widows at their respective meeting centres in the selected states of Kaduna, Oyo and Enugu. Where the widows could not be reached during their meeting days, the researcher and the research assistants arranged to meet them through other fora like during religious gatherings, at individuals houses and cooperative societies, as well as their working places. To ensure maximum cooperation, the researcher and his research assistants explained to the cooperating bodies and the widows, the importance of the study.

Scoring Procedure

In scoring of the first and third instruments, a five point likert rating scale was used with the highest score for any item being five and lowest being one. For example, in the scoring of the first instrument. Stress Rating Scale for Widows (SRSW), the researcher used the five point Likert rating scale. Since there are 20 items altogether in the instrument, the lowest total score obtainable is twenty while the highest total score obtainable for the same instrument is one hundred. Therefore to score the instrument, the

researcher categorized the stress experienced by the widows into three levels viz.: low, medium, and high with the score range for these levels being 20-45 (low), 46-74 (medium), and 75-100 (high) stress levels respectively. The adoption of this classification is informed by the realization that stress, as a construct/phenomenon is a time variable occurrence. Therefore, the adoption of a sharp line of divide for the respondents might not adequately reflect the variable nature of this construct.

2. In scoring of the Widows' Network Support Rating Scale (WNSRS) the scoring procedure used by Abolarin (1997) was adopted Subsequently, a unit score was assigned to each of the nine networks or provider of support indicated by the respondent. These points were counted and the total number found for each network under each of the four support systems, and for the overall supports.

   Thus, Irrespective of the number of similar support element mentioned under a particular heading, only one Point was allotted to such heading. Therefore, since there are four support systems that could be provided by nine support networks, a respondent can only get a maximum of four scores multiplied by the total number of networks available (i.e. 4 x 9 = 36).

3. The procedure for scoring the Widows' Adjustment Strategies Questionnaire (WASQ) is typically the same with the one used for the first instrument i.e. Stress Rating Scale for Widows (SRSW). In essence, a four point Likert rating style was used. Since there are 25 items in the

questionnaire, the lowest total score obtainable for the instrument is twenty five while the highest total score obtainable for the same instrument is one hundred respectively. The summative scoring of the instrument is based on three categories of adjustment strategies used namely low, average and high with corresponding score range of 25-45 (low), 46 – 74 (average) and 75-100 (high) adjustment strategies respectively. This classification approach was adopted because of the understanding that adjustment strategyor coping behavior is dependent on so many phenomenological and physiological factors. These factors, in turn, could lead to the manifestation of any of the three classes of adjustment strategies used here.

Method of Data Analysis

In analysing the data obtained in the study, the researcher used three statistical analysis measures viz.: Frequency count, Simple percentage, and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA). Both frequency count and simple percentage were used to tease out the demographic grounping of the respondent. These measures were also used to confirm the nature of stress level, support systems and adjustment strategies reported by the respondents. Thereafter, the researcher used both Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) and Duncan Multiple Range Test (DMRT) to test the hypotheses.

Analysis of Variance (ANOVA): This is a statistical method of handling comparative studies where there is a single dependent variable and one or more independent variable(s). According to Ipaye (1989), and Adana (1996),

ANOVA is an inferential statistical technique for comparing two or more group means. Apart from this, the tool is considered to be sufficiently robust enough to permit the analysis of data, which might be derived in causal comparative studies like the present one. This is pecially deemed useful in analysing the relative difference among ethnic background, age, educational level, religious affiliation and duration of widowhood of widows and the incidence of stress level, support systems and adjustment strategies in widowhood.

As a result of significant differences found in hypotheses one, three, five, six, eight; nine; eleven; twelve and fifteen, a post-hoc test-Duncan multiple Range Text (DMRT) was conducted in order to ascertain the magnitude and direction of the significant differences. Thus, in testing the hypotheses (1 – 15), the researchers used Analysis of variance (ANOVA) at 0.05 alpha level of significance for all data collected with special reference to Duncan Multiple Range Test (DMRT).

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

Introduction.

In this chapter, the results of the data collected for the study and the interpretation of findings of this research work are presented. The main focus of the study was to investigate the stress level, support systems and adjustment strategies of Nigerian widows across the three main ethnic groups of Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba respectively. In order to collect appropriate data for the study, the researcher used three instruments viz. (i) Stress Rating Scale for Widows (SRSW), (ii) Widows Network Support Rating Scale (WNSRS), and (iii) Widows Adjustment Strategies Questionnaire (WASQ). While the first and third instruments were developed by the researcher, the second was adapted from Abolarin (1997). The data collected were analysed using three statistical measures viz.: frequency count, simple percentage, and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA).

The results of the data analysis are presented in three parts with the first part being demographic data on the main research questions raised in the study. The second part deals with the report of data on the testing of the fifteen null hypotheses. The third part is on summary of findings based on the statistical analysis of data collected.

Table 2: Distribution of respondents by Stress Levels, Support Systems and Adjustment Strategies.

	VARIABLES	NO. OF RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE (%)
1.	**STRESS LEVEL**		
	Low	258	29.8
	Medium	518	59.9
	High	89	10.3
	Total	**865**	**100.0**
2.	**SUPPORT SYSTEMS**		
	Economic Support System	853	98.6
	Service Support System	850	98.2
	Social Support System	845	97.7
	Emotional Support System	856	99.0
3.	**ADJUSTMENT STRATEGIES**		
	Interpersonal oriented behaviour	845	97.7
	Self-care oriented behaviour	852	98.4
	Cognitive Oriented behaviour	856	99.0
	Time management oriented behaviour	850	98.2
	Solitary-oriented behaviour	848	98.0

Table 2 which was meant to answer the research questions raised in chapter one reveals that of the 865 widows studied in this research work, 258 (29.8%) reported low stress level, 518 (59.9%) reported medium stress level while 89 (10.3%) reported high stress level. The table also shows that 853 (98.6%) of the widows received economic support, 850 (98.2%) got service support, 845 (97.7%) received social support while 856 (99.0%) received emotional support. The table also indicates that 845 (97.7%) of the widows

used interpersonal-oriented behaviour as their adjustment strategy, 852(98.4%) used self-care-oriented behaviour, 856(99.0%) used cognitive-oriented behaviour, 850 (98.2%) used time-management oriented behaviour while only 848 (98.0%) reported using solitary-oriented behaviour as their adjustment strategies.

Hypotheses Testing.

In this study fifteen null-hypotheses were tested. Data collected were tested using Analysis of variance (ANOVA). The reports of the tested hypotheses are presented in this section as shown on Tables 3 – 27.

Hypothesis One: There is no significant difference in the stress level of Nigerian widows from the three ethnic groups.

Table 3: Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) on Stress Level, of Nigerian widows on the Basic of Ethnic Group.

Stress Level	DF	S. S	M. S.	Cal. F.	Critical
Model	2	15803.80	7901- 90		
Error	862	215085.57	250.35		
Corrected total	864	231609.38		31.56*	3.00

** Significant, P < 0.05.*

Table 3 shows the analysis of variance on stress level of Nigerian widows from the three main ethnic groups. The table indicates that there is significant difference among Nigerian widows from the three main ethnic groups on the variable examined. This is because, the calculated F. ratio of 31.56 is higher than the critical F. ratio of 3.00.

In order to establish both the magnitude and direction of the difference on this variable, a post-hoc test-Duncan Multiple Range Test was conducted.

