

THE PLIGHTS OF WIDOWS AND WIDOWHOOD IN NIGERIA: REFLECTIONS ON 2 KINGS 4:1-7

Samson Olusina Olanisebe

Department of Religious Studies,

Obafemi Awolowo University,

Ile-Ife, Osun State, Nigeria.

soolanisebe@yahoo.com, slanisebe@oauife.edu.ng

+234 803 422 7580

Abstract

Losing one's husband at any point in time (whether as a young or old woman) is not a thing of envy in Africa. The paper examines the plights of widows and the challenge of widowhood in Nigeria. It also highlights some of the social ills that are associated with widows in Nigeria. This is discussed within the framework of widowhood in the Old Testament with particular reference to the case of the widow of one of the sons of the prophets in 2 Kings 4:1-7. The paper adopts the intercultural hermeneutical method in achieving the aim of the paper. The study finds out that the plights of the widows in Nigeria range from poverty and economic deprivation to marginalisation and inhuman treatment in the husband's family, in the church as well as in the society. The paper concluded that the widows themselves have major roles to play in addition to the efforts of the church and the society at large in ameliorating the plights of widows in Nigeria.

Keywords: Widowhood, Poverty, Marginalization, Social Deprivation, Nigeria

Introduction

Sheykhi (2006)¹ has observed that as a social phenomenon, widowhood must have been in existence for as long as socially regulated marriage has, and that widowhood appears as an effect of marital dissolution worldwide; in some cases it happens due to divorce, and in most cases, as a natural event because of the death of a spouse. Adetunji (2001) identifies the interconnection of high rates of HIV infection and AIDS deaths with an apparently rising proportion of women aged below 50 years who are widowed in sub-Saharan African. According to estimates from the Joint United Nations Programme on this disease (UNAIDS, 1998), not only does sub-Saharan Africa have the highest prevalence of HIV worldwide, about 83 percent or 11.5 million of all deaths from AIDS

since the beginning of the pandemic have occurred in the region. These AIDS-related deaths exacerbate the already high mortality rates in that area. Consequently, many countries with high HIV prevalence rates have experienced large increases in adult mortality rates, especially among males and the consequence is an increase in the proportion of young widowhood among women.²

However, in Africa, a person is not believed to be a widow as a result of divorce but only when the marriage partner is no more as a result of death. It is to be noted that in Nigeria a new parlance or redefinition of the concept of widowhood is being developed to accommodate women whose husbands are alive but who have either been divorced or are not being adequately catered for by the husbands. Women who have been caught in these webs usually refer to themselves as “living widows” meaning that though their husbands are alive the latter’s existence is as good as dead for their gross irresponsibility in the discharge of their family duties.³ This paper, however, is not including this new group of widows in the discussion but concentrates on the genuine widows who have lost their husbands and who are indeed feeling the heat of neglect, economic deprivation, marginalization, and thus are socially vulnerable. This is carried out through critical reflections on the biblical story of a widow of one of the sons of the prophets in 2 Kings 4:1-7.

Widowhood in Old Testament: Reflections on 2 Kings 4:1-7

The Old Testament corpus recognizