



# Towards widowhood rites: A comparative study of the Dagaaba and the Ewe people of Ghana



## Review article

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### Abstract

This study examined the practices of widowhood rites in Dagaaba and Ewe communities. It applied an approach to intersectionality and resilience to explore the idea of selfhood and personality, and uses case studies to explain the difficulties that arise in using a human rights approach to tackle the widows' plight in the two communities. The study adopted qualitative analysis techniques. In Dagaaba and Ewe, the predicament of widows has shown that much remains to be done to meet the concerns of several categories of African women. Seminars, workshops symposia and the media can be used as a genuine tool for educating the entire civil society and the masses about widowhood rites and projecting widows' rights to all facets of society. The study concluded that the morals for addressing widowhood in an African society should concentrate on addressing the "human aspect"—the limitations (e.g., legal, religious, cultural, and socio-economic) embedded in the social relations that restrict both the widow and community.

**Keywords:** *Dagaaba widowhood rites, Ewe widowhood rites, widowhood rites, widowhood effects*



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## Introduction

Culture is a medium for domestic growth, it said. It becomes, in this sense, a panacea and an instrument that could be used for the creation of any nation. But does that also mean that culture is a medium and an instrument for national development? Of course, the answer is no. There are growing harmful cultural practices that are inimical, dehumanizing and infringing on people's basic human rights as perpetrators of these cultural practices. It should be noted that the procedure of widowhood rite not only dehumanizes but also infringes the basic human rights of the victims. No wonder Ghana's constitution and international treaties have rejected these barbaric actions altogether. Widowhood can be described as the status of a person who was officially married to someone who later died. There is some kind of unbalance in the execution of widowhood rites in Ghanaian society in this report. The men enjoy more liberty than the women in conducting the rite. There is no public uproar if a man fails to perform the act, but if a woman fails, she is mixed with all kinds of taunting and believed to have a hand in her husband's death. Given the air of change circulating in our society about women's role, more needs to be done to relieve them from the patriarchal system laid down by the community and culture.

According to Seán (2006), this oppression of women occasionally blocks women from self-development and excludes them from engagement in true marital life and in social structure since they do not share similar rights that men take for granted. Economically, a spouse's death will lead to loss of income and property earned or held by the deceased spouse, unless the income system regulations, inheritance laws or the will of the deceased spouse specifically allow for their continuity and inheritance. It is therefore crucial to understand how marriage and inheritance privileges to income and assets are characterized in law and through programs that provide income for older people.

In Ghana, the issue of widowhood rites, which has been explained as one of the world's most cruel and inhumane, uncivilized, and negative cultural norms due to its affiliated infringement of women's rights, is still rife. Mentally, physically, and mentally abused women who endure these rituals are accused of murdering their husbands. In the name of culture, thousands of women have suffered multiple violations of human rights, and have dehumanized customary practices. Many of the widowhood rituals were performed by women who humiliated the widows, tortured, stripped them naked, rasped their hair and forced them to drink concoctions made by their late husbands' corpse wash.

Besides forcing the widows to sleep for a couple of days with the corpse, most women and their children are also denied shelter and food. In this region of the world, in the name of religion, the numerous human rights abuses widows and their children are going through have driven widows into severe poverty, displacement, social injustice, with many children being denied access to education and health. Many widows are deprived their autonomy and

freedom, and their children. Most widows, who couldn't bear the pain, beatings, and other ill-treatment, commit suicide on some occasions.

Although the usual practice of widowhood rites marginalizes widows, harms them and disregards their basic human rights and dignity, these rites remain dominant in some Ghanaian communities. The worrying and disturbing aspect of this concept is that the practice of widowhood rites is widespread in contemporary regions and shows no sign of diminishing in the near future. The above-mentioned constitutional arrangements have undoubtedly proved inadequate in defending widows, because the process continues to exist and seems to be on the rise.