Table 4: Duncan Multiple Range Test (DMRT) on Stress Level, of Nigerian Widows on the Basis of Ethnic Group.

Ethnic Groups	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)	Mean score	Duncan Groupings
Stress Level				
Yoruba	314	36.3	50.78	A
Hausa	307	35.5	53.09	B
Igbo	244	28.2	61.17	C

Note: Different Duncan letters indicate differences among the ethnic groups.

The result of Duncan Multiple Range Test on Table 4 indicates that all the three ethnic groups differ significantly in this stress level. For example, Yoruba widows totalling 314 (36.3%) have a mean score of 50.78, Hausa widows – 307 (35.5%) have a mean score of 53.09, while the Igbo widows – 244 (28.2%) have a mean score of 61.17. The difference Duncan letters indicated that all the three ethnic groups differ significantly in their stress level. Specifically, it is clear from the table that the Yoruba widows have least stress level, followed by the Hausa widows, while Igbo widows reported the highest stress level, as shown by their mean scores.

Hypothesis Two: There is no significant difference in the support system of Nigerian widows from the three main ethnic groups.

Table5: Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) on Support Systems of Nigerian widows on the Basis of Ethnic Group.

Support System	DF	S. S	M. S	Cal. F.	Critical F.
Model	2	741.72	370.86		
Error	862	29069.72	33.72	11.00	3.00
Corrected total	864	29811.44			

*** Significant, p < 0.05**

Table 5 shows the analysis of variance (ANVA) on support systems of Nigerian widows from the three main ethnic groups. The table indicate that there is significant difference among Nigerian widows from the three main ethnic group in the amount of support system received. This is because the calculated F, ratio of 11.00 is higher than the critical F. ratio of 3.00 at 0.05 alpha level.

In order to establish both the magnitude and direction of ethnic difference on the variable examined, a post-hoc test - Duncan Multiple Range Test (DMRT), was conducted.

Table 6: Duncan Multiple Range Test (DMRT) on Support Systems of Nigerian widows on the Basis of Ethnic Group.

Ethnic Groups	No of Respondents	Percentage (%)	Mean Score	Duncan Groups.
Support Systems				
Yoruba	314	36.3	12.20	A
Hausa	307	35.5	12.61	A
Igbo	244	28.2	14.23	B

Note: Different Duncan letters indicate differences among the ethnic groups.

The result of Duncan Multiple Range Test on Table 5 indicates that all the three ethnic groups differ significantly in the amount of support systems received. This is because Yoruba widows - 314 (36-3%) have a mean score of 12.20, Hausa widows – 307 (35-5%) have a mean score of 14.23. It can thus that been seen from the different Duncan letters on the table that while Yoruba and Hausaa widows received al- most the same or similar amount of support systems the Igbo widows who enjoying more support system reported using very effective adjustment strategies.

Hypothesis Three: There is no significant difference in the adjustment strategies of Nigerian widows from the three ethnic groups.

Table 7: **Analysis of variance (ANOVA) on Adjustment Strategies of Nigerian widows on the Basis of Ethnic Groups. Bereavement.**

Adjustment	D.F	S.S	M.S	Cal. F.	Critical F.
Model	2	4949.75	2474.75		
Error	862	12978941	150.56	16.44*	3.00
Corrected total	864	13479.16			

***Significant, P < 0.05.**

Table7 show the analysis of Variance (ANOVA) on adjustment strategies of Nigeria widows from the main ethnic groups. The table indicated that there is no significant difference among Nigerian widows from the three main ethnic groups on the variable examined. This is because the calculated F. ratio of 16.44 is lesser than the critical F. ration of 3.00 at 0.05 alpha level.

In order to establish both the magnitude and direction of this difference on the variable examined, a post –hoc test – Duncan Multiple Range Test was conducted.

Table 8: Duncan Multiple Range Test (DMRT) on Adjustment Strategies of Nigerian Widows on the Basis of Ethnic Group.

Ethnic Groups	No of Respondents	Percentage (%)	Mean Score	Duncan Groupings.
Adjustment Strategies				
Yoruba	314	36.3	45.28	A
Hausa	307	35.5	49.46	B
Igbo	244	28.2	50.92	C

Note: Different Duncan letters indicate differences among the ethnic groups.

The result of Duncan Multiple Range Test on table 8 shows indicates that al the three ethnic groups differ significantly in their adjustment strategies. This is because Yoruba widows – 314 (36-3%) have score of 45.28, Hausa widows – 307 (35-5%) have a mean score of 49, while Igbo widows-244 (28.2%) have a mean score of 50.92. It is thus clear form the different Duncan letters that the Yoruba widows used the least effective adjustment strategies as compared to Hausa and Igbo widows who reported using very effective adjustment strategies.

Hypothesis Four: There is no significant difference in the stress level of Nigerian widows on the basis of Age at bereavement

Table 9: Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) on stress Level of Nigerian widows on the Basis of Age at Bereavement.

Stress level	D.F	S.S	M. S	Cal. F	Critical F.
Model	2	1400.823	700.43	2.62	3.00
Error	862	230208.51	267.06		
Corrected total	864	321609.38			

Table 9 shows the Analysis of variance (ANOVA) on stress level of Nigerian widows on the basis of their age at bereavement. The table indicated that there is no significant difference among Nigerian widows stress level on the basis of age groupings. This is because the calculates F. ration of 2.62 is lesser than the critical F. ration of 3.00 at 0.05 alpha level.

Hypothesis 5: There is no significant difference in the support system of Nigerian widows on the basis of age at bereavement.

Table 10: Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) on support system of Nigerian widows on the Basis of Age at Bereavement.

Stress Level	D.F	S.S	M.S	Cal. F.	Critical F.
Model	2	1276.35	638.17	19.28*	3.00
Error	862	28535.09	33.10		
Corrected total	864	29811.44			

*** Significant P. < 0.05.**

Table 10: shows the Analysis of variance (ANOVA) on support system of Nigerian widows on the basis of their age at bereavement.

The table indicates that the widows differ significantly in the amount of support system received on the basis of the age groupings. This is because the calculated F. ratio of 19.24 is higher than the critical F. ratio of 3.00 at 0.05 alpha level.

In order to determine both the magnitude and direction of the difference in this variable, a post-hoc test-Duncan Multiple Range Test (DMRT), was conducted.

Table 11: Duncan Multiple Range Test (DMRT) on support systems of Nigerian widows on the Basis of Age at Bereavement.

Age groupings	No of Respondents	Percentage (%)	Mean Score	Duncan Groupings
Support Systems				
25 –35 years	235	27.2	14.92	A
36 – 55 years	366	42.3	12.51	B
56 years and above	264	30.5	11.89	C

Note: Different Duncan letters indicate difference among widows of different age groups.

The results of Duncan Multiple Range Test on table 11 indicate that there is significant difference in the support system of widows of different age

groups. The widows of age 25 – 35 years – 235 (27.2%) have a mean score of 14.93, those of 36 – 55 years age group - 366 (42.3%) have a means score of 12.51, while those of 56 years and above age group – 264 (30.5%) have a means score of 11.59 in their support systems. The different Duncan letters thus indicate that all the three age groups differ significantly in the amount of support systems received after bereavement. Specifically, it is clear from the table that young windows within the age bracket of 25 – 35years were most supported at bereavement followed by the middle age widows within the age bracket of 36 – 55 years, while the least supported are widows in the age range of 56 years and above.

