

Psychological Trauma of Widows in Dantanko Community of Bassa Lga, Plateau State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

This study has examined the psychological trauma of widows in Dantanko community of Bassa Local Government Area, Plateau State, Nigeria. The aim was to establishing workable steps in neutralizing the effect of the trauma. To achieve this, a descriptive research design was adopted and a purposive sampling technique, which is non-probability, was employed to draw a total sample of thirty-five [35] widows in Dantanko community. Data analysis was carried out using descriptive analysis and the results were displayed in bars charts. The findings revealed that widowhood experiences are traumatic, especially with reference to anxiety about the future of their children, family finances, loneliness, worry about life, difficulty in keeping physically fit, suffering from depression, poor self-image and suicidal thoughts. It was recommended that the various stakeholders that are involved with widows should empower widows through vocational and skill acquisition programmes, the government should provide short-term loans for them, enact, and enforce laws prohibiting unhealthy widowhood practices, and medical experts should provide adequate medical care to widows and encourage them on the need to continue with life while counsellors should help them with bereavement counselling.

Key Words: Psychological, Trauma, Widows, Community, Widowhood

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I. INTRODUCTION

The most frightening and unwelcome word to every ear yet unfathomably inevitable to all human beings across all races and gender is the word, 'death'. It comes at will, unexpected, unadvised and unannounced. It is an unsolved, unresolved and untamed fate to all mankind that one must prepare to live with when it occurs to one's beloved. It is simply defined as a cessation of life, a period when soul leaves the body to afterlife, thus bringing an end of existence in this life (Adetoyee and Adeyemi, 2023). Unfortunately to all mankind, there is not physical remedy to death and it has no regard for anyone, despite personalities, disposition, age, gender, region or race. It is unarguably truthful that male gender (married or unmarried), are prone to it due to the type of work they engage, burdens they bear, personality, war among others. Death has many routes of visitation to its guests. The major and usual passages it plies are sickness, accident, war, murder, attacks, suicide, depression, mysterious circumstance among others.

In marriage, when death takes away the male, it renders the female partner a widow and when it is a female, the male becomes a widower. Who then is a widow? According to Kolawole and Mallum (2017), a widow is a female married adult who has not legally remarried to anyone else since the death experience of her husband. This is to say, a widow is a woman whose husband has died and she has remained unmarried. The condition of the living partner (whether the wife or the husband) after the exit of a spouse is referred to as widowhood, which invariably means the state of being a widow/widower (Orit et al., 2019). Undoubtedly, the death of a marriage partner could render the other frustrated, lonely, distressed, exasperated, and traumatized because of the love that binds them together. Loss is a universal circumstance that awaits individual at one point in time, but a loss of beloved always come with unexplained and unimaginable reality to the partner that he/she will have to live with and the experience of bereavement and grief remains uniquely personal to the surviving partner.

The death of a partner, particularly the male (husband) has a huge significant impact on the wife, who suddenly becomes a widow. She has to experience grief during the period of mourning and bereavement especially when her husband used to be the breadwinner of the family. She must cope and adapt to living without a husband and providing for her children alone (Orit et al., 2019). This kind of unplanned situation is accompanied with financial obligation, emotional distortion, mental depression. It involves a physical break in the family relationship, and it is ranked by widows as the most stressful and devastating event in life (Oreh, 2006). This is because widowhood does not only involve the loss of the role of a wife to the husband, but also the loss of a most supportive person of the woman, the person who has played a central role in the woman's life, the father of her children, the family breadwinner and the companion of the woman (Adetoyee and Adeyemi, 2023). It is reported

that the death of a husband in most African societies makes the wife powerless to the society, marginalized by the husband's relative, voiceless to her nation, and mistreated by other men (Oreh, 2006). In a nutshell, for a woman to be called a widow, it is because she has personally experienced the loss of someone she once shared a sexual intimate relationship with through a legally-bond matrimony sealed by a religious body, traditional/cultural rite and parental blessings.

Looking at the religious perspective, Kore (2014) opined that the Bible is completely silent regarding widowers. It may be because they can easily take care of themselves. But for widows, fatherless and orphans, they are at the mercy of society who may be overwhelmed with excessive sorrow or lamentation. Whereas, in some situation, the wife becomes the prime suspect of her husband's death, the man is immediately offered an appropriate substitution to comfort him upon the loss of his wife. Reason is that from time immemorial, societies have always been male dominated and still so with most black races or generally, women have always been relegated to the background and traditions and customs in Nigeria clearly rob most widows of their rights (Kolawole and Mallum 2017).