Widowhood rites are generally accepted to be practices that any widowed spouse has to go through when he or she becomes a widow. It should be noted that although the practice is not biased in terms of gender, it is usually women who pass through this practice. In the unlikely case the conditions are generally different when a man would have to go through them. In Ghana, nearly every traditional society observes this practice, though there may be some differences and/or variations in the form this might take. This study focuses on how widowhood rites are practiced in the traditional Dagaaba of the Ullo traditional area and the Ewe society. As if losing your spouse and loved one doesn't cause enough sorrow and misery for a woman to stay behind, this tragic situation doesn't end here but sometimes gets worse. Millions of widows worldwide are experiencing extreme poverty, banishment, crime, unemployment, health and discrimination. In addition, these women are sometimes blamed for the death of their husband, and accused of sorcery. Widows are sometimes seen as unclean, and are not supposed to touch things. They are not guarded by special laws, and frequently their human rights violated. The last stretch of the rites continues after the widow was released from confinement. The woman keeps dressing in black and or dark colored clothing until after a year when the one-year memorial service of the man is held. Another aspect that needs to be observed during this time is that the woman should remain single and not enter into any sexual relationship with any man. Throughout this period the woman is considered to be a time of mourning and as such the lady must be chaste. The woman now has her liberty to go about her regular life again after the one-year commemoration is celebrated.

The United Nations adopted its first International Widows Day on 23 June 2011 to give special acknowledgement to the struggles of widows in attempt to reestablish their human rights and eliminate poverty through empowerment. This was important because women in many countries, once widowed, frequently face a denial of inheritance and property ownership, degrading and life-threatening grieving and burial rites and other types of widow violence. In many countries, the social status of a woman is intimately connected to that of her husband, so that when her husband dies, a woman has no position in society any more. For many a husband's loss is just the first emotional pain in a long-term ordeal. Widows all over the

world share two common experiences: a loss of social status, and a reduction in economic conditions. The widowhood state is exacerbated by conditions of poverty, armed conflict and inadequate access to services and resources.

Women can inherit property except through men within the Ewe lineage in Ghana, generally their husbands, but they lose these same rights when their intimate relationships with their husbands end by death or divorce. Thus especially those in rural areas, widows often lose their property and are expelled from their marriage homes, leaving them and their children in deplorable conditions. The precarious condition of these widows represents numerous oppressed roles, subordination, injustice and exploitation experiences. Yet large number of widows resist and withstand oppression. Understanding the financial, spiritual / religious, social and legal tools culturally embedded that they utilize to effectively continue their lives is a significant prerequisite for the creation of effective supportive interventions.

These widows, especially those living in rural, often lose their assets when their husbands die, and are expelled from their marriage homes, leaving them and their families in deplorable, at-risk circumstances. So the majority of widows and their children are living in extreme poverty. In most cases, extreme poverty leaves widows and their children, especially their daughters, in incredibly vulnerable circumstances that sometimes become the key determinants for their daughters who marry much older men at a very early age. Then, they themselves become young widows (Owen, 2001), recreating the generational poverty in their own lifetimes and in the next generation.

Poverty will cause many widows to remove their children from school and introduce them to child labour and/or prostitution, so that they can benefit to family income and care for themselves. The widows' lack of land ownership (including housing) impacts their access to other resources, such as capital, health, and education (Agarwal, 1997; Pandey, 2003; Tinker & Summerfield, 1999). These constraints have a further negative effect on the self-confidence, independence with well-being, as well as their opportunity to adapt to decision-making in the household. Despite all these legal amendments and ratification of international agreements, women's rights in Dagaaba and Ewe communities proceed to be adversely affected by gender discrimination and inequities. Still, there has been little thoughtful evaluation of such inequalities, particularly on widow-abuse and property violations of human rights. Instead, those practices were seen as part of the people's cultures and beliefs.

Widowhood rites include mandatory fasting, eating once or twice daily, showering in cold water three times daily, public sobbing after bereavement, confining to a room for some days and donning black for at least one year after deprivation (Korang-Okrah, 2007/08). Such practices usually place widows in poor, vulnerable and dependent positions where social isolation and cultural, physical and psychological abuse can occur (Sossou, 2002). Compounding the struggles of the widows is the intricacies of the pluralistic legal system in

Ghanaian communities which does not protect and support the rights and dignity of these disadvantaged widows. One would expect inappropriate behaviors in the name of widowhood rites to become obsolete in an age like this now. Unfortunately, widowhood practices are on the increase in Dagaaba and the Ewe communities at this time in the practice of cultural norms. This argument that widowhood ritual practice is on the rise in the communities is neither a fabrication nor an exaggeration. It's a fact nobody could challenge. Hundreds of reports in both printed and electronic media attest to this. The purpose of this study was to examine the practices of widowhood rites in Dagaaba and Ewe communities.

### **Research questions**

What are the widowhood rites and practices among the Dagaaba of the ullo traditional area? What are the widowhood rites and practices in the Ewe community in Ghana? What are the effects of widowhood rites?

### **Theoretical Framework**

The approach in this research was from two theoretical approaches, intersectionality and resilience, in order to capture the depth and breadth of multidimensional experiences of Dagaaba and Ewe widows. The theory of intersectionality was applied to define and recognize the various, complex identities of the widows, their social roles and subsequent perceptions of difficulties they faced as widows. On the other hand, the resilience theory was used to analyze the explanations of the widows' processes of change and the sources of sustainability they use for persistent survival, well-being and work. Intersectionality begins with the premise that human perception is complex involving multiple, layered identities resulting from social relations, history, and power structure operations (Crenshaw 1989; Collins 1990; McCall 2005). Black feminist theorists simply argue that socially built categories of persecution and privilege, such as race, class, gender and age, interact simultaneously to create custom life experiences for marginalized communities.

According to Murphy, Hunt, Zajicek, Norris & Hamilton (2009), feminist women of color strongly argue that race, gender and sexuality are indistinguishable determinants of inequalities that interdependently shape interlocking structures which in turn serve as the foundations for the establishment of multiple systems of domination. This therefore affects people's access to power and privileges, influences their social relationships and shapes their daily experiences (Murphy et al, (2009)). Intersectionality provides theories relevant to the dynamics of human life as characterized by privilege and inequality social constructions (Murphy et al, (2009)). For example, Ewe and Dagaaba widows, like widows in other Sub-Saharan African countries, face challenges of different identities, subordination encounters, and marginalization (von Struensee, 2004; Ewelukwa, 2002; Awusabo-Asare, 1990). Girls are



faced with socio-cultural constraints right from birth through a gender based, stratified cycle of socialization, in which traits such as virility, authority, strength, leadership qualities, intellect, etc. are promoted in boys. Girls are expected to vary from boys, with the focus on household tasks in their social relations (Boateng et al., 2006).

Thus, relative to boys, the rights and responsibilities of girls to access resources such as learning, food / nutrition, health, and economic facilitation are limited (Boateng et al. 2006). Such circumstances create social disparities, a condition in which people have unfair access to valued cultural resources, services, and positions (Kerbo, 2003). Essentially, such processes result in the social exclusion of groups and individuals through identity indicator construction, resulting hierarchical relationships, and the use of influence and power.

The approach of intersectionality issued an ecological basis to analyze the illustrations of the widows of their sophisticated and layered identities of their encounters. Through the use of the lens of this feminist theory, the multiplicities underlying their experiences were identified and analyzed. According to Shields (2008), this viewpoint shows that the social identities of individuals have a profound impact on one's values and gender experience, so the social locations of persons as expressed in intersecting identities must be at the center of every identity investigation. Therefore, the perspective of intersectionality challenges the prospect of the former feminists for doing research. This is because, in the sense of power structures rooted in social roles, intersectionality has changed how gender is debated and interpreted (Collins, 2000; Shields, 2008). Therefore, intersectionality is the most significant contribution of feminist philosophy to the current understanding of gender (McCall, 2005).

The intersectionality implies, according to Shields (2008), a more precise and tractable way of coping with two problems. Intersectionality offers a solution that is "a vocabulary for the obvious point that without considering certain aspects of social structure / personal identity that play a foundational role in the process and sense of gender, it is difficult to talk about gender" (Shields, 2008, p.303). Ungar (2010) states that "interface is not only the capability of the individual ... but the ability of service providers, government agencies, churches, families and communities to assist individuals facing significant adversity" (p.405). Thus, resilience as a process depends on the "social and physical natural systems in which it is embedded, and is therefore necessarily culturally bound by one's society's daily experiences and socio-political decisions" (Ungar, 2010, p. 405).

Culture is relevant to resilience due to its influence on resource accessibility and availability which facilitates positive adaptation. Ungar (2010) referred to culture as "regular activities ritualized into a collection of codified beliefs principles and structures that reflectively maintain organized social relationships." For positive adaptation, individuals need to engage in culturally relevant health-sustaining processes and activities. Negotiation, the second concept of resilience, is thus taken to mean one's successful engagement in processes that

sustain well-being, not only for physical resources but also for discursive power to define one's own strategies of self and coping (Ungar, 2010). The intersectionality and resilience models used together by this study offered a structure for considering the cultural and relational realities of the Dagaaba and Ewe widows' lived widowhood encounters as well as how they manage and negotiate for safe resources for sustained survival, well-being and function.

### **Methodology**

The study examined the widowhood rites in Dagaaba and Ewe communities where the respondents included the widows in the two communities. The study was entirely qualitative in nature. Parsons (2008) notes that qualitative studies allow the dimensions and variances of the field under evaluation to be analyzed and characterized via primary and secondary data methodological approaches. Qualitative analytical methods are effective in that they can explain something that only statistics can't explain. Additionally, it helps researchers to be more selective in what fields they want to explore and how to study. Parsons (2008) claimed that qualitative research has no standardized tests controlling the sample group. The sample group to be selected would depend on what the researcher needs to identify out, the purpose of the analysis, what is at stake, the quality of the research and the quantity of data collected, which can be accomplished with the allocated time and the limited resources. Purposive sampling technique was employed to sample three widows from each community who have gone through the widowhood rites. This ensured that the information given is valid and very essential for the study. In-depth interview guides were used to collect the qualitative data from the sampled widows from each community who have gone through the widowhood rites. This ensured that the important information on the rites was collected effectively. Recording devices were used to record the interviews which were later transcribed to obtain the information which was analyzed. Respondents of both Dagaaba and Ewe speakers gave their responses in the native languages and these responses were translated into English by the researchers who themselves are native speakers of their respective languages. A total of six widows who have gone through the traditional widowhood rites were interviewed. The interviews were conducted in two days, each day one society. The qualitative data collected through the in-depth interviews was analyzed thematically and the report presented in general narrative.

### **Findings**

#### **Dagaaba widowhood rites**

Most treatments in the widowhood rites are designed to dehumanize their patients, which is always a stressful and traumatic process that can influence the victim throughout their life. Rites of widowhood may involve physical as well as psychological violence towards the widow.

Examples of this are that a woman has to shave her hair, wear black clothes as a sign of grieving for a long time and in some parts of the society is not allowed to bathe or change clothes. Among the Dagaaba when a woman loses the husband, traditional mourning takes place. During the mourning period, they wear the widow tag called 'ganaa' on her waist which is an animal skin depicting that she is a widow. In some communities the widow is given a 'white woven cloth' to wear and use part as a scarf. If the widow refuses to wear the 'ganaa' or the 'white woven cloth' means that she has sexual intercourse with another before the death of her late husband. Relatives, friends and sympathizers come to support the deceased family both financially and morally. After burial they sleep on the funeral ground till the next morning and the widow is taken to the river side to be bathed with cold water. When they return from the river side, they mix millet flour with water and put it down. If a house fly doesn't fall on the water it means, there is something wrong.

After that the woman stays for one year before they perform the necessary final widowhood rites. After one year they will wait until a woman dies then they will then fix a day for the rituals to be performed on the widow, but if no woman dies, even if it is five years the widow will still continue to stay and obeying all the rules that binds a widow. A widow does not sit on a stool, she sits on a skin on the funeral day and after that day when she is going anywhere, she carries her own mat and on it she sits or sleeps. When she is sitting down, nobody walks over her feet and she does not shake hands with people too.

She doesn't dress neatly and doesn't wear earrings. Further, she doesn't shave her hair until the day that they will perform the necessary rituals on her. This condition causes the widow to run the risk of splitting up socially, economically and emotionally after prolonged grieving, especially if she has no grown-up siblings and does not receive support from her husband's family. Preventing from engaging in any agriculture activity is based on the Ewe tradition's belief that any plantation crops she touches at this mourning stage would be liable to wither away. The austere look of widows and the rejection of anything that gives pleasure and comfort (about them) is intended to pacify the deceased's vengeful spirit and make his widows seem seriously regretful and sorry about his demise.

When the day is finally fixed for the widowhood rites to be performed, the community elders will brew some pito called biter pito which nobody drinks but remain for the rituals. On the eve of the rituals the widow is taken to a junction where they capsize a calabash for the widow to step on it and break it. If she is not able to break the calabash implies that she has slept with another man before the day of the rituals. After breaking the calabash, the elderly females (sister in-laws) in the family will then shave the hair, bath and dress the widow. The mother and aunties of the widow are responsible for the provision of her dresses. All these activities are done in the night at a junction far away from the house. On the next day, the widow is taken around the whole community from house to house to greet the people for



them to know that she has now gone through purification and is now ready and qualified to remarry again. In the Dagaaba culture, after the widowhood rites are performed on the widow, one of the brothers is allowed to inherit the widow. Usually it is one of the younger brothers that inherit the widow. In the Dagaaba culture, elder brothers don't inherit younger brother's wives after their death. On the other hand, a man can inherit the uncles' widow or the father's junior wife after his death.

The African woman remains victim of traditional detrimental rites affiliated with the passing away of her beloved partner. Deaths are rarely regarded as such, except in situations where the causes are normal and explicable. Death is attributed to magico-religious factors in Africa, and widows are the main target of accusations of enchantment or witchcraft and as such are accused for the death of their beloved couples (Ugweueze, 1997). Widowhood can be defined as a widow's or widow's state or timeframe, it should be noted that it is exceptionally good to mourn one's late husband, but this can be done without confining the late man's wife to cruelty and violation of her fundamental human rights that could result in severe effects in her life and the bereaved children.

Perhaps the woman's most humiliating care is the ritual of widowhood. The following common features of the widowhood ritual can be identified: sitting on the floor for a number of days before and after funeral; keeping the hair unkempt for a period before full shave, being prohibited to take a bath for several days; confinement within the household of the deceased husband; mandatory wailing and recapping of the virtues of the husband; wearing black cloth; being prohibited to inherit the assets of the husband; being prohibited to have sexual relations for a year after burial; public statement of guilt should one have an adulterous relationship.

In other instances, the widows are forced to marry her late husband's family, usually a spouse. By tradition, a widow who goes through this will be forced to shave her hair in the most bizarre way, in an effort to disfigure herself so that the late husband's ghost will not remember her. Widows who concur to such forced marriage must also continue to give birth to the deceased man's children. This causes the men who re-marry widows to shed the obligation of caring for the children, as they do not possess his name. On the other hand, there is still neglect of widows who are bold enough to reject the forced marriage. In extreme cases they lose farm land, property, and shelter. They just inherit their kids. They kill their livestock; they are tortured, physically abused and economically exploited.

### **Ewe community widowhood rites**

Grieving and mourning is, in specific, a cultural expectation undertaken to honor the dead among the Ewe. For this purpose, if a woman's husband passes away, from that point in time the man gives up his breathe away, she starts mourning. A prominent spectacle being projected by the bereaved woman is that she is running at the top of her voice about wailing

and sobbing; a hysteria that dying creates or is expected to produce. The children also join in the wailing, along with other friends and relatives of the bereaved family, sharing sorrow and sadness over the major loss. They reenact the accomplishments of the deceased's life, his love, fidelity, and qualities such as great, honest, dependable brother, spouse, father, or uncle while wailing and weeping. By custom among the Ewe premises, the widow demands much in terms of mourning to represent her woeful condition, suffering, and sorrow for her husband's death. In the days before his demise, when divorce took place between a man and his wife, the widowed wife, by custom, returns to grieve her ex-husband and do what Okorie (1995) defined as conducting a posthumous negotiated settlement with the deceased in the presence of close relatives of the deceased. There is the belief that failure to follow the rite will result in the woman's death from her late ex-husband by spiritual assault.

The widow is made to wear a special pant not sewn called red napkin. It is usually red in color. The widow wears this to prevent her late husband from coming to have intercourse. It is known among the Anlo people as "Godoe dzi". The widow is required to remove her beads and tie rope around her waist to hold the red napkin. During meals time, she is made to put charcoal in her soup or stew and slot a broomstick in her main meal to scare the man from joining her to dine. Furthermore, the widow is not permitted to prepare food alone, eat or talk to others in public but her fellow widows. Her food is prepared separately and eaten in cracked bowls. The justification for consuming meals from cracked bowls is that eating from deformed plates is dishonorable to the soul of an admired deceased husband; it is a way to dissuade her late husband's fluttering ghost spirit from participating with his widow at the meal. She also must not leave her compound at night else the late husband may cross her on the way and frighten her.

In few instances, they either bath the corpse and give the water to the wife to drink or pour water into the deceased's mouth and pour it into a container for the wife to drink. This practice is to check if the wife has cheated on the man while he was alive or if she bears a hand in the death of her late husband. Once the wife falls sick after this, it means she is guilty of the allegation. For the remainder of the mourning period the widow, at this time, she is still clad in a black dress. The woman walked bare-footed in the olden times, wore pads throughout as during menstruation of women and kept her hair uncombed. According to the Gbi tradition, a widow's unattractive image is similar to what Tasie (2013) reported among the Nigerian Isiokpo that "it is a ploy to protect sexual advances by the deceased husband's ghost spirit towards his widow and also hook him into believing she is menstruating".

When the deceased is laid in state, the widow is asked to sit on a stool in front of the corpse to prove that she is innocent and did not engage in any immoral relationship with another man. The widow must buy items like mat, comb, pomade, sponge, soap, cloth, towel, etc that a widow both when once used and declare to the late husband through someone in

the clan like an elder that from that day, he is going to use these items bought for him and no longer share with the widow. The woman is taken to a rubbish dumping site, undressed and redressed into another widowhood attire, often black with no spot of design on it. The hair of the widow is completely shaved. In these traditional Ewe states, hair shaving (usually by an elderly widow) as a practice of widowhood is regarded very vital. Apart from being a sign of breaking all ties between the dead and his widow, it prevents men from pursuing a widow in that state of situation with insatiable love desires. Further, when bathing, she must not remove her pant but bath on it before changing it to a new dry one quickly to avoid the late husband spying on her nakedness.

She observes this rite based on the duration given. When the time elapsed, she is again led to the dumping site and all the items she used during the funeral rite are removed and thrown to the rubbish dump and re-clothed in white to signify end of widowhood rite. The white cloth symbolizes her strength and success in all the works of this indigenous cultural practice. To mark the end of the practice of widowhood, she is taken to the farm of her late husband to harvest food items such as tubers of yam, cassava, cocoyam or plantain for sale on the market often at a cheap price and returns home immediately. On the day of ending the rite, the widow is locked up in a room and prevented from going out. She is prohibited by the family from visiting funerals and the market to buy food items. She is also barred from receiving or answering public greetings. If she disregards this order, there is the fear that she may misfortune anyone who salutes or answers her greetings.

Another rite that accompany this rite is called “Ahogo tutu” meaning removal of widowhood pant. In this rite, the woman must compulsorily look for a man to have sexual relations with her to scare the late husband from coming close to her again. From here, she can now remove the red pant (godoe dzi) and leave it on the bed of the new man who slept with her. Thereafter, she can start wearing normal panties and is at liberty to marry but not to the very man who had sex with her. She is led out the next day amidst singing and clapping. She will dance happily to the song. They then cook and eat with her. Another widow leads her out to buy food items from the market.