Hypothesis six: There is no significant difference in the adjustment strategies of Nigerian widows on the basis of age at bereavement.

Table 12: Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) on Adjustment Strategies of Nigerian widows on the Basis of Age at Bereavement.

Support System	D.F	S.S	M.S	Cal. F.	Critical F.
Model	2	5277.26	2638.63	17.57*	3.00
Error	862	129461.90	150.19		
Corrected total	864	134739.16			

- **Significant, P < 0.05**

Table 12 shows the Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) on adjustment strategies of Nigerian widows on the basis of their age at bereavement. The table indicates that the widows differ significantly in their adjustment

strategies on the basis of age groupings. This is because the calculated F. ratio of 17.57 is higher than the critical F. ratio of 3.00 at 0.05 alpha level.

In order to determine the magnitude and direction of the difference in this variable, a post-hoc test –Duncan Multiple Range Test (DMRT) was conducted.

Table 13: Duncan Multiple Range Test (DMRT) on Adjustment Strategies of Nigerian Widows on the Basis of Age at Bereavement.

Age groupings	No of Respondents	Percentage (%)	Means Score	Duncan Groupings
Support Systems				
25 –35 years	235	27.2	51.51	A
36 – 55 years	366	42.3	48.71	B
56 years and above	264	30.5	45.05	C

Note: Different Duncan letters indicate difference among widows of different age groups.

The results of Duncan Multiple Range Test on table 13 indicate that there is significant difference in the adjustment strategies of widows of different age groupings. This is because those within 25 – 35 years age group – 235 (27.2%) have mean score of 51.51, those of 36 – 55 years age group – 366 (42.3%) have a means score 48.71, while those of 56 years and above age group – 264 (30.5% have a mean score of 45.05. Thus, the

different Duncan letters show that widows in the three age groups differ significantly in their adjustment strategies. It is clear from the table that younger widows within the age bracket of 25 – 35 years reported the use of most effective adjustment strategies, those of middle age bracket – 36 – 55 years reported the use of moderately effective adjustment strategies while older widows within the age bracket of 56 years and above reported the use of the least effective adjustment strategies.

Hypothesis Seven: There is no significant difference in the stress level of Nigerian widows on the basis of educational level.

Table 14: Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) on Stress Level of Nigerian Widows on the Basis of Educational Level.

Stress Level	D.F	S.S	M.S	Cal. F.	Critical F.
Model	2	532.44	266.22		
Error	862	321076.93	268.07	0.99	3.00
Corrected total	864	231069.38			

Table 14 shows Analysis of variance (ANOVA) on stress level of Nigerian widows on the basis of their educational level. The table indicates that there is no significant difference among the widows stress level on the basis of educational level. This is because of the calculated F. ratio of 0.99 is lesses than the critical F. ratio of 3.00

Hypothesis Eight: there is no significant difference In the Support System of Nigerian Widows on the basis of educational level.

Table 15: Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) on Support Systems of Nigerian Widows on the Basis of Educational Level.

Support System	D.F	S. S	M. S	Cal. F.	Critical F.
Model	2	1276.35	638.17		
Error	862	28535.09	33.10	19.28*	3.00
Corrected total	864	29811.44			

*Significant, P.>0.05.

Table 15 show the Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) on support system of Nigerian widows on the basis of their educational level. The table reveals that there is a significant difference among widows support systems on the basis of their educational level. This is because the calculated F ratio of 19.28 is higher than the critical F ratio of 3.00 at 0.05 alpha level.

In order to determine the magnitude and direction of this difference, a post –hoc test- Duncan Multiple Range Test was conducted.

Table16: Duncan Multiple Range Test (DMRT) on support system of Nigerian widows on the Basis of Educational level

Educational Level	No of Respondents	Percentage (%)	Mean score	Duncan Grouping
Support Systems				
Primary Six	355	41.0	11.63	A
Sec. Sch.- NCE/OND	352	40.7	12.99	B
First Degree and above	158	18.3	14.32	C

Note: Different Duncan letters indicate difference among widows of different educational levels.

The results of Duncan Multiple Range Test on table 16 indicates that there is significant difference among widows of different educational level in the amount of support systems received after bereavement. This is because widows who possessed primary six education – 355 (41.0%) have a mean score of 11.63, those with secondary to NCE / OND education – 352 (40.7%) have a mean score of 12.99, while those who had first degree above – 158 (18.3%) have a mean score of 14.32. Thus, from the different Duncan letters, it is clear that widows with primary six education received the least support. As for those with secondary school to NCE / OND education, they reported medium support

system while those who had first degree and above reported enjoying higher support systems.

Hypothesis 9: There is no significant difference in the adjustment strategies of Nigerian widows on the basis of educational level.

Table 17: Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) on Adjustment Strategies of Nigerian widows on the Basis of Educational Level.

Adjustment Strategies	D.F	S. S	M. S	Cal F.	Critical F.
Model	2	5680.08	2840.40		
Error	862	129059.08	149.72	18.97*	3.00
Corrected total	864	134759.10			

***Significant, P. < 0.05.**

Table 17 shows the Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) on adjustment strategies of Nigerian widows on the basis of their educational level. The table reveals that there is a significant difference among widows' adjustment strategies on the basis of their educational level. This is because the calculated F ratio of 18.97 is higher than the critical F ratio 3.00 at 0.05 alpha level.

In order to establish the magnitude and direction of the difference in this variable, a post-hoc test –Duncan Multiple Range Test was conducted.

there is a significant difference among widows' adjustment strategies on the basis of their educational levels. This is because the calculated F ratio of 18.97 is higher than the critical F. ratio of 3.00 at 0.05 alpha level.

In order to establish the magnitude and direction of the difference in their variable, a post-hoc test-Duncan Multiple Range test was conducted.

Table 18: Duncan Multiple Range Test (DMRT) on Adjustment Strategies of Nigerian Widows on the Basis of Educational Level.

Education Level	No of Respondent	Percentage (%)	Mean Score	Duncan Groupings
Adjust. Strategies				
Primary Six	355	41.0	45.32	A
Sec. Sch – NCE / OND	352	40.7	50.11	B
First Degree and above	158	18.3	51.25	C

Note: Different Duncan letters indicate difference among widows of different educational levels.

The results of Duncan Multiple Range Test on table 18 indicates that there is significant difference among widows of different educational levels in their adjustment strategies. This is because widows who have primary six education – 355 (41.0%) have a mean score of 45.32, while the other two groups – 352 and 158 (40.7% & 18.3%) have a mean score of 50.11 and

51.25 respectively. It is thus, clear from the different Duncan letters that widows with only primary six education used the least effective adjustment strategies compared to the other two groups who reported the use of more effective adjustment strategies.

Hypothesis Ten: There is no significant difference in the Stress level of Nigerian widows on the basis of religious affiliation.

Table 19: Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) on Stress level of Nigerian Widows on the Basis of Religious Affiliation.

Stress Level	D.F	S. S	M. S	Cal. F	Critical F.
Model	2	2492.67	1246.34	4.69*	3.00
Error	862	229116.70	265.86		
Corrected total	864	321609.38			

**** Significant, P. < 0.05***

Table 19 shows the Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) on stress level of Nigerian widows on the basis of religious affiliation. The table indicates a significant difference among the widows in their stress level on the basis of religious affiliation. This is because the calculated F. ratio of 4.69 is higher than critical F ratio of 3.00 at 0.05 alpha level.