The series of happenings that follow the widow after the death of her husband lead to indescribable taunt of psychological trauma. For instance, the grief that plunges her to depressive mood, mental disorganization of life to accommodate significant changes and adjustment, cultural and traditional disturbance of peace and sanity, posttraumatic growth and resilience, internal and external conflicts, abandonment and loneliness, emotional sorrow, risk of losing self-esteem, self-image and self-respect, as well as the burden of raising children alone all heighten the psychological trauma of the widow. The trauma becomes more unbearable especially if the death occurs in the early years of marriage when they still had your children to rear. It is exacerbated by the immediate challenge of adjusting to a new and uncertain endless future of permanent separation, absence of proper care and support.

Adams, et al., (2021) cited in Adetoyee and Adeyemi (2023), estimated that there are about 7% to 16% of widows among women worldwide. To buttress this fact, UNIFEM (2008) reported that the number of widows worldwide is estimated to be around 245 million in 2007. Seven years later, Blair (2015) similarly reported that the number of widows have gone up to 258 million widows across the world with 8% increase, which is an indication of a steady increase in the number of widows due war, accidents, cultism, bomb blast, insurgence, assassination, natural disaster, communal and religious clashes, attack, plane crashes, sickness, ethnic riots, among others. Unfortunately, most of these widows are left alone by the societies and relatives with little or no care to the extent that some resign their fate to this life they wish they could not have had. A lot of them faced with wanton discrimination irrespective of culture, religion, ethnicity and tradition, which classify them among the most vulnerable human beings.

Several studies have revealed and agreed that widows undergo great agony, abuse, accusation and grief after the demise of their husbands, which traumatizes them by placing their lives at health risk, financial difficulties and physically unstable such that loneliness and emotional depression take over them. These fundamental challenges make them highly susceptible to all kind of experiences, which would have profound effects on their physical and mental health like hopelessness, sadness and loss of interest in activities, suicidal ideation, substance abuse, intense and prolong grief reaction, nightmares, flashbacks, post-traumatic stress disorder [PTSD], self-harm, hormonal instability or imbalance like disruptions in cortisol, adrenaline and thyroid hormone levels, leading to mood disturbances and metabolic problems; stress-induced neuro-inflammation and neuroplasticity changes (Adetoyee and Adeyemi 2023; Akubor, 2009; Orit and Shai, 2019; Jichao and Lei, 2024).

In addition, many cultural superstitious and beliefs among several African ethnic groups have negatively contributed to the great deal of burden and ordeal placed on widows with their unwelcoming evil traditional rites, especially when such a wife is suspected to be responsible for her husband's death. Akubor (2009) cited in (Adetoyee and Adeyemi 2023) stated that in the African culture, widows are subjected to different abuses, especially if they are suspected to be responsible for the husband's death. To prove their innocence, certain ritual acts are performed on them such as to force her drink the water that was used to clean her husband's corpse. In the aspect of the property, a widow may also be denied inheritance and land rights especially when she does not have children or male children. Other humiliations include shaving the widow's hair, stigmatizing her with a particular mourning dress, forcing her to stay in a securely locked room with the corpse, forcing to sleep on bare floor for days without bathing among others.

In Dantanko, where the present study is being carried out, it has faced a lot of attacks and attempts of ethnic cleansing, which resulted in the skyrocketing increase of the number of widows due to the numerous death of men. Preliminary study has shown that Fulani militias' series of attacks on Rigwe nation residing in Miango and Kwall districts is the major reason for high number of widows in Dantanko community. But in whichever circumstance that leads to the death of the husband, it does not any way exempt the widow from facing some forms of violation and humiliation. Kolawole and Mallum (2017) listed out the manifestations of some of the humiliation to be defacement and dethronement, forced levirate marriage, disinheritance, and denial of right to dignity and equality. The effects of these humiliations always manifest themselves in the life of the widow and her children as a psychological trauma, including risk of diseases and health problems, poverty, hardship, among

others. It is against this backdrop that this paper is focused so as to unravel the factors that are responsible for the skyrocketing increase in the number of widows in Dantanko Community, identify the psychological trauma that widows go through, come up with workable strategies that can aid cushion both their internal and external sufferings arising from the effects of widowhood.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

The shocking experience of the death of a husband and ill-treatment from the family could lead to the widows' expression of anxiety, non-adjustment to stress which may make them susceptible and vulnerable to unpleasant and acute physical, health and mental conditions like financial difficulties, loneliness, emotional depression due to intense sadness, hopelessness and loss of interest in activities; suicidal ideation, substance abuse, intense and prolong grief reaction, nightmares, flashbacks, post-traumatic stress disorder [PTSD], self-harm; hormonal instability or imbalance like disruptions in cortisol, adrenaline and thyroid hormone levels, leading to mood disturbances and metabolic problems; stress-induced neuro-inflammation and neuroplasticity changes among others. In most cases, many widows and their children are rendered, or may become, social outcasts when the husband dies and are subjected to rape, prostitution, forced or child marriage, forced labour, slavery, property theft, eviction, and physical and psychological abuse.

According to Adetoyee and Adeyemi, (2023), most Nigerian cultures and other African countries have little or no respect to women's fundamental human rights, as they treat widows like second-class citizens. If his assertion is considered to be fact, then widows would receive the worst treatment in this part of the world. Even though, widows have rights to live, the dignity of a person, freedom of association, thought, conscience, expression, movement, and freedom against discrimination, amongst others, it is disheartening to note that widows have experienced verbal threats, physical and sexual violence, as well as murder attempts on their lives in spite of their right. This paper does not only focus on the problem variables of the widows and how they have been coping with the problems, but on their psychological trauma with a case study of Dantanko community of Bassa Local Government Area of Plateau State, Nigeria.

1.2 Research Questions

The psychological trauma of widows have been a long-standing and unattended issue that sums up the concerns of most widows in the study area and of course the country at large. Every challenge a widow experiences ends in traumatizing her psychologically, thus the need to discuss this thoroughly, which is why the study is pioneered based on this premise through the following research questions:

- i. What are the socio-demographic characteristics of widows in Dantanko community of Bassa LGA Plateau State, Nigeria?
- ii. What are the causes of the death of their husbands?
- iii. What are factors responsible for the psychological trauma of widows in the study area?
- iv. What are the manifestations of psychological trauma in the widows of Dantanko community?
- v. What steps need be taken to mitigate the psychological trauma of the widows?

II. Aim and Objectives

The aim of the study is to investigate the psychological trauma of widows in Dantanko community of Bassa Local Government Area of Plateau State, Nigeria and recommend steps to take to reduce the psychological trauma of the widows. In order to achieve this, the following objectives were followed:

- i. To know the socio-demographic characteristics of widows in Dantanko community of Miango town.
- ii. To identify the causes of the death of their husbands.
- iii. To identify factors that are responsible for the psychological trauma of widows in the study area.
- iv. To identify the manifestation of psychological trauma in widows of Miango community.
- v. To recommend steps to take to reduce the psychological trauma of the widows.

III. MATERIALS AND METHODS

This section deals with the general procedures that were employed in carrying out this study as well as the materials that were used.

3.1 Research Design for the Study

The research design adopted for the study was a descriptive survey. According to Beard and Verma (2002), the descriptive survey method has the advantage of being an effective way of collecting data from a large number of sources. Given this, a descriptive survey was considered appropriate to investigate the psychological trauma of widows in Dantanko community of Miango town of Bassa Local Government Area of Plateau State, Nigeria.

3.2 Ethics Consideration

This study got approval from the community head of the study area before administering the questionnaire. Participants were fully informed of the purpose of the study, the procedures involved in the study, such as data collection methods and the benefits of the study. They were also informed of the confidentiality and anonymity

procedures for protecting their demographic information and the right to withdraw from the study without penalty as they wished. Each participant was served with a copy of the consent letter in this regard.

3.3. Area of the Study

The area of the study is Dantanko community of Bassa Local Government Area, which is geographically bounded by Rukuba Barrack 3 Armour Division in the North, famous ECWA Secondary School Miango in the South and ECWA Miango DCC Secretariat in the East. The region is defined by latitudes 9⁰45'N and 9⁰55'N of the Equator; and longitudes 8⁰45'E and 8⁰58'E of the Greenwich Meridian. Dantanko community is one of the fast growing and developing village that is leapfrogging into a town though with homogenous population. The major source of people's livelihood is subsistence and semi-mechanized farming of cash crops such as grains, Irish potatoes, vegetables and legumes. The people of the community devote to Christianity as a religion and build their beliefs around Rigwe tradition and Christianity with a thin line divide. Dantanko community falls within the Savannah woodland of the vegetation zone that envelopes the North-central Nigeria.

3.4 Population and Sample

The study population was comprised of only the widows who are residents in Dantanko community of Bassa LGA Plateau State Nigeria. The total population of the widows is not known tentatively but thirty-five [35] widows turned out as participants in this research exercise. Therefore, the sample size for the study was the total number of all widows in Dantanko community with no regard to their age of marriage or widowhood. The study employs a purposive/judgmental sampling technique. The choice for this non-probability sampling method is that the researcher has adjudged the respondents to have a test of widowhood and therefore are only set of individuals that can provide data for the present study through their personal experiences as widows.

3.5 Instrument for Data Collection and Study Procedure

The instrument that was used for the research was designed by the researcher and it was titled "Questionnaire for Psychological Trauma of Widow (QPTW)." The questionnaire is divided into two sections; A and B. Section "A" contained the socioeconomic status and demographic characteristics of the respondents, and this entails their age, educational attainment, and duration of widowhood, cause of husband's death, occupation, tribe any form of insurance. Sections "B" contained thirty-eight [38] statements each is designed with an attempt to address or investigate the psychological trauma of widows. Each of the statements has two options: Yes and No, and the participants are expected to tick the option that best describes their current experience.

3.6. Data Collection Technique

The researchers administered all the thirty-five copies of questionnaire though with the help of two widows, who are also the indigenes of the study area. The reason for employing them was because the widows know and respect them and they speak their dialect. The completed copies of the questionnaire were collected immediately to avoid loss in transit and none was lost or incompletely filled and therefore, 35 copies of the questionnaire were returned for analysis and presentation.

3.7 Data Management and Analysis

The data collected from the field in the study were collated and carefully sorted out and grouped according to the choice of options of the participants. After processing the data, they were summarized, organized one after the other and were coded, entered and analyzed using Microsoft Excel version 13. The outcome was presented using frequency tables and graphs.

IV. RESULTS

4.1 Socioeconomic Status and Demographic Profile of the Respondents

A research was conducted on the socio-demographic characteristics of widows in Dantanko community of Bassa Local Government Area, Plateau State Nigeria in respect to their psychological trauma. The results of this research is presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Socioeconomic Status and Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

S/N	VARIBALE	RESPONSES	PERCENTAGE
1	Age-group (years)		
	Below 30	3	8.6
	31-40	13	37.1
	41-50	11	31.4
	50 above	9	22.9
2	Duration of Widowhood [yrs]		
	Below 5	12	34.3
	6 – 10	14	40

	11 – 15	7	20
	16 above	2	5.7
3	Number of children		
	1 – 3 children	9	25.7
	4 – 6 children	20	57.2
	7 above children	6	17.1
4	Educational Attainment		
	Non-formal	6	17.1
	Primary	12	34.3
	Secondary	12	34.3
	Tertiary	5	14.3
5	Occupation		
	Farming	7	20
	Trading	23	65.7
	Teaching	5	14.3
6.	Different religion with the late spouse		
	Yes	1	2.9
	No	34	97.1
7	Different tribe with the late spouse		
	Yes	3	7.6
	No	32	91.4
8	Form of life insurance		
	Yes	2	8.6
	No	33	91.4

The variables of interest that were considered in this study were age, occupation, educational attainment, duration of widowhood, religion of the late spouse and the widow, tribe of the late spouse and the widow as well as the form of life insurance and the outcome of the fieldwork are presented in Table 1. The analysis of the data revealed that 77.1% of the widows are still in the active and childbearing age within the age group from 40years downward, which may explain the reason why they are perpetually kept under pressure to remarry and few might have succumbed to the pressure.

