

AN EVALUATION OF THE EFFECTS OF WIDOWHOOD ON CHILDREN'S TRAINING IN SABO TASHA CATHOLIC CHURCH, KADUNA STATE

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This research focuses on the challenges that widowhood presents, particularly in patriarchal societies like Nigeria. Widows are often left alone to grapple through the challenges of raising families with little or no financial or emotional support. Consequently, these challenges have often impacted the educational, emotional and social development of their children. The study investigates these challenges as they affect widows in the Catholic Community of Sabon Tasha in Kaduna State. The study examines the multifaceted hardships experienced by this vulnerable group, such as financial insecurity, social stigma, emotional stress, and the absence of a father figure in their homes. Using a descriptive survey design, the study sampled 186 respondents, including widows, their children, and church officials, using structured questionnaires. The findings reveal that widowhood significantly affects the academic performance, psychological well-being, and social behaviour of children in widowed homes. The research concludes that widows need to be supported to overcome financial and emotional challenges. In this regard, both the church and government need to form a synergy to support and alleviate the plight of widows.

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Introduction

Widowhood is a widespread social phenomenon that presents considerable emotional, financial, and social challenges, particularly in developing countries like Nigeria, where cultural norms and limited institutional support exacerbate these difficulties. Adeyemi (2020) highlights that widowhood disproportionately affects women in patriarchal societies, where men are typically primary providers, leaving widows responsible for child-rearing and family sustenance under challenging conditions. In Nigeria, traditional practices often marginalise widows by denying them property rights, employment opportunities, and community support, as noted by Olaniyi (2019). This marginalisation adversely impacts the ability of widows to meet the educational and emotional needs of their children. The absence of a father figure is associated with behavioural problems, poor academic outcomes, and difficulties in social

integration among children, as emphasised by Nwosu and Okoro (2021). This study focuses on the effects of widowhood on child training within the Sabon Tasha Catholic Church community, aiming to elucidate the difficulties widows face and assess church-led interventions, thereby contributing to the understanding of widowhood's impact on child development and informing strategies to enhance support for widowed families.

Statement of the Problem

Widowhood in Sabo Tasha, Kaduna, is accompanied by overwhelming economic, social, and emotional problems for widows who struggle to cater for their children to a final state whereby the children become deprived in terms of upbringing, schooling and welfare. Widows are frequently affected by poverty, limited employment opportunities, and social stigma, resulting in insufficient support for their children. The study seeks to examine the effect of widowhood in child training as well as

the role of the Church in assisting widowed families.

Objectives

This research paper aims to explore the following objectives:

1. The main challenges widows face when trying to raise their children in Sabo Tasha, Kaduna.
2. How losing a husband affects kids' education, emotions and social development.
3. Examine the role of the Catholic Church in alleviating the plight of widows
4. Practical ideas on how the community can better support widowed families.

Research Questions

This research is guided by the following questions:

1. What are the challenges that widows encounter in training their children in the Sabo Tasha Community?
2. What are the challenges that widowhood has on the educational, emotional and social development of children?
3. What is the support provided by the Catholic Church to widowed homes?
4. What are the policies that can be put in place to improve the training of children in widowed homes?

Methodology

The descriptive survey research design was employed to examine the effects of widowhood on childbearing. The descriptive method helps to understand the challenges of widowhood in the educational, emotional, and social development of children from such homes. In administering the structured questionnaires to widowed mothers at Sabo Tasha Catholic Church, the quantitative approach will be used. This research will also use a simple random sampling technique to select respondents from the population. In this way, every widow and child have an equal probability of being selected, thus

reducing prejudices and bias. In selecting Church officials, a purposive sampling technique will be used. This is because they play a significant role in support programmes for widows. Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) formula, which recommends a sample size of 186 for a population of 360, will determine the sample size.

Data Presentation and Analysis

Table 1: Research Question One: Opinion of Respondents on the Challenges Widows Face

S/N	Statement	Mean Score	Decision
1	Financial hardship makes it difficult for widows to provide for their children.	3.61	Accepted
2	Lack of emotional support affects widows' child guidance.	3.42	Accepted
3	The absence of a father can lead to disciplinary issues in training children.	3.58	Accepted
4	Widowhood exposes children to peer influence due to a lack of guidance.	3.47	Accepted
5	Cultural and/or societal stigma affect child training.	3.35	Accepted

The data presented in Table 1 highlight key challenges faced by widows in raising their children. The highest mean score (3.61) was recorded for financial hardship. This indicates that financial insecurity negatively impacts the outcomes of widows in providing for their children. Emotional support, with a mean score of 3.42, was also a factor militating against the widows' ability to effectively provide the right atmosphere for the emotional growth of their children. Table 1 also reveals that the absence of a father, peer influence due to a lack of guidance, and stigmatisation of children from widowed homes tend to have a negative impact in the upbringing of children.

Table 2: Research Question Two: Opinion of respondents on the effect on Children's Development

S/N	Statement	Mean Score	Decision
1	Widowhood affects academic performance due to financial struggles.	3.56	Accepted
2	Children of widows often experience trauma and depression.	3.44	Accepted
3	The lack of parental guidance leads to social withdrawal or aggression.	3.51	Accepted
4	Children from widowed homes have self-esteem issues.	3.39	Accepted
5	The absence of a father can affect children's moral and social values.	3.45	Accepted

The view of respondents on the effects of widowhood on the development of children is what Table 2 indicates. This table reveals a major concern of widows across educational, emotional, and behavioural variables. As indicated above, this table also reveals that financial struggles, with a mean score of 3.56, affect the children of widows. The respondents also affirmed that children in widowed homes are frequently subjected to emotional distress, including trauma and depression.

Consequently, the above negatively impacts their social and behavioural development, causing them to withdraw due to the lack of self-esteem. The problem is exacerbated by the absence of a father figure to provide moral and social guidance.

Table 3: Research Question Three: Opinion of Respondents on the Church's Support for Widows

S/N	Statement	Mean Score	Decision
1	The church provides financial assistance to widows.	3.16	Accepted
2	Counselling services are available for widows and their children.	3.25	Accepted
3	The church organises skill acquisition programs.	3.35	Accepted
4	Special scholarships exist for children of widows.	3.01	Accepted
5	The church offers spiritual and emotional support.	3.45	Accepted

The responses of respondents under Table 3 reveal the support rendered by the church to widows in the community. The highest score of 3.45 was in spiritual and emotional support provided to widows and their children by the Catholic Church. Other areas of support include skill acquisition and counselling services. The least area of support is in the provision of scholarships for children of widows. Although this score is low, it is indicative of the church's commitment to the educational development of children in widowed homes.

Table 4: Research Question Four: Opinion of respondents on the strategies for Improvement

S/N	Statement	Mean Score	Decision
1	The government should provide social welfare for widows.	3.59	Accepted
2	Community programs should be created to support widowed families.	3.48	Accepted
3	The church should introduce mentorship	3.50	Accepted

	programs for the children of widows.		
4	Skill acquisition programs should be expanded to support widows.	3.56	Accepted
5	Special educational programs should target children of widowed mothers.	3.41	Accepted

The findings in Table 4 above show the respondents' responses to strategies for addressing the challenges faced by widows. Items 16-20 indicate that widows and children need to be supported to rise through the myriad of challenges that confront them. The respondents believe that social welfare is a top priority for this vulnerable group of individuals. They also suggest there should be community programs to support widows as well as their children. Other areas proposed for intervention include skills acquisition and support from the government, as well as increased support from the church.

Summary of Findings

The data revealed that widowhood has profound implications for children's academic, emotional, and social well-being. Responses indicated high agreement that children from widowed homes face academic decline (mean = 3.56), emotional trauma (mean = 3.44), and self-esteem issues (mean = 3.39). Social withdrawal or aggression and moral value deterioration were also common (means = 3.51 and 3.45). The role of the Catholic Church in offering assistance to widowed families through the provision of counselling services, financial aid, skill acquisition and emotional support was acknowledged by respondents. Nevertheless, the respondents also strongly advocated for a synergistic strategy of collaboration in government programs, community support systems, church mentorship initiatives and educational schemes that are targeted at vulnerable children of widows.

Discussion of Findings

The demographic characteristics of the respondents align with findings by Owolabi (2019), who reported that widowhood in Nigeria predominantly affects women within the productive age group (30–50 years), increasing their burden of care for children. Similarly, Chenube, O & Omumu (2011) noted that the majority of widows in urban communities possess at least secondary education, yet still face economic marginalisation due to limited employment opportunities. This corresponds with the high percentage of self-employed and unemployed widows in this study, confirming the link between educational attainment and underemployment in widowed households.

Regarding the challenges faced by widows in child training, this study aligns with Leinonen, Solantaus, & Punamäki (2002), who found that financial insecurity and emotional instability significantly hinder widows' ability to provide adequate parental guidance. In particular, Nwokoro (2016) emphasised the absence of a father figure as a critical factor leading to disciplinary lapses and peer pressure susceptibility among children in single-mother homes. These findings validate the high mean scores observed in this study on financial hardship, lack of emotional support, and cultural stigma, confirming that widowhood presents multiple layers of parenting challenges.

The effects of widowhood on children reported in this study resonate with Emorhievwunu & Emorhievwunu (2023), who emphasised that children from widowed homes often experience emotional trauma, low self-esteem, and poor academic performance. Likewise, Ismail, Murdiana, & Permadi (2024) affirmed that the absence of parental guidance, particularly from fathers, can lead to social withdrawal, aggression, and moral lapses in children. The findings here reflect these assertions, with high

agreement among respondents that widowhood affects educational, emotional, and social development, underscoring the psycho-social risks associated with growing up in a single-parent, widowed household.

Conclusion

This research has brought to light the significant economic burden and trauma that widows in urban and semi-urban settlements, such as Sabo Tasha, face in providing for their children, which hinders effective child upbringing. The research found that financial/economic insecurity is a significant challenge facing widows who are in dire straits due to an unstable income. In addition to this tremendous burden is the psychological and emotional trauma that accompanies grieving widows who find it challenging to cope with their situation, let alone provide a stable home amidst the disciplinary and developmental challenges such as poor academic performance, emotional instability, and social withdrawal that children and early adolescents encounter in the early years of human development.

This research has also highlighted the role the Catholic Church has played and continues to play. However, the church needs to do more to address the multidimensional needs of widows and mitigate the numerous challenges they face in society. The study recommends a synergistic approach between the church and governmental institutions to alleviate the burden faced by widows. This collaboration will provide a stronger social welfare system, skills acquisition, capacity building, and mentorship programmes. This will go a long way in helping and strengthening widows who have to grapple with so many challenges that they face every day to provide for their families. When the educational, economic, and psychological needs of widowed children are taken care of, society is rid of many societal miscreants who may be a nuisance to present and future generations. The well-being of children in

widowed homes is thus vital to broader societal stability and development.

Recommendations

1. The government should implement sustainable social welfare programs, including financial assistance and educational grants, specifically for widowed families.
2. Both the government and religious institutions should establish and expand professional counselling services for widows and their children to cope with emotional trauma.
3. Local communities should organise regular support forums and workshops to create a sense of belonging and empowerment for widows.
4. Stakeholders, including the church and NGOs, should provide scholarships and academic mentoring programs for children of widowed mothers to ensure their educational continuity.

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