

## CHALLENGES AND COPING STRATEGIES OF WIDOWS IN ILORIN METROPOLIS, KWARA STATE

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### Abstract

Widowhood is embedded with a lot of challenges for women which requires strategies to cope with it. This study investigated the challenges and coping strategies of widows in the Ilorin metropolis. The population for this study consisted of selected widows in Ilorin, Kwara state. The sample consisted of fifty widows randomly selected. The instrument that was used for this study is a researcher-designed questionnaire tagged "Widow Practices Questionnaire (WPQ). In testing the hypotheses, t-test and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) statistics were used to test the hypotheses generated for the study at a 0.05 level of significance. The study revealed that the widows experience challenges such as endures psychosocial problems after their partner's demise, endures problems of poor governmental support, experience negative pressure from the family of the demise among others. The coping strategies employed by widows are; widows never depend on the family's provision to survive since their partner's demise, embrace grants from religious bodies and government for survival, and cope with gifts and luxuries provided by non-governmental groups for survival among others. Also, there were significant differences in the challenges experienced and coping strategies employed by widows in the Ilorin metropolis based on age and job type; while there were no significant differences in the challenges experienced and coping strategies employed by widows based level of education. Based on the findings of this study, it was recommended that widows should be encouraged and supported by the government and religious bodies. Government and relevant stakeholders should endeavor to create measures and legislation that help

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protect the widows and preserve their rights as well as access to several benefits and the widows should be encouraged to meet counselors to disclose their problems, so that their challenges can be expertly addressed.

**Keywords:** Challenges; Coping Strategies; Widows

**Discipline:** Social Science

### **Absztrakt**

#### **AZ ÖZVEGYEK KIHÍVÁSAI ÉS MEGKÜZDÉSI STRATÉGIÁI A KWARA ÁLLAMBELI ILORIN METROPOLISBAN**

Az özvegyesség sok kihívást jelent a nők számára, amihez megküzdési stratégiák szükségesek. Jelen tanulmány az Ilorin metropoliszban élő özvegyek kihívásait és megküzdési stratégiáit vizsgálta. A vizsgálatban  $n=50$  véletlenszerűen kiválasztott özvegy vett részt Ilorinban, Kwara államban. A vizsgálatban a „Widow Practices Questionnaire (WPQ)” kérdőív felvételére került sor. A hipotézisek tesztelése során t-próbát és Varianciaanalízis (ANOVA) statisztikát használtak, a vizsgálatához generált hipotézisek 0,05-ös szignifikanciaszinten történő tesztelésére. A tanulmány feltárta, hogy az özvegyek olyan kihívásokkal szembesülnek, mint a pszichoszociális problémák elviselése partnerük halála után, a kedvezőtlen kormányzati támogatásból adódó problémák elviselése, és negatív nyomást tapasztalnak többek között a haláleset családja részéről. Az özvegyek soha nem függenek a családtól. Ahhoz, hogy életben maradhassanak partnerük halála után vallási testületektől és a kormánytól kapnak támogatás, emellett nem kormányzati csoportok ajándékait is elfogadják. Szignifikáns különbségek mutatkoztak az Ilorin metropoliszban élő özvegyek által tapasztalt kihívásokban és megküzdési stratégiákban az életkor és a munkatípus alapján. Javaslatok: a kormány és a vallási szervek támogassák az özvegyeket. A kormánynak és az érintett feleknek törekedniük kell olyan intézkedések és jogszabályok megalkotására, amelyek segítik az özvegyek védelmét és jogaik megőrzését, valamint a juttatásokhoz való hozzáférést. Az özvegyeket arra kell ösztönözni, hogy találkozzanak tanácsadókkal problémáik feltárása érdekében.

**Kulcsszavak:** kihívások; megküzdési stratégiák; özvegyek

**Diszciplína:** társadalomtudomány

### **Introduction**

Loss in human life is unavoidable, and it is ubiquitous, loss could be incurred in terms of disappointment, finance, fire, drought, flood, accident and in many ways. The most irreparable loss a human being can have is death. The most dangerous loss one can incur is the loss of a loved one. It can be the loss of a workmate, friend, brother, uncle, niece, nephew classmate, brother, child, sibling, and so on. The conjugal loss appears to be one of the most deadly losses one can ever experience. It

is fatal, canal, and perilous because it appears as if a branch is severed from the trunk. Whenever someone loses his or her spouse he or she is in a permanent or perpetual state of grief and bereavement (Akinlabi, 2013).

The inevitability of death in spite of the great strides made in scientific and technological research, leads us to assert that there is no human society without widows and widowers. Yearly, there are seven million widows globally (United States Bureau of Statistics, 2008). The increasing number

of widows across the world in recent times has become a social problem. In Nigeria, widow-hood is a common phenomenon attributed to the high and increasing mortality rate (Oyekanmi, 2007). The fact that females have a higher average life expectancy than males and the practice where-by men marry women younger than themselves likely result in more widows than widowers in society. As Potash (1986) opines, “widows make up about half the adult female population in Africa”. Even though this view is not justifiable by available data, one striking feature in most parts of Nigeria is the fact that until the 1990s, not much research had been done on widows and their plight as determinable from relevant discourse.

Even though men and women could die prematurely owing to a number of factors such as ill-health, accidents, and wars amongst other unforeseen circumstances, it is observed from the relevant literature that, unlike a wife’s death, the death of a husband is culturally challenged in many African societies. When a husband dies, the ready suspect is the wife. Deaths, even in circumstances where the causes are natural and explicable, are never perceived as such. Magico-religious factors and widows’ bewitchment or sorcery are evoked for the death of the partners (Erinosho, 2000). The widespread belief is that someone must necessarily cause the death of a man and that person is likely to be his wife.

The situation of bereavement is worsened by the cultural dictates of society. This is because bereavement is elongated by the cultural observations of people. Widows both old and young have their bereavement extended and debilitating as a result of cultures expressed in mourning expressed rituals about what to eat, where to sleep, days to stay indoors, cloths worn, ceremonies to attend, control over properties, ceremonies to attend, inheritance practices and caring for the living and nonliving properties of the deceased. It appears as if the old widows that are widows that experience conjugal

loss after 11 years of marriage appear to cope with bereavement than widows who incurred conjugal loss less than 10 years of those marriages. (Akinlabi, 2013) The widows generally experience feelings of tension and stress. These are experienced in the forms of cognitive, dissonance and experienced of shame. Bereavement generally appears to be a state of discomfort. The bereaved are discomforted in handling various life issues in the absence of the deceased. Issues like managing the material resources of the deceased, taking care of the children, managing the extended relatives, especially in the typical complex Yoruba culture of South West Nigeria meeting the cultural dictates, thinking alone, actualizing the uncompleted projects of the deceased, remarrying another spouse. All these pose a lot of challenges for the incapacitated bereaved.

In other to face all these arduous challenges the bereaved widows appear to result to coping mechanisms like adaptive mechanisms, that offer positive help, attack mechanisms, avoidance mechanisms, behavioural mechanisms, cognitive mechanisms, conversion mechanisms, defense mechanisms, self-harm mechanisms, crying, denial, compensation, displacement, dissociation, emotionality, fantasy help rejecting complaining, idealisation, identification, intellectualisation, introjection, passive aggression performing rituals, post-traumatic growth projection, provocation, rationalization, reaction formation, regression, repression, self-harming somatization, sublimation, substitution suppression symbolization and trivializing undoing.

The death of a husband dramatically alters a woman’s status and leaves her at the mercy of her husband’s relations who are customarily empowered to make decisions concerning her and the properties left behind by the deceased, not minding her welfare and that of her children, if any. As observed in the *Women’s Rights Wake Up Call Assessment Report* (2001), the plight of widows is made worse by various widowhood rites, which,

though not uniform in all societies, exist in one form or another almost everywhere. While it is more entrenched in the rural areas, the practice affects many urban women in Nigerian societies especially as it is common with those who die in the cities but are to be buried in rural areas (“hometown burial”). As the prime suspect in her husband’s death, the widow is usually compelled to go through an ordeal to prove her innocence. In some cases, she is made to drink the water used to wash the corpse (Kantiyok, 2000). “To express their grief, widows are sometimes required to sleep on the floor, abstain from taking baths, shave their hair, and wear dirty rags as clothes for as long as mourning lasts”. In a similar vein, “She is made to cook with broken pots and eat with unwashed hands” (Akumadu, 1998).

These practices, which stem from societal traditions and family beliefs, are harmful besides being extraordinarily harsh. Moreover, most of these rituals erode the dignity of the widows and also traumatize them. Besides exposure to diseases such as cholera, diarrhea, etc, occasioned by eating with unwashed hands, drinking water used to bathe the corpse could be poisonous. Worse still, any attempt to contest such practices is met with stiff resistance and sanctions. The confined widows, in the wake of these treatments, suffer from social degradation, an inferiority complex, and low self-esteem.