The duration of widowhood of several all the respondents were researched and the results also revealed that 74.3% have been widowed for at about 10years now. Only 5.7% of the respondents are been widows for more than 16years. This infers that most of the respondents are undoubtedly young widows. Further, 57.6% of the widows have up to six children always expecting a parental responsibility from them. There is no doubt that the trauma that comes with single parenting cannot be quantified. Because of the low level of literacy (85.7%) among the widows, farming (20%) and petty trading (65.7%) as means of livelihood to cater for their families and only about 14.3% are teachers, which further explains why only this percentage have attained tertiary education.

Interestingly, 97.1% of the widows share same religion with their late spouses and 91.4% of the widows stated that they are of the same tribe with their late spouses. This infers that have the same beliefs and share the same culture regarding widows' rite, treatment and placement in the society. Unfortunately, about 91.4% of the widows stated that there was not any form of life insurance prior to their spouse's death, which implies that there is hardly any substantial and consistent support for the widows that can help them cater for themselves and the children they have to take care of.

4.2 Cause of the Husband Death

Analysis of data on the cause of the husband's death was conducted among widows of Dantanko community. This is to ascertain the major circumstance that are the reasons of their demise. The results of the analysis is presented in Figure 1.

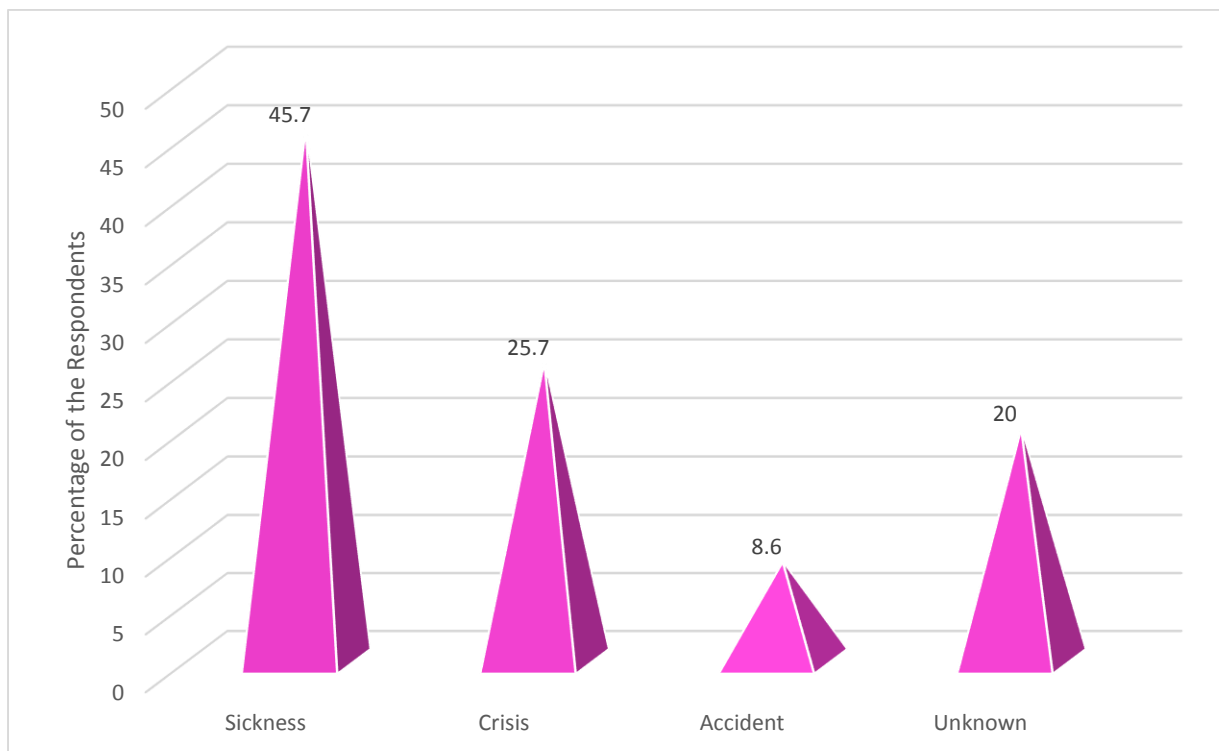


Fig. 1: Cause of the Husband Death

Figure 1 shows the distribution of deaths of husbands of widows in the study area. Result has shown that 45.7% of the widows in Dantanko community have lost their husbands to death through sickness while one-fourth percent of the widows lost their husband through crisis in the community. Further, 20% stated to have lost their husband through an unverified circumstance that they tagged as mysterious, unexplained or unfathomable, and 8.6% of the dead husband died as a result of accident or impact from accident. From the analysis, the figure clearly revealed that some of the causes of death are sudden [crisis, accident and probably mysterious circumstance] and some are not [sickness and probably mysterious circumstance]. Therefore, the impact and psychological trauma from the cause of the death of the beloved differs from one to another. That is, the psychological trauma of the widow who lost her husband in crisis situation or accident may not be the same with the one who lost husband through sickness and vice versa. The analysis also revealed that if the community had not been under siege of attacks from militia gunmen, 25% of the widows would not have been widows because their husband would have still been alive with them.

This findings is in congruous with the findings of Adetoyee and Adeyemi, (2023), who stated that causes of death of spouses that are too sudden such as war, crisis, accident and unfathomable circumstances tend to have longer traumatic impact on the widows than protracted sickness. In whichever case, a widow always suffers an unimaginable trauma psychologically, once the cause of her husband’s death flashes back into her memory, except she is given comfort