Some of these activities may be detrimental to the health and wellbeing of a woman; in the instances a woman has to drink concoctions or other toxic substances to prove her innocence over the death of her husband. Sometimes she is expected to undergo in sacrificial rituals that may involve her exposure to physical injury such as the widow has to drink the water in which the corpse of their husbands washed. Some were supposed to walk outside their communities to have sexual intercourse at the end of the rite with unfamiliar man in order to shelve herself from the widowhood rite's bad omen. Many women endure violence and harassment by family members after their husband's death, sometimes regarding property and/or money. These women often lose their social status, and they are excluded from social

life. Widows are often forcibly displaced from their homes and physically assaulted. Widows with children often have to withdraw from schooling and rely on their labor. Widow deprivation is also heightened by inadequacy and a lack of schooling. Consequently, their exposure to income generating opportunities is severely limited. In some of Ghana's special cases the widow's ordeal starts with the presumption of the citizens that the widow is liable for the death of the husband. The widow can't trim her toe or finger nails, nor wear sandals during the period of mourning, among the Ewes of Ghana. Although the widow is exposed to such indignities, a widower is not. He may remarry at will, if he so desires. These acts of injustice, humiliation and marginalization of women found in one dimension of Ghanaian culture, including social organization, are observed in other aspects of culture, and are part of Ghanaian womanhood culture itself.

### **Effects of widowhood rites**

The study found younger widows had higher psychological consequences of widowhood than old people. Depression was mainly the psychological consequences felt by widows. This results primarily from husband's loss and feelings of isolation. Older widows suffered fewer psychological effects, perhaps given the fact that these women found the death of their spouse fewer distressing because it was more anticipated in the lifespan at that point. Furthermore, it was found that the extent of the disparity between younger and older widows regarding the psychological impact is so high. It is obvious that the psychological issues of the younger widows arise not only from the negative impacts of the widowhood rites but also from the fact that some people feel lonely because of their husbands' unexpected death. Although the older ones still experience the isolation as a result of death, it is clearly understood that most of them predicted their husbands' death during that life cycle period. In view of this, while the older ones feel saddened by their husbands' absence, the degree of absence the younger ones experience is more than theirs. Hence in this research, the large difference in size of the impact is predictable.

The husband's death imposes an extreme economic strain on the entire family. Here, the wife (now a widow) takes domestic obligation and may not be wealthy enough to afford enough by herself and children. In other circumstances where the widow is unable to choose a husband from the brothers of the dead spouse as is a widow's procedure, the families of the husband then removes from the widow all of the deceased person possessions. Such a widow has to start something on its own to earn money in this way. Which leaves this widow suffer greater economic disadvantages. Unlike the older ones, most young people rely solely on the husband for holding money daily at home. This widow has little to do in the case of her husband's death so as to keep a family. This makes the widow experience greater economic

backsliding. This illustrates why youthful widows are more likely to experience economic effect than their older counterparts.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

People still do not want to interact with widows in most societies. There are myths that if you're a wife and mingle with widows, your husband is going to die. Husbands discourage their wives from attending gatherings with widows, threatening them with divorce. In Dagaaba and Ewe, the predicament of widows has shown that much remains to be done to meet the concerns of several categories of African women. The call for a more constructive approach in this direction is completely urgent as one recognizes the fact that Ghana has made much more success than many other African nations in protecting widows. The most cruel and inhumane rites of widowhood occur as a result of the gender disparities. Thus, widowhood rites are another traditional type of discrimination against women. This current situation is due to certain assumptions that such practices are an integral part of tradition and culture and must be appropriate as such.

In addition to seminars, workshops and symposia, the media can also be used as a genuine tool for educating the entire civil society and the masses about widowhood rites and projecting widows' rights to all facets of society. Widows are human and as such deserve equal care from their spouse, relatives and members of the community; these rites which are deemed necessary by the society are often hazardous to the health and well-being of the widows and their offspring; thus, rites need to be scrapped to a large extent so that women can live normally after their husbands' departure.

To sum up, people gradually become aware of the harmful effect of harmful widowhood rites in our societies. Some African nations have already imposed law banning harmful widowhood practices. The act sets out various situations where individuals can be punished if they disobey the law. The law's concentration should be documented. So that people are knowledgeable of their rights and obligations under the law. Machinery to incorporate the law should be set in motion by the authorities. The present study found that there were more psychological effects of widowhood rites among younger widows than the older ones. Keeping this in mind, it is recommended that these widows be screened and given the necessary therapy. After the death of the spouses, youthful widows experienced more economic strain compared to older ones. NGOs should pay them special attention in order to improve their economic lives in view of this.



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