On further clarification, Fasonranti (2006) reported that in some Yoruba communities, a widow is expected to eat from broken plates and cook with broken pots, and on the seventh day, her hair is shaved to sever the bond between her and the dead husband. She is also expected to keep vigil and appears very sorrowful by wailing and crying profusely. If she fails to mourn, it is believed that she may become mentally deranged or forfeit the right to any benefit. After this, she goes into mourning proper, which could be for a period of three or four months (120 days) during which she

is to be of impeccable behavior so that her late husband’s spirit may gain quick entry into the community of his ancestral spirit. At the end of three or four months, a widow will perform the outing ceremony, which includes being washed in the night after having the final wailing, making some rituals that are expected to finally put the spirit of the departed soul to final rest and perform the “outing” rites which involves changing of dresses and being led to the market. The outing rites also involve the widow going to an elaborate party which is referred to as “ijade-opo” to mark the outing. With this, a widow will have to spend all she had left in shouldering the responsibilities of the ceremony. The widow then steps into the shoes of a provider, becoming the breadwinner of their family (Awoh, 2004).

On the inheritance right, the deceased husband’s property is shared among his children. But if the family is a polygamous one, the property is shared among the number of wives he had, (Olaniyi, 2010). However, relevant to the plight of widows is the protection provided under section 42 of the Nigerian constitution which protects women against all forms of discrimination on the grounds of sex (Afolaya, 2011). Also, section 15 of the Nigerian constitution provides for non-discrimination. But still, discrimination abounds in widowhood rites. This is evident in the fact that widowers are not expected to go through the ordeals that widows go through. These obnoxious, harmful, and inhuman treatments and practices are believed to be ways of according respect to the dead husband and separating the woman from the spirit of the dead. This belief is unfounded and untrue, it rather debases the woman and relegates her to the background. Also, the right to freedom, equality, and justice as contained in S. 17 of the constitution is grossly violated by the widowhood rites of Ilorin in Nigeria. Especially when they are widows. This is because most of the widows are not educated and knowledgeable about their rights. They are also

not empowered economically to pursue the enforcement of these rights. This is compounded by the fact that chapter II of the Nigerian Constitution 1999 (as amended) which provides for the education, socio-economic, cultural and general well-being of the individual is made non-justiciable by s. 6 (6)(c) of the Nigerian Constitution.

Interestingly, the Nigeria Constitution to ensure that the fundamental human rights guaranteed are realized, goes ahead to state expressly the right of persons to enforce their rights in the event of violation. The High Court has the jurisdiction to entertain matters relating to the violation of fundamental human rights. Yet women do not enjoy these rights on equal footing with men.

Coping actions or mechanisms for the widows are symptoms of deeper problems and addressing them directly can be ineffective or even counter-productive. The best approach is to discover the deeper cause of the problems which will ultimately result in the coping mechanism disappearing. If one is using deliberate theatrical methods during persuasion, feigning a coping mechanism makes it harder for the other person to broach an apparently stressful situation (Falana, 2010).

Widowhood changes the social and economic roles of women both in the house and the society. It alters the structure of the family. The effect is severe and it is based majorly on religion and culture. It appears to affect the safety, identity, and mobility of women and children; it affects their access to basic goods and services necessary for survival and their rights to inheritance of land and property. It impacts the community because widowed women have lost recognition. It has psychological effects coupled with insecurity. They are deprived of support from traditional sources which elongates the problem of economic hardship in fact in most cases the widows appear to be vulnerable to intimidation, violence abuse, or repudiation by society. This has even resulted in widows grieving in silence in addition to raising a

family. They are seen saying that their main reason for going on with in life is the responsibility of raising their dependent children.

On the challenges of widows, the widows are poor and uncared for by people who are supposed to give them succor and help. Thus, many widows face extreme poverty, discrimination, and dehumanizing treatment. They were miserably deprived of their social security and family support. Their children too are isolated, often in unhealthy conditions, physically abused, and at times without inheriting any property.

On the coping strategies, it was provided that there is a need for the government to make legislation prohibiting all the obnoxious widowhood practices. This especially will be geared towards extricating widows from all sorts of sufferings associated with widowhood. They should find and be given viable jobs and not depend solely on their husbands. Sheppard (2009) noted that more women are taking up industrial labour in modern times. Women are having more access to education and are becoming economically independent compared to traditional societies

### **Problem**

The challenges faced by widows have pulled a rise to the need for people to be aware of the strategies and ways of implementing these challenges. As a result of this fact, there are many widows who find it very hard to cater to their needs and the needs of their children. The world needs to be aware of the challenges and also, the coping strategy in order to alleviate the pain, tension, and struggles they go through.

Nigeria has the poor socio-economic status of widows and women generally. From all indications, widowhood remains an important risk for transition into poverty. For instance, the imposition of restrictive and extensive mourning rites, such as seclusion, dress code, or feasting are all have great implications for the socio-economic status of

widows. Also, the traditional barriers to the assessment of land, capital, credit, employment, housing, and other means of livelihood also reduced the ability of widows to become economically secure.

In a related manner, Ogundipe (2009); Olaniyi (2010) observe that during the mourning period a widow cannot engage in any economic venture nor do any personal work to earn an income. Added to this is the outing ceremony in which a widow is expected to make an elaborate party for the outing (“ijade-opo”) where she will have to spend all she had left, shouldering the responsibilities.

The economic effect of widowhood as raised by Ogundipe (2009) indicates that a widow automatically suffers the loss of marital expectations and security especially with respect to maintaining and raising the children, which would have been the joint responsibility of the couple. This is concomitant with the inability to pay children’s school fees; provide adequate food; secure good accommodation; meet children’s needs and maintain a household.

The reason for this, according to Anyanwu (2005), was that most women depend more on their husband’s earnings and so the death of the spouse marks the beginning of a terrible crisis for such women. With these, widows and their children have continued to suffer in this part of the country.

Earlier researchers have tried to ameliorate this by conducting various research works. For instance, Falana (2010) worked on attitudes to death-related grief among the Yoruba people of Nigeria. He stressed how the Yoruba culture behaves and the rites that are done when a loved one (husband). Falana Bernard Akinlabi worked on Coping mechanisms/resources for young and old Widows in South West Nigeria; she gave helpful strategies that could help widows live well. Comfort Adeyemo worked on widowhood and its harmful practices: causes, effects, and the possible way out

for Widows and women folk where he highlighted how people of tribes and ethnic groups actually behave and the attitudinal norms that are forcefully exhibited. Olaniyi (2010) worked on problems of widowhood practice among Nigerian widows. He emphasized majorly on the challenges and possible lines of the dangers/risks involved.

Widowhood resulting from sudden death gives no room for a will or other preparations. Thus, property inheritance becomes a big challenge. For instance, it has been a long-standing custom in most parts of Nigeria, including Aworiland, for women not to inherit property (Oke, 2001). Women are almost always regarded as their husbands’ property and being themselves, property cannot aspire to own property (Orebiyi, 2002).

The seriousness attached to property in some cultures is reflected in the manner the properties of the deceased male members of the family are usually handled. Instances in which the relatives of the deceased insist on their right to inherit the property of the deceased, often to the exclusion of the wife/wives and children, can be a terrible plight for the widow(s). In spite of statutory and Islamic 6 laws which provide for women to inherit property following the death of their husbands, one noticeable problem among some people in Nigeria is that, in practice, legal or religious laws are often overridden by the customary laws of succession. Widespread practices among this local group reveal that women under traditional customary laws are often denied their rights to inheritance. The law ranges from denial of rights to commonly held property with their husbands die to lack of or restricted access to the children produced from such unions. It is most shocking that the cases of joint property ownership, and the family/relations of the deceased man do not consider this. Rather, the woman is completely ostracized and barred from having access to such joint property. In some cases, no consideration is given to the widow and her children by the extended family. In fact, the

widow without children is rarely considered in property inheritance.

Against this background, this study examines widowhood practices, challenges, and coping strategies among the Widows in Ilorin with a view to ascertaining the coping mechanisms of widows compared to their male counterparts. This is because the challenges arising from widowhood and property inheritance have created numerous problems for many widows in Ilorin. They have rendered many widows psychologically and economically incapacitated and the need for a critical appraisal becomes urgent.

Following all these issues surrounding the need for effective information and knowledge on the challenges of Widows and how they can cope, this present research is aimed at providing a substantial overview of the challenges involved in widowhood and strategies on how they can cope effectively.

### Research Questions

The following research questions were raised to guide the study:

1. What are the challenges experienced by widows in the Ilorin metropolis?
2. What are the coping strategies employed by widows in the Ilorin metropolis?