4.3 Factors Responsible for the Psychological Trauma of Widows

The Table 2 recorded the results of the analysis of data on the factors responsible for the psychological trauma of widows in Dantanko communit of Bassa LGA.

Table 2: Factors Responsible for the Psychological Trauma of Widows

S/N	Factors	Yes (%)	No (%)
1.	My in-laws has abandoned me	22.9	77.1
2.	My in-laws has abandoned my children	22.9	77.1
3.	My family has abandoned me	11.4	88.6
4.	My in-laws has confiscated his property	17.1	82.9
5	I have left my husband’s house	48.6	51.4
6	Pressure on me to remarry	17.1	82.9
7	My in-laws has accused me of killing him	17.1	82.9
8	All my children are living with me	82.9	17.1
9	One or more of my children are wayward	28.6	71.4
10	Little or no source of income	97.1	2.9
11	Financial lack	100	0
12	My children are school dropped out	71.4	28.6

13	Loneliness	80	20
14	Difficult to take care of the children	71.4	28.6

According to the findings, the top three factors that are responsible for the psychological trauma of widows are financial lack (100%), little or no source of income (97.1%) as well as the fact that all their children are living with them instead of their spouses' relatives (82.9%). The connection among these three factors became more obvious on the premise that there is no means of livelihood or regular stable financial income on weekly or monthly basis that will fund the bills staring at them couple with the fact that their late husbands' relatives leave the children for them to fend for. The implication of this has recruited many of their children into street as school dropped-out (71.4%) because of their inability to meet the schools demands and no one seems to render a helping hand.

Not only that, 28.6% of the widows lamented that the implication of being school dropped-out made them wayward by giving into illicit drugs and substance, which has a serious deleterious health effect on their being. Treasuring and nurturing circumstance like this no doubt brings a lot of indescribable psychological trauma. This is why about 71.4% of the widow confessed that they are finding it challenging to take care of their children as they used to, when their husbands were alive. Apart from this, about 80% of the widows revealed that loneliness is also a strong determining factor for their psychological trauma. Once they are left alone with no one to engage them, it traumatizes them psychologically. This is probably the reason why 17.1% of the widows facing the pressure to remarry because the relatives think it can be a cure for loneliness.

Life cannot be expected to treat the widows well on the fact that over 17% stated that their husbands' relatives confiscated all their late husbands' property and have even gone to accuse them of killing their husband. This further explained why over 22% of the widows were abandoned by their husbands' relatives as well as their children. To this extend, 68.6% of the widows in Dantanko community have already left their husbands' house probably to avoid some of the accusation, abandonment, maltreatment and persecution leveled against them.

4.4 The Manifestation of the Psychological Trauma in Widows

Findings on the manifestation of the psychological trauma in widows of Dantanko community was carried out and the results of the analysis were presented in table 3.