In order to determine the magnitude and direction of this difference, a post-hoc test-Duncan Multiple Range Test was conducted.

Table 20: Duncan Multiple Range Test (DMRT) on stress Level of Nigerian Widows on the Basic of Religious Affiliation.

Religious	No of respondents	Percentage (%)	Mean Score	Duncan Grouping
Stress Level				
Islam	338	39.1	52.59	A
Christianity	498	57.6	55.99	B
Others	29	3.3	52.21	A

Note: Different Duncan letters indicates difference among widows of different religious affiliations.

The result of Duncan Multiple Range Test on table 20 show that there is a significant difference among widows in their stress level across religious affiliations. The table indicate that widows faiths –338 and 29 (39.1% & 3.3%) have mean score of 52.59 and 52.21, respectively as against Christian widows – 498 (57.6%) with a mean score of 55.99. the different Duncan letters thus indicates that Christian widows experience more indicated stress than Muslim widows and widows of other faiths.

Hypothesis Eleven: There is no significant difference in the support system of Nigerian Widows on the basis of religious affiliation.

Table21: Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) on Support System of Nigerian Widows on the Basic of Religious Affiliation.

Support System	D.F	S. S	M. S	Cal. F	Critical
Model	2	466.71	233.35		
Error	862	29344.73	34.04	6.85*	3.00
Corrected total	864	29811.44			

*Significant, P<0.05

Table 21 shows the Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) on support system o Nigerian widows of the basis religious affiliation. The table indicates a significant difference among the widows in their support systems across religious lines. This is because the calculated F ratio 6.85 is higher than the critical F ratio of 3.00 at 0.05 alpha level.

In order to establish the magnitude and direction of the difference in this variable, a post-hoc test –Duncan Multiple Range Test was conducted.

Table 22: Duncan Multiple Range Test (DMRT) on Support System of Nigerian Widows on the Basis of Religious Affiliation.

Religion	No of Respondents	Percentage (%)	Mean Score	Duncan Groupings
Support Systems				
Islam	338	39.1	12.48	A
Christianity	498	57.6	13.48	A
Others	29	3.3	10.00	B

Note: Different Duncan letters indicate difference among widows of different religious affiliations.

The result of Duncan Multiple Range Test on table 22 shows that there is a significant difference among widows in their support system across religious affiliations. The table shows that widows of other religious affiliations –29 (3.3%) have a mean score of 10.00 as against Muslim and Christian widows – 338and 498 (39.1%57.6%) with mean score of 12.48 and 13.48 respectively. Thus, the different Duncan letters on the table indicates that widows of other religious affiliations are the least supported compared to Muslim and Christian widows who appeared to be averagely supported in bereavement.

Hypothesis Twelve: There is no significant difference in the adjustment strategies of Nigerian widow on the basis of religious affiliation.

Table 23: Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) on Adjustment Strategies of Nigerian Widows on the Basis of Religious Affiliation.

Adjustment Strategies	D.F	S. S	M. S	Cal. F	Cri. F
Model	2	539.30	269.65	1.73	3.00
Error	862	134199.86	155.68		
Corrected total	864	134739.16			

Table 23 shows the Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) on the adjustment strategies of Nigerian widows on the basis of religious affiliation. The table indicates that there is no significant difference among the widows in their adjustment strategies on the basis of religious affiliation. This is because the calculated F ratio of 1.73 is lesser than critical F ratio of 3.00 at 0.05 alpha level.

Hypothesis Thirteen: There is no significant difference in the stress level of Nigerian widows on the basis of duration of bereavement.

Table 24: Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) on stress level of Nigerian Widows on the Basis of Duration of Bereavement

Stress Level	D.F	S. S	M. S	Cal .F	Critical F
Model	2	149.58	74.49		
Error	862	231459.79	268.51	0.28	3.00
Corrected total	864	231609.38			

Table 24 shows the Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) on stress level of Nigerian widows on the basis of duration of bereavement. The table reveals that there is no significant difference in the stress level of widows of varying period of bereavement. This is because the calculated F ratio of 0.28 in lesser than the critical F ratio of 3.00 at 0.05 alpha level.

Hypothesis Fourteen: There is no significant difference in the support system of Nigerian widows on the basis of duration of bereavement.

Table 25: Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) on support system of Nigerian widows on the Basis of Duration of Bereavement.

Stress Level	D.F	S. S	M. S	Cal. F	Critical F
Model	2	129.65	64.82		
Error	862	29681.79	34.43	1.88	3.00
Corrected total	864	29811.44			

Table 25 shows the Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) on support system of Nigerian widows on the basis of duration of bereavement. The table reveals that there is no significant difference in the support system of widows of varying period of bereavement. This is because the calculated F. ratio of 1.88 is lesser than the critical F. ratio of 3.00 at 0.05 alpha level.

Hypothesis Fifteen: There is no significant difference in the adjustment strategies of Nigerian widows on the basis of duration of bereavement.

Table 26: Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) on Adjustment Strategies of Nigerian Widows on the Basis of Duration of Bereavement.

Adjustment Strategies	D.F	S. S	M. S	Cal.F	Critical F
Model	1.	2880.06	1440.03		
Error	862	131859.09	152.97	9.41*	3.00
Corrected total	864	134739.16s			

Significant, P. < 0.05.

Table 26 shows the Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) on adjustment strategies of Nigerian widows on the basis of duration of bereavement. The table reveals that there is significant difference among widows of varying periods of bereavement and their adjustment strategies. This is because the calculated F. ratio of 9.41 is higher than the critical F. ratio of 3.00 at 0.05 alpha level.

In order to establish the magnitude and direction of the difference, a post-hoc test-Duncan Multiple Range Test (MRT) was conducted.

Table 27: Duncan Multiple Range Test (DMRT) on Adjustment Strategies of Nigerian Widows on the Basis of Duration of Bereavement.

Duration	No of Respondents	Percentage (%)	Mean Score	Duncan
2-5years	397	46.0	46.38	A
6-11years and above	468	54.0	48.50	B

Note: Different Duncan letters indicate difference among widows of varing periods of bereavement.

The results of *start here Duncan Multiple Range Test (DMRT) on adjustment strategies of Nigerian widows on the basis of duration of their bereavement indicates that there is a significant difference among widows of varing periods of bereavement. This is because widows who were bereaved for between 2-5years –397(46.0%) have mean score of 46.33while their counter parts who were bereaved between 6-11years and above –468 (54.0%) have a mean score of 48.50. Thus, from the different Duncan letters of the table, it is clear that widows who were bereaved 6 years and above higher adjustment and more effective adjustment strategies than those bereaved between 2-5 years ago.

Summary of Findings.

It was found base on the result of data analysis for the study that Nigerian widows manitast three levels stress in widowhood Viz low, medium and high. As for support system, the finding of the study is that Nigerian widows enjoys four main support systems namely; economic, service, social and emotional support systems. However, in the area o adjustment strategies, it was found that Nigerian widows employs five broad categories of adjustment strategies viz; interpersonal oriented behaviour, self-care oriented behaviour, cognitive oriented behaviour, time management oriented behaviour and solitary oriented behaviour

Fifteen null hypotheses were tested for the study using Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) and Duncan Multiple Range Test (DMRT). Based on these statistical analyses, the following are the main findings of the study:

1. There is a significant difference in the stress levels, support systems and adjustment strategies of Nigerian widows on the basis of ethnic background
2. There is no significant difference in the stress levels of Nigeria widows on the basis of age at bereavement. However, a significant difference was found among them in term of support systems received and adjustment strategies used on the basis of age at bereavement.
3. There is no significant difference in the stress levels of Nigerian widows on the basis of educational level, but there is a significant

difference among the widows in both support systems and adjustment strategies on the basis of educational level.

4. There is significant difference in both stress levels and support systems of Nigerian widows on the basis of religious affiliations but no significant difference was found in their adjustment strategies on the basis of religious affiliations.

5. There is no significant difference in both stress level and support systems of Nigerian widows on the basis of duration of bereavement, but a significant difference was found in their adjustment strategies on the basis of duration of bereavement.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

The main objective of this study was to investigate the stress levels, support systems and adjustment strategies of Nigerian widows from the three main ethnic groups of Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba respectively. Consequently, relevant data were obtained about stress levels, support systems and adjustment strategies of Nigerian widows from these main ethnic groups. Furthermore, fifteen null -hypotheses were tested for the study using analysis of Variance (ANOVA) and Duncan Multiple Range Test (DMRT) at 0.05 alpha level of significance. This chapter contains the discussion of findings, conclusions drawn from the findings of the study, the implications of these findings for the widows, the society and counselor training as well as practice plus recommendations for future research work.

Discussion of Findings

The first three hypotheses states that there is no significant difference in the stress levels, support systems and adjustment strategies of Nigerian widows on the basis of their ethnic background. The results of the analyses carried out on these hypotheses indicated that the widows differ significantly on all the three variables on the basis of their ethnic background. This is possibly because of cultural and environmental differences in widowhood

expectations and challenges. Widowhood is naturally greatly stressful to widows who are affected socially, psychologically and economically. This is because there is a wide range of cultural variations in both mourning and widowhood expectations of the typical Nigerian widow. The findings is, therefore, not out of place; the finding that they differ significantly across the three variables, based on their ethnic background. The findings of this study buttresses the observation by Abolarin (1997) that cultural influence is a major determinant of widows' stress and support system.

In the same vein, the findings of this study further confirms the submission of Gbenda (1997) and Hake (1972) that socio-cultural factors do influence widows' opportunities and challenges, especially in a multi-cultural society like Nigeria. This is logical because of the predominant influence of such factors as widows' marital and parental ethnic background, on her level of deprivation in widowhood and the subsequent support systems to combat the threat of such deprivations. Similarly, other socio-personal factors like widow's marital status, participation in supportive group programme, educational level are central to her widowhood experiences, opportunities and adjustment. Thus, the finding of this study in a way supported the finding of Wiebe, (1987), McGloshen and O'Byrant (1988) that widows adjustment to bereavement is a function of her personality trait, socio-economic status and socio-cultural opportunities.

Hypotheses four to six states that there is no significant difference in the stress levels, support systems and adjustment strategies of Nigerian widows on the basis of their age at bereavement. The result of the analyses conducted on the data for these hypotheses indicated that there is no significant difference among Nigerian widows in their stress level, on the basis of age at bereavement, while a statistically significant difference was found to exist among them In both support system and adjustment strategies. the similarly found in their stress level is possibly as a result of the general stressful nature of widowhood in Nigerian. A typical Nigerian widow is by tradition expected to undergo certain mourning rites and widowhood practices. These mandatory practices, to a great extent, constitute widowhood stressors to the widow because of their inherent deprivations. Thus, a widow's stress could be from any one or a combination of these deprivations. i.e economic constraint, lack of sexual partner (for sexual gratification), lack of warmth and emotional support, and lack of suitable marital partner to satisfy her numerous needs. The widows invariably go through life with so many un-met needs. This situation thus makes widowhood a pathetic situation, and widows being highly deprived people, are lost in the ocean of life without a clear picture of what the future holds for them (Babangida, 1988).

the finding that there is a significant difference among Nigerian widows, in both support system and adjustment strategies, provides support

for the feeling that age is a major determinant o many psychological and phenomenological variable affecting an individual like support system during bereavement and eventual adjustment. Since the age of an individual determines a lot of thing about him or her in life, it is not illogical that its influence in support systems and adjustment strategies o the widows is prevalent. In fact, the finding of this study confirms the finding of Abolarin (1997), Tate (1981) and Bankofff (1983) that age is among the predictors o widows support systems and overall adjustment to bereavement. Thus, the finding of this study reinforces the belief that there is age difference not only in grieving but also in the determination of support system and adjustment strategy.

Another area of similarity between the findings of this study and that of Abolarin (1997) is in the age group of widows who are highly supported and those who are least supported. This is because in her study, Abolarin (1997) found that a widow's marital status (e,g child bearing age) is crucial to the amount of support she receives. However, while the finding of this study buttressed the submission of O'Byrant and Morgan (1989) that there is age difference in grieving and adjustment, it refuted the claim by Pfeiffers (1977) and Ball (1977) that widowhood has more and immediate negative effects on the health, social status and psychological state of young widows than older ones. On the contrary, the finding of this study is that older widows do not adjust to bereavement better than younger widows.

Hypotheses seven to nine states that there is no significant difference in the stress level, support systems and adjustment strategies of Nigerian widows on the basis of their educational level. The result of the analyses carried out to test this hypotheses indicates that while there is no significant difference among widows in their stress level, there exists a statistically significant difference among them in their support systems and adjustment strategies. The finding that there is no significant difference among widows in their stress level is possibly because majority of them (60.0%) expressed experiencing medium stress level. Coupled with this is the fact that most widows in Nigeria live under pathetic socio-economic and psychological conditions compounded by the practice of many retrogressive and dehumanizing mourning/widowhood rites and customs. These practices merely accorded to the widow a position of public scorn and disdain, especially, in such societies like Igbo society where the wife is literally held responsible for the death of her husband. By this finding, it is clear that, irrespective of educational attainment, widowhood is typically stressful to Nigerian widows.

However, the finding that there is significant difference among widows in both support systems and adjustment strategies confirms the importance of educational attainment in enhancing widow's support and adjustment. The close range of mean scores of widows with secondary education and those with first degree and above qualifications on the two variables (see table 10)

reaffirm the relative influence of education as a predictor of optimal adjustment. Educational attainment is like an in-built mechanism, the possession of which appropriately equip its possessor for life challenges. It is equally true that education as a socio-personal asset enlightens the mind and opens wide range of options in combating life stress and environmental challenges like widowhood stress. It is no surprise, therefore, that significant difference is found among widows in support systems and adjustment strategies, bearing in mind that most of the negative impacts of widowhood often associated with widow's personality are sometimes due to the widow's socio-economic status. A widow's socio-economic status is, however, a function of her educational level, work history, living condition among others.

Based on the finding of this study, it could be inferred that this finding supported the observation by Choi (1992), that widow's adjustment in the area of socio-economic status is a function of other attributes or personal resources like widow's level of education, work history and social security. In another way, this finding debunked the view held by Tate (1981) that the presence of a confidant to the widow is more crucial to a widow's life satisfaction than other factors such as education, number of children, duration of widowhood etc.