### Research Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were tested in the study:

1. There is no significant difference in the challenges experienced by widows in the Ilorin metropolis based on age
2. There is no significant difference in the coping strategies employed by widows based on age
3. There is no significant difference in the challenges experienced by widows in the

Ilorin metropolis based on the level of education

4. There is no significant difference in the coping strategies employed by widows based on the level of education
5. There is no significant difference in the challenges experienced by widows in the Ilorin metropolis based on job type
6. There is no significant difference in the coping strategies employed by widows based on job type

### Methods

A descriptive research design of survey type was used for this study.

The population is the entire group from which the researcher is interested in gaining information and upon which subsequent conclusions are drawn (Daramola, 2006). The population for this study consists of selected widows in Ilorin, Kwara state. The sample consisted of fifty widows randomly selected. The sampling technique that was used in this study was purposive sampling technique.

The instrument that was used for this study is a researcher self-developed questionnaire tagged "Widow Practices Questionnaire (WPQ)". The instrument consists of two sections A and B. Section A sought information about the demographic data of the respondents; such as age, gender, class, and religion, while Section B contained 20 items on the influence of stress on the academic performance of newly admitted students in university of Ilorin. The instrument is designed to obtain responses from respondents on the influence of stress on the academic performance of undergraduates. Section B requires respondents to select from options to reflect their perception of the influence of stress. Items in section B have responses that will be designed in a Four-point Likert-type rating scale of Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree.

The corresponding items were developed by the researcher through consultation of different literatures, interactions with colleagues, and guidance from experts in the department.

#### *Validation of the Research Instrument*

Validity is often defined as the extent to which an instrument measures what it purports to measure (Kimberlin & Winterstein, 2008). Validity is the ability of an instrument to measure what it is supposed to measure. The content and face validation of the instrument was obtained.

The research instrument was validated by experts in the Counsellor Education Department, University of Ilorin for content validity. The content validity is to ensure the instrument measures the constructs of the study. Their comments and input were used to correct the instrument as appropriate.

#### *Reliability of instrument*

Reliability is an important psychometric property that needs to be taken into account when evaluating the usefulness of a specific measure (Hunsley & Mash, 2008). Based on psychometric theory, reliability refers to the consistency of measurements and can be defined as the „degree to which test scores are free from errors of measurement” (American Psychological Association, 2005). The reliability of the instrument was tested using test re-test reliability. The instrument was administered twice at intervals of two weeks on twenty (20) randomly selected respondents. The two set scores were analyzed using Pearson’s Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) and 0.76 was obtained.

In analyzing the data collected for this study, both descriptive and inferential statistical analyses were employed. The demographic data collected was analyzed using percentages and ranking order. In testing the hypotheses generated, t-test and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) statistical measures

were used to analyze the hypotheses generated for the study at 0.05 level of significance.

## **Results**

### *Demographic Data Analysis*

The distribution of respondents by the demographic variables of the study is presented below (Table1).

*Table 1. Distribution of Respondents by Demographic Data.*

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Age</b>		
20-30 Years	20	40.0
31-50 Years	22	44.0
50 Years & Abv	8	16.0
Total	50	100.0
<b>Qualification</b>		
Degree	19	38.0
NCE	15	30.0
OND	8	16.0
SSCE	5	10.0
Pry. Sch.	3	6.0
Total	50	100.0
<b>Job Type</b>		
Trader	12	24.0
Entrepreneur	21	42.0
Civil Servant	17	34.0
Total	50	100.0

Table 1 shows the distribution of the respondents based on age, qualification, and job type. 20 (40.0%) respondents were within the range of 20-30 years. 22 (44.0%) respondents were within the age range of 31-50 years while 8 (16.0%) respondents are 50 years and above. Apparently, most of the widows are within the age range of 31-50 years. 19 (38.0%) respondents are degree holders. 15



(30.0%) respondents are NCE holders while 8 (16%) respondents are National Diploma holders. 5 (10.0%) respondents are SSCE holders and 3 (6.0%) respondents are primary school leaving certificate holders. Apparently, most of the respondents were degree holders. 12 (24.0%) respondents are traders, 21(42%) respondents are entrepreneurs while 17 (34%) respondents are civil servants. Apparently, most of the respondents are entrepreneurs.

### Answering the Research Questions

*Research Question One:* What are the challenges experienced by widows in the Ilorin metropolis?

Table 2 shows the mean and rank order of the challenges experienced by windows in the Ilorin

metropolis, Kwara state. Indications on the table provided that items 9, 6, and 2 with mean scores of 3.58, 3.58, and 3.52 respectively were ranked 1<sup>st</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup> and state that; Widows “endures psychosocial problems after partner’s demise”, “endures problem of poor governmental support” and “experience negative pressure from the family of the demise” respectively.