Table 3: The Manifestation of the Psychological Trauma in Widows

S/N	Manifestation	Yes (%)	No (%)
1.	Always suffer emotional depression	82.9	17.1
2.	Always think of suicide	11.4	88.6
3.	Suffering from low self-esteem	20	80
4.	Unable to develop self-image	42.9	57.1
5	Sleep restlessly	17.1	82.9
6	Crying spell about my husband's death	54.3	45.7
7	Always fall sick	25.7	74.3
8	Worry a lot about life	91.4	8.6
9	Feeling unfriendly towards others	40	60
10	Poor appetite	31.4	68.6
11	Symptom of stress	45.7	54.3
12	Infected with STDs/STIs	34.3	65.7

Based on the findings as presented on Table 3, nine-tenths (91.4%) of the widows stated that they worry a lot about what may become of them in life, which is the evidence of how traumatized they appears to be. By implication, 82.9% declared how they always suffered emotional depression. Over 54% of the widows always have crying spell about the death of their husband and probably what might have caused their death, and 17% of them always have sleepless night or sleep restlessly because of the trauma in the widowhood. As a result, 42.9% admitted of being unable to develop self-image, which caused them to suffer from low self-esteem (20%) and feeling unfriendly towards others (40%). Further, 31.4% of the widows developed poor appetite and always having symptom of stress (45.7%) and have already infected with STDs/STIs, which probably explained the kind of illness that orchestrated their spouses' demise and the same fate has caught up with them. About 26% of the respondents fall sick almost on regular basis to the extent that over 11% of the widows most times contemplated committing suicide due to trauma.

This findings concurred with the findings of Adetoyee and Adeyemi (2023), who carried out examination on the traumatic situation of widows in relation to their health conditions. They found out that the exhibition of the psychological trauma in the lives of widows can lead to a lot of physical and mental health such cardiovascular diseases like increased risk of heart disease, hypertension, sudden or gradual stroke, reduced immune function and make the widow susceptible to illnesses. The similitude of the results is such that both findings discovered that a significant number of widows (>73%) experienced sleep disturbances like insomnia, sleep deprivation and unexplained fatigue or digestive problems like irritable bowel syndrome, stomach ulcers, and gastrointestinal

issues, weight loss, arthritis, fibromyalgia, hypervigilance, emotional numbing, rumination or intrusive thoughts among others.

V. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings of the study revealed that widows have challenges, but the forefront challenges of widows in Dantanko community experiences that traumatize them psychologically are anxiety about the future of their children, financial difficulties, loneliness, and worry about life's difficulties in keeping physically fit and emotional depression. These fundamental challenges make them highly susceptible to all kind of physical and mental health. Yes, the psychological trauma experienced by widows can have profound effects on their physical and mental health because the state of widowhood is always characterized with acute negative experiences. Needless to lay emphasis that the underlying trauma for being widow is an ordeal that places female gender in perpetual concern, which often leads to mental health consequences like depression due to intense sadness, hopelessness and loss of interest in activities. Others manifest as suicidal ideation, substance abuse intense and prolong grief reaction, nightmares, flashbacks, post-traumatic stress disorder [PTSD], self-harm. The findings further indicated other psychological challenges like hormonal instability or imbalance like disruptions in cortisol, adrenaline and thyroid hormone levels, leading to mood disturbances and metabolic problems; stress-induced neuro-inflammation and neuroplasticity changes among others.

These experiences are traumatic for widows, due to the fact that some are still mentally attached to their late husbands, hence, experiences like these become almost inevitable, and they need assistance from mental health practitioners to cope with their widows' experiences. Medical experts should provide adequate medical care to widows and encourage them on the need to continue with life so that they can overcome these psychological traumas and be able to meet the needs of their children. They can be helped to accept the social situation (financial difficulties and people's inability to render help) in which they have found themselves. Mental health professionals such as counsellors, psychiatrists, and psychologists can help widows through self-help groups to cope with their concerns. To this end, the study therefore, further proffers other recommendations:

1. Laws against dispossessing widows of their inheritance as well as other unhealthy widowhood practices should be enacted and effectively enforced throughout the nation to the extent that free legal services on such matter should be made available. .
2. Compulsory education for women and girl-child be mandated by the government at least to post-primary level so as to eradicate illiteracy among women.
3. Government should empower widows by organizing vocational and skill acquisition programmes for widows, with the training received and skills acquired, the widows would be equipped to earn a living.
4. Government and other NGOs should provide short-term loans and grant for widows in small and medium scale businesses based on their abilities and capacities.
5. Professional counsellors should be trained strategically render help and assistant to widows so that they can overcome constant psychological trauma.

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