Hypotheses ten to twelve states that there is no significant difference in the stress level, support systems and adjustment strategies of Nigerian widows on the basis of their religious affiliation. The result of the analyses

carried out on the data to test these hypotheses indicated that there is a significant difference among Nigerian widows in their stress level and support systems, while there was no significant difference among them in their adjustment strategies. The difference between Christian and Muslim widows in their stress level is probably a result of the difference in their attribution of causality. While a typical Muslim faithful may literally attribute every encounter (good or bad) to God, a Christian faithful on the other hand could attribute similar occurrence to lack of faith or sinfulness. Thus, with widowhood experiences, the same religious difference in attribution could be responsible for the significant difference found. This postulation is in agreement with the observation by Asonibare (1986), that Christians as a group differ from Muslims in the way they attribute causality, noting that this attribution style is probably as a result of their socialization process.

The higher stress level reported by Christian widows as against the Muslim widows and widows of other faith could be a further manifestation of cultural variation in grieving, widowhood practice and environmental challenges. This is possibly because of the fact that widowhood is fraught with traumatic experiences in such societies like Igbo community of eastern Nigeria, bearing in mind that widows from that society (which is predominantly Christian) endure high level deprivations following the demise of their husbands. The areas of deprivation for a typical Igbo widow include denial of right of inheritance, stigmatization as possible murderer of her own

husband, refusal of service and social support by relatives of late husband to elderly but childless widow among others.

Thus, with the incidence of pathetic widowhood practice in the eastern part of the country (Osarenren, 1998), it is sheer corollary that Christian widows (mostly from the east) should manifest higher stress level compared to widows that are not equally maltreated for the sake of the so-called mourning or widowhood. However, both Muslim and Christian widows were found to have similar support systems (see Table 23). This is possibly because of the humane posture of Islam and Christianity on alleviating the sufferings of persons under stress or who are in difficulties like widows.

The findings of this study, especially in terms of support systems and adjustment, are in agreement with the submissions of Glick, Weiss and Parkes (1974), Jernigan (1976) that religious involvement constitutes an important resource in widow's adaptation to widowhood especially at the later stage of the process. The findings on influence of religion in both support systems and adjustment strategies concurred with the finding of McGloshen (1988), that positive affect in widows is related, among others, to such factors as widows' religious involvement, number of siblings and support from children and their families.

Hypotheses thirteen to fifteen states that there is no significant difference in the stress level, support systems and adjustment strategies of Nigeria widows on the basis of duration of bereavement. The results of the

analyses conducted to test these hypotheses indicated that there is no significant difference among the widows in both their stress level and support systems, while a statistically significant difference was found to exist among them in their adjustment strategies. A possible explanation for this finding could be the fact that stress level and support systems are both individual and "other – oriented" in nature, unlike adjustment strategies that are supposed to be "self-initiated" in outlook. Thus, the duration of bereavement might not affect or change drastically both the stress level and support systems of a widow. This is because of individual differences in grieving and influence of certain socio-personal factors on the type and amount of support systems to be given. Consequently, where an individual lacks other accessory factors for stress reduction, like gainful employment, intrinsic religious orientation, and impressive socio-economic status, her stress level may not alter significantly.

Similarly, since the support systems to be offered are "other-initiated" the quality, quantity, timing, and adequacy of support to be given, apart from dwindling after a long time, might not equally meet the appropriate need of the user at such a time, thus the lack of significant difference manifested by sampled widows in both stress level and support systems. On adjustment strategies, the finding that women widowed recently (2 – 5 years ago) differ significantly from the others is likely a pointer to the effect of time lag on the overall adjustment of the bereaved. Initially during bereavement, irrespective

of widow's age, educational level or religious involvement, bereavement is naturally painful and stressful. However, with time individual differences in grieving sets in and subsequently determines the nature and speed of individual adjustment.

From the foregoing, it is clear that the finding of this study corroborates the finding of Lopata (1979), Abolarin (1997) and Pfeiffers (1977) that there is time-lag in grieving, stress reduction and eligibility for social support. These findings, however, in a way debunked the assumption that older widow will adapt more easily to bereavement stress and thereby, depend less on others for support systems. It can thus be concluded that time-lag (duration of bereavement) is not a major predictor of stress reduction and enjoyment of support systems, whereas the same time-lag is crucial to any meaningful adjustment.

Limitations of the Findings

In the process of collecting data for the study, the researcher encountered a number of problems, which in one way or the other limited the scope of the study. The first major problem encountered was the problem of language barrier, especially in the Northern and Eastern parts (Kaduna & Enugu) of the country. The researcher had to rely on the use of trained research assistants to administer copies of questionnaire where respondents could not communicate in the English language. This specifically could be a

major limitation of the findings since the questionnaires were not formally translated before administration. Closely connected to the first problem was the problem of sex discrimination, as a result of seclusion (Purdah) in places like Kaduna where entrance to female abode is forbidden to male adults. Thus, specific use of female research assistants cum interpreters became expedient. The researcher was forced to specifically train selected female research assistants to ensure adequate coverage.

Apart from the above problems, the researcher also faced the problem of inaccessibility, due to incessant industrial actions by civil servants in Enugu. Thus, retrieving already distributed copies of questionnaire from such civil servants became difficult. The researcher together in the research assistants consequently had to embark on a house to house location of such civil servants or outright identification of new respondents, who could be served with fresh copies of the questionnaire where previous respondents could not be traced. That problem greatly hindered the progress of the study as well as its coverage.

Another problem encountered was that of limited respondents. As a result of the unique nature of the study, the researcher had to scout for specific respondents i.e. widows who could only be located in specific places like place of work, religious gatherings, churches/mosques or such other related venues. Consequently the researcher's accessibility to these individuals was limited to such occasions as during monthly meetings,

religious services or special celebrations. For example, during the rainy season where these people could not attend such meetings, the researcher had to either trace them to their houses and, where that could not be done, the researcher had to wait for another meeting day. On some other occasions, the researcher had to seek out new respondents where previous respondents could not be traced. These problems, thus, hindered not only the progress of the study but also its coverage.

Similarly, the researcher faced the problem of subject mortality. This is because out of the 1000 questionnaire forms administrated only 925 were returned at all. And of the 925 only 865 were duly filled for analysis purpose, thus there was a loss of 135 questionnaire which could have significant effect on the coverage of the study.

Conclusions

Based upon the results obtained after data analysis, the following conclusions are drawn about the findings of this study thus:

1. Nigerian widows based upon their ethnic background, differ significantly in their stress level, support systems and adjustment strategies.
2. Although there is no significant difference in the stress level of Nigerian widows, statistically significant difference was found to exist among them in their support systems and adjustment strategies based on age at bereavement.
3. Based on the educational level of the widows, no significant difference is found in their stress level but a statistically significant difference exists in both their support systems and adjustment strategies.
4. Based on religious affiliation Nigerian widows differ, significantly, in both their stress level and support systems but are similar in their adjustment strategies to bereavement stress.
5. Nigerian widows are however similar in both stress level and support systems, based on duration of their bereavement while they differ significantly in their adjustment strategies on the same basis.

Recommendations

Based upon the nature of the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made for future research and implementation of findings thus:

(i) Further study should be carried out focusing on the same variables, same factors with widowers as sample from the three main ethnic groups of Nigeria (Hausa, Igbo & Yoruba).

(ii) Studies should be done examining widows on the three variables, to be studied separately, using other factors on cross-ethnic basis.

(iii) A comparative study of widows and remarried widows should be conducted to examine their degree of difference or otherwise, on the three variables studied.

Considering the fact that widowhood has been found to be stressful to all widows, it is hereby recommended that massive and intensive campaign should be mounted nation-wide to advocate the prohibition of obnoxious mourning rites and widowhood practices in the country.

In the spirit of true democracy and preservation of human dignity as entrenched in the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (1999), it is recommended that Nigeria law makers (legislators) should legislate against all oppressive or barbaric mourning rites and widowhood customs that tend to heighten widowhood stress and hamper adjustment.

Based upon the findings of this study on the importance of education attainment in both support systems and adjustment strategies of widows, it is instructive that with more functional education, Nigerian widows could be emancipated from the stress and tension of widowhood. Therefore, it is suggested that the federal, state and local governments of Nigeria should imbibe the spirit, philosophy and goals of the newly introduced Universal Basic Education, which is to make people useful citizens in their communities, their country and in the world at large (Obasanjo, 1999).

Since widowhood practice in Nigeria is associated with double standard from the society, it is recommended that government should formulate a national policy meant to address the needs of the widow. This is necessary if widows are to be given any meaningful sense of belonging, bearing in mind that they are also human beings with normal feelings. Government is therefore implored to establish a National Commission for Widow Affairs with social, legal, financial and educational advancement of widows as its focus.

Based on the finding that widowhood practice, as currently practised in Nigeria is stressful irrespective of a widow's age, educational level and duration of bereavement, it is suggested that bereavement and widowhood counselling programme should be incorporated into the training syllabus of all prospective counsellors. This is necessary in order to equip these counsellor

trainees to adequately meet the challenges of providing rehabilitative counselling to widows.

Bearing in mind the impact of participation in widowhood supportive group programme in the overall adjustment of widows, it is hereby recommended that a National Association of Nigeria widows should be established. Its focus should be similar to that of the Widow Organization International (WOI) with a broad-based agenda for alleviating sufferings of widows.

As a result of the growing acceptability of remarriage (or leviration) by widows as a useful adjustment strategy, irrespective of religious affiliation, it is hereby recommended that Nigerian widows, especially those bereaved before the age of thirty five (35 years of age), should be encouraged to remarry. This is crucial if their physiological and psychological needs like sexual gratification, provision of emotional support and social support are to be legitimately satisfied.

Implications of the Study

The findings of this study, as earlier on highlighted, have a number of implications for the society, the widows, the government and cousellors among others. Firstly, the finding that widowhood is stressful irrespective of age, educational level and duration of bereavement implies that widowhood practice in Nigeria is generally fraught with problems. The implication is that

everybody from the government to the widows need to pay special attention to the plight of widows in order to ease their suffering.

Secondly, the finding that the support systems available to the widow is dependent on her age, educational level and religious affiliation implies that special attention must be paid by the widow, our religious leaders and the general society to the maximum utilization of these factors. On the other hand, women must learn to develop themselves spiritually and academically in order to combat the stress of widowhood when it eventually comes. It is equally important that our society should learn to fully support all widows, regardless of their age or marital status, since it may not be their fault becoming widows.

Thirdly, the finding that widows' adjustment strategies is dependent on their educational level and duration of bereavement reinforces the assumption that educational attainment still remains a powerful instrument of human empowerment that should be possessed by all, widows inclusive. However, the fact that adjustment is influenced by duration of bereavement implies a lack of consistency in the human adjustment process. Therefore, there is the need for the widow, her relatives, those of her late husband, the counsellor and all significant others in the widow's life to study the nature of this influence and device means of making widowhood less traumatic, regardless of the widow's length of bereavement.

On a general basis, there is the need for government to legislate against those age long but retrogressive widowhood practice that tends to heighten widowhood stress and tension, especially in such societies like the Igbo societies of Eastern Nigeria. This is because of the finding that widowhood is generally stressful; majority of the widows are least supported, irrespective of age, educational level or duration of bereavement. The government, based on these findings, would also need to emphasise moral education in the curriculum of our educational system, as a way of preparing all prospective widows for intrinsic religious involvement.

Finally, both counsellors in practice and counsellor trainees would have to fully grasp the overall import of all the identified factors in the determination of widows' stress level, support systems and adjustment strategies. This awareness is fundamental if counsellors are to deeply understand the myriad of issues surrounding widowhood and widows' plight. The implication is that, without this in-depth understanding it may be difficult if not totally impossible for counsellors to offer adequate rehabilitation counselling to widows.

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APPENDIX B

UNIVERSITY OF ILORIN
DEPARTMENT OF GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING
STRESS RATING SCALE FOR WIDOWS (SRSW).

Introduction:

Dear Ma,

This questionnaire seeks to find out the level of stress you face as a widow. You are requested to read the questions that follow carefully and then tick the appropriate column or gaps, as they apply to you, most sincerely. Your response will be used for this research purpose only and will be treated confidentially.

Section: PERSONAL INFORMATION

Please fill in the blanks or tick (✓) the gap below to indicate your responses.

1. Your State of origin ----------
2. Ethnic group ----------
3. Your educational level ----------
   (a) Below primary six
   (b) Primary six
   (c) Secondary school certificate
   (d) NCE/OND
   (e) HND/First Degree and
   (f) Second Degree and above

5. Your Religion (a) Islam (b) Christianity (c) Others

6. Your age when you lose your husband 25 years( ) 26 – 35 years( )36 – 45 years ( ) 46 – 55 years ( ) 56 – 65 ( ) 66 years & above( )

7. When did you lost your husband? 2 years ago ( ) 2-5 years ago ( ) 6 – 10 years ago ( ) more than eleven years ago( )

Section II

You are requested to read the questions that follow carefully and then to tick the appropriate columns (1-5) which will indicate how stressful the situation is to you. For instance, if you put a tick (✓) under (1) it means that the situation in question is least stressful to you, but if you put a tick under (5), it means the situation in question is most stressful to you. You are therefore requested to respond to all items raised, as they apply to you, most sincerely. Please tick (✓) as applicable to you the following items in the columns provided.

PART A: SOCIO-PSYCHOLOGICAL STRESSORS

	1	2	3	4	5
1. Being unable to interact freely with members of the opposite sex.					
2. Having to start new intimate relationship					
3. Having to make new friends all over again.					
4. Having to cope with subtle isolation from members of the extended family.					
5. Getting involved in social activities.					

PART B: FINANCIAL STRESSORS

1. Receiving very small amount for the up keep of the family
2. Having little support from my late husband's family
3. Having to live without many of the social amenities usually provided by my late husband like Television, Telephone, Video etc.
4. Having to queue or struggle for bus/taxi on the way to work or market.
5. Having to take on extra job to make money in order to meet the demands and financial needs of my family.

PART C: HELTH & EMOTIONAL STRESSORS

1. Having feelings of not being able to meet or satisfy the expectation of my children.
2. Having no close confidant with whom I could share my feelings and experiences.
3. Having to lie with fears of possible attack by armed robbers.
4. Having to cope with problems of poor health.
5. Having to sleep and wake without a lover I could call mine.

PART D: AUTHORITY AND RESPONSIBILITY STRESSORS.

1. Having to accept responsibility for my children behaviours.

2. Having to subject myself to the authority of my late husband's family in respect of vital decisions concerning my life and/or those of my children.
3. Having to accept responsibility for my late husband's properties.
4. Having to cope alone with household responsibility or routine assignments like cooking, cleaning and repairs in the house.
5. Having to keep a united family without the assistance of my late husband.

WIDOWS NETWORK SUPPORT RATING SCALE (WNSRS)

The items below (PARTS A – D) describe various supports (grouped into support systems) which you could have received when you were bereaved. Please read through them and consider whether or not you received any of them. Then kindly tick (√) among the list, beside each item, those who helped you in the described areas. You can tick as many group of people as are applicable.

The people that helped me are:

The area I received help	My Husband's	Comm. Group	My Sibling	My Parents	My Children	My Extended Family	My Religious Group	My Husband's Friends	My female friends
PART A: ECONOMIC SUPPORT SYSTEM									
1. The gift of money									
2. The gift of food									
3. The gift of clothing, shoes, bags etc.									

4. The payment of House rent, NEPA Bills etc.
5. The payment of children school fees

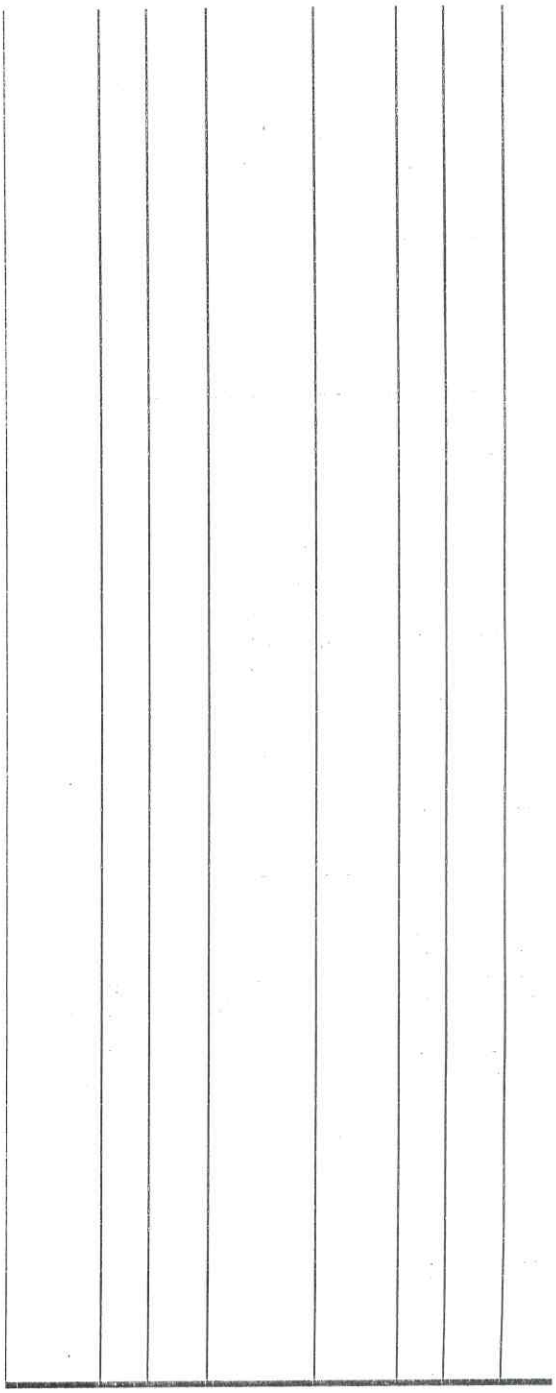
PART B: SERVICE SUPPORT SYSTEM

6. Cooking meals
7. Transportation
8. House keeping
9. Shopping
10. Car maintenance
11. Child care
12. Making decision
13. Legal aids

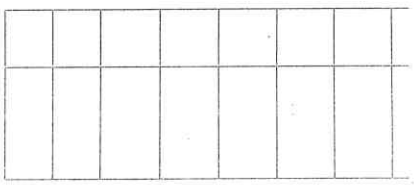
PART C: SOCIAL SUPPORT SYSTEM

The area I received help

14. Creating a grief-free environment by talking,
    Singing and praying.
15. Sponsoring my going to another town for a
    Changed environment.
16. Keeping my company by staying over night



17. Seeking my good personal appearance
18. Advising me on convenient school for the Children



19. Advising me on convenient accommodation
20. Giving an objective view of how I am handling an issue

PART D: EMOTIONAL SUPPORT SYSTEM

The following were the people

21. I most enjoy to be with
22. With whom I share my concern
23. I turn to when I am unhappy or under stress
    I confide in about things that are important to Me
25. That make me feel respected

WIDOWS ADJUSTMENT STRATEGY QUESTIONNAIRE (WASQ)

Introduction:

The questionnaire seeks to find out the type of adjustment strategies used by widows. You are kindly requested to read the questions that follow carefully and then tick the appropriate, as it apply to you, most sincerely.

Please tick (✓) as applicable to you the following questions in the columns provided.

4	5	2	1	0

PART A: INTERPERSONAL ORIENTED BEHAVIOURS QUESTIONS

1. I try to forget about my grief by talking to people I think are Important
2. I visit friends and relations whenever I am bored
3. I ask my family members for help any time I cannot solve a

given problem by myself

4. I attend social or community meetings in order to feel good.
5. I share my feelings and experiences with my children.

PART B: SELF-CARE-ORIENTED BEHAVIOUR

1. I usually go for exercises to relief tension
2. I always spend some time with my new male friend
3. I always eat a balanced diet
4. I accept more leadership responsibilities in our association to
   give me less time to be alone.
5. I register for new training programme to acquire new skills for
   survival.

PART C: COGNITIVE-ORIENTED BEHAVIOURS

1. I engage myself in lots of prayers to take my mind away from
   my grief.
2. I participate in organised singing in Islamic or Christian
   gathering to forget most of my problems
3. I find time to celebrate important occasions like birthday for my
   children or myself.
4. I read lots of newspapers/novels to overcome boredom
5. I cry on my own for hours whenever I have problem(s) I
   cannot solve

PART D: TIME MANAGEMENT-ORIENTED BEHAVIOURS

1. I always reschedule my tasks according to my ability
2. I always combine two or more similar assignments.
3. I always refuse to bother myself with unfinished office works when I get home.
4. I always divide my tasks into more convenient parts
5. I always reject any task that is likely to involve extra efforts

PART E: SOLITARY-ORIENTED BEHAVIOURS

1. I reserve some time to be on my own
2. I always sleep for many hours to enable me forget about my problems.
3. I always sit alone idle doing nothing any time I am not feeling okay.
4. I take extra doses of sleeping tablets any time my problem(s) do not allow me to sleep.
5. I take a long walk to get out of my bad moods.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Do you think remarriage should be encouraged among widows as a way of finding adjustment? Yes/No.
2. Suggest any other way you think widows could be assisted to adjust easily to widowhood.

Thanks.

A.A. Adegoke, *PhD.*

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6th August, 1999.

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

The bearer of this letter Mr. ONIYE, AbdulRazaq Olayinka, is a Ph.D. student of this department. He is Currently conducting his Ph.D. research on "Widowhood Stress and Adjustment".

The department will appreciate whatever assistance you can render to Mr. Oniye to facilitate the process of his data collection.

We also thank you in advance for your anticipated cooperation and support.

A. A. Adegoke, Ph.D.
Head of Department.

DEPT. OF GUIDANCE & COUNSELLING
H. O. D.
06 AUG 1999
University of ILORIN