Ranked 8<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> were items 7, 5, and 3 with mean scores of 2.60, 2.32, and 1.68 respectively and state that; Widows “experience societal stigma and condemnation”, “enjoy no help from family member” and “can hardly care for wards after partner’s demise”. Since 8 out of the 10 items have mean scores above the 2.50 benchmark, it can be concluded that the widows experience challenges in the Ilorin metropolis, Kwara state as attested to on the items.

*Table 2: Mean and Rank Order on Challenges Experienced by Widows. Source: Author’s Computation (2023)*

<b>S/N</b>	<b>Challenges faced by Widows. As far as am concerned, widows;</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Rank</b>
9	endures psychosocial problems after partner’s demise	3.58	1 <sup>st</sup>
6	endures problem of poor governmental support	3.58	1 <sup>st</sup>
2	experience negative pressure from the family of the demise	3.52	3 <sup>rd</sup>
4	are continuously ignored by the government	3.40	4 <sup>th</sup>
8	experience difficulties in correcting the emotional worries of the child single handedly	3.18	5 <sup>th</sup>
10	are hardly encouraged by religious leaders	3.04	6 <sup>th</sup>
1	are hardly provided with finance for survival	2.88	7 <sup>th</sup>
7	experience societal stigma and condemnation	2.60	8 <sup>th</sup>
5	enjoys no help from family member	2.32	9 <sup>th</sup>
3	can hardly care for wards after partner’s demise	1.68	10 <sup>th</sup>

Table 3. Mean and Rank Order on Coping Strategies Employed by Widows. Source: Author's Computation (2023)

	<b>Coping strategies of widows. As far as am concerned, widows;</b>	Mean	Rank
10	never depend on family's provision to survive since partner's demise	3.58	1 <sup>st</sup>
2	embrace grants from religious bodies and government for survival	3.54	2 <sup>nd</sup>
6	cope with gifts and luxuries provided by non-governmental groups for survival	3.42	3 <sup>rd</sup>
3	engage in late partner's business endeavor for survival	3.40	4 <sup>th</sup>
9	never disregards help from friends	3.40	4 <sup>th</sup>
8	embraces online funding for survival after partner's demise	3.06	6 <sup>th</sup>
1	source for financial help from friends and family for survival	2.80	7 <sup>th</sup>
5	are ever dependent on sales of valuables left by the late partner	2.60	8 <sup>th</sup>
7	engage in unethical practices such as fraud and prostitution for survival	2.30	9 <sup>th</sup>
4	engage in independent business for coping	2.22	10 <sup>th</sup>

*Research Question Two:* What are the coping strategies employed by widows in Ilorin metropolis?

Table 3 shows the mean and rank order of the coping strategies employed by widows in the Ilorin metropolis. Ranked 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> were items 10, 2, and 6 with mean scores of 3.58, 3.54, and 3.42 respectively, and state that; Widows “never depend on family's provision to survive since partner's demise”, “embrace grants from religious bodies and government for survival” and “engage in late partner's business endeavor for survival”.

Also, ranked 8<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup>, and 10<sup>th</sup> were items 5, 7, and 4 with mean scores of 2.60, 2.30, and 2.22 respectively, and state that; Widows “are ever dependent on sales of valuables left by the late partner”, “engage in unethical practices such as fraud and prostitution for survival” and “engage in independent business for coping” ranked the least of all the three items. Since 8 out of 10 items have mean scores above the 2.50 benchmark, it can be concluded that the Widows “never depend on family's provision to survive since partner's demise”, embrace grants from religious bodies and

government for survival, cope with gifts and luxuries provided by non-governmental groups for survival among other strategies for survival as attested to on the items.

### Hypotheses Testing

Six null hypotheses were formulated for the purpose of this study. The hypotheses were tested using t-test and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) statistical tools at 0.05 alpha level.

*Hypothesis One:* There is no significant difference in the challenges experienced by widows in the Ilorin metropolis based on age.

Table 4 indicates that the calculated F-ratio of 5.90 is higher than the critical F-ratio of 3.00 with a corresponding p-value of .001 which is less than 0.05 level of significance. Since the calculated F-ratio is less than the critical F-ratio, the null hypothesis is therefore rejected; thus, there was a significant difference in the challenges experienced by widows in the Ilorin metropolis, Kwara state based on age.

Table 4. Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) showing the Respondents' Expression on Challenges Experienced by Widows based on Age. Source: Author's Computation (2023)

Source	SS	df	Mean Squares	Cal. F-ratio	Crit. F-ratio	p-value
Between Groups	42.018	2	21.009			
Within Groups	167.162	47	3.557	5.90	3.00	.001
<b>Total</b>	<b>209.180</b>	<b>49</b>				

Table 5. Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) showing the Respondents' Expression on Coping Strategies Employed by Widows based on Age. Source: Author's Computation (2023)

Source	SS	df	Mean Squares	Cal. F-ratio	Crit. F-ratio	p-value
Between Groups	468.241	2	234.121			
Within Groups	2612.319	47	55.581	4.21	3.00	.000
<b>Total</b>	<b>3080.560</b>	<b>49</b>				

Table 6. Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) showing the Respondents' Expression on Challenges Experienced by Widows based on Level of Education. Source: Author's Computation (2023)

Source	SS	df	Mean Squares	Cal. F-ratio	Crit. F-ratio	p-value
Between Groups	32.387	4	8.097			
Within Groups	176.793	45	3.929	2.06	2.27	.124
<b>Total</b>	<b>209.180</b>	<b>49</b>				

*Hypothesis Two:* There is no significant difference in the coping strategies employed by widows based on age.

Table 5 indicates that the calculated F-ratio of 4.21 is higher than the critical F-ratio of 3.00 with a corresponding p-value of .000 which is less than 0.05 level of significance. Since the calculated F-ratio is less than the critical F-ratio, the null hypothesis is therefore rejected; thus, there was a significant difference in the coping strategies employed by widows in the Ilorin metropolis, Kwara state based on age.

*Hypothesis Three:* There is no significant difference in the challenges experienced by widows in the Ilorin metropolis based on level of education.

Table 6 indicates that the calculated F-ratio of 2.06 is less than the critical F-ratio of 2.27 with a corresponding p-value of .124 which is greater than 0.05 level of significance. Since the calculated F-ratio is less than the critical F-ratio, the null hypothesis is therefore not rejected; thus, there was no significant difference in the challenges experienced by widows in the Ilorin metropolis, based on the level of education.

*Hypothesis Four:* There is no significant difference in the coping strategies employed by widows based on level of education.

Table 7 indicates that the calculated F-ratio of 2.06 is less than the critical F-ratio of 2.27 with a corresponding p-value of .203 which is greater than

0.05 level of significance. Since the calculated F-ratio is less than the critical F-ratio, the null hypothesis is therefore not rejected; thus, there was no significant difference in the coping strategies employed by widows in the Ilorin metropolis, Kwara state based on level of study.

*Hypothesis Five:* There is no significant difference in the challenges experienced by widows in Ilorin metropolis based on job type.

Table 8 indicates that the calculated F-ratio of 4.48 is higher than the critical F-ratio of 3.00 with a corresponding p-value of .004 which is less than 0.05 level of significance. Since the calculated F-ratio is less than the critical F-ratio, the null hypothesis is therefore rejected; thus, there was significant difference in the challenges experiences

by widows in the Ilorin metropolis, based on job type.

*Hypothesis Six:* There is no significant difference in the coping strategies employed by widows based on job type.

Table 9 indicates that the calculated F-ratio of 4.30 is higher than the critical F-ratio of 3.00 with a corresponding p-value of .001 which is less than 0.05 level of significance. Since the calculated F-ratio is less than the critical F-ratio, the null hypothesis is therefore not rejected; thus, there was no significant difference in the coping strategies employed by widows in the Ilorin metropolis, Kwara state based on job type.

*Table 7. Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) showing the Respondents' Expression on Coping Strategies Employed by Widows based on Level of Education. Source: Author's Computation (2023)*

Source	SS	df	Mean Squares	Cal. F-ratio	Crit. F-ratio	p-value
Between Groups	477.245	4	119.311			
Within Groups	2603.315	45	57.851	2.06	2.27	.203
<b>Total</b>	<b>3080.560</b>	<b>49</b>				

*Table 8. Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) showing the Respondents' Expression on Challenges Experienced by Widows based on Job Type. Source: Author's Computation (2023)*

Source	SS	df	Mean Squares	Cal. F-ratio	Crit. F-ratio	p-value
Between Groups	33.486	2	16.743			
Within Groups	175.694	47	3.738	4.48	3.00	.004
<b>Total</b>	<b>209.180</b>	<b>49</b>				

*Table 9. Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) showing the Respondents' Expression on Coping Strategies Employed by Widows based on Job Type. Source: Author's Computation (2023)*

Source	SS	df	Mean Squares	Cal. F-ratio	Crit. F-ratio	p-value
Between Groups	476.439	2	238.220			
Within Groups	2604.121	47	55.407	4.30	3.00	.001
<b>Total</b>	<b>3080.560</b>	<b>49</b>				

### Discussion of Findings

The study revealed that the widows experience challenges such as endures psychosocial problems after their partner's demise, endures problems of poor governmental support, experience negative pressure from the family of the demise among others. The finding was supported by Fasonranti (2006) found that in some Yoruba communities, a widow is expected to eat from broken plates and cook with broken pots, and on the seventh day, her hair is shaved to sever the bond between her and the dead husband. She is also expected to keep vigil and appears very sorrowful by wailing and crying profusely. If she fails to mourn, it is believed that she may become mentally deranged or forfeit the right to any benefit.

The coping strategies employed by widows are; Widows never depend on the family's provision to survive after partner's demise, embrace grants from religious bodies and government for survival, and cope with gifts and luxuries provided by non-governmental groups for survival among others. The finding was in line with Falana (2010) whose study revealed that the best approach to coping with widowhood is to discover the deeper cause of the problems which will ultimately result in the coping mechanism disappearing. If one is using deliberate theatrical methods during persuasion, feigning a coping mechanism makes it harder for the other person to broach an apparently stressful situation.

Another finding revealed that there was a significant difference in the challenges experienced by widows in the Ilorin metropolis based on age. This was negated by Aransiola and Ige (2010) who found that widowhood practices are observed among the Yoruba to protect women of different ages from being harmed by the spirit of the husband; for the woman to prove innocence of the death of her husband and for the husband family to ascertain if the woman had been pregnant as at the time the husband died so that they can claim

responsibility and care for the woman among other reasons.

Findings also revealed that there was a significant difference in the coping strategies employed by widows based on age. This finding corroborates Fasoranti and Arunah (2007) who found that after the wailing periods, widows experienced several degradations and deprivation.

Among the Yorubas, the widow may be accused of killing her husband and therefore could be asked to swear with either the Holy Bible or the Holy Quran or through other traditional means to cope with her husband's death irrespective of the age of the woman.

Another finding revealed no significant difference in the challenges experienced by widows in the Ilorin metropolis based on their level of education. The study was negated by Olaniyi (2010) who found that problems of widowhood practice among Nigerian widows are not based on education but on tradition. He emphasized majorly on the challenges and possible lines of the dangers /risks involved.

Findings also revealed that there was no significant difference in the coping strategies employed by widows based on their level of education. This was in line with Sheppard (2009) who found that more women are taking up industrial labour in the modern times to cope with widowhood due to their level of education. Women are having more access to education and are becoming economically independent compared to traditional societies.

Another finding showed that there was a significant difference in the challenges experienced by widows in the Ilorin metropolis based on job type. The finding was negated by Anyanwu (2005) whose study revealed that most women depends more on their husband's earnings and so the death of the spouse marks the beginning of a terrible crisis for such women due to lack of job. With these, widows and their children have continued to suffer in this part of the country.

Findings also revealed that there was a significant difference in the coping strategies employed by widows based on job type. This was negated by Sheppard (2009) who found that more women are taking up industrial labour in modern times to cope with the death of their husbands. Women are having more access to education and are becoming economically independent compared to traditional societies. Also, Ilozue (2007), using Lagos state as a case study, it is actually when there exist greedy family members can then drag the properties with the widow, or sometimes, the attitude of the woman when the husband is alive determines the way she is treated. The in-laws will want to collect everything from her and throw her out of the house too if she was behaving badly to them before their brothers' death, but if not, there is no reason for taking the late husband's property and punishing her.

### Conclusion

The study found that the widows experienced challenges such as endures psychosocial problems after their partner's demise, endures problems of poor governmental support, experience negative pressure from the family of the demise among others. The coping strategies employed by widows are; Widows never depend on the family's provision to survive after partner's demise, embrace grants from religious bodies and government for survival, and cope with gifts and luxuries provided by non-governmental groups for survival among others.

### Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made;

1. Widows should be encouraged and supported by the government and religious bodies due to their vulnerable situation.

2. Government and relevant stakeholders should endeavour to create measures and legislation that help protect the widows and preserve their rights as well as access to several benefits.
3. The widows should be encouraged to meet counsellors to disclose their problems, so that their challenges can be expertly addressed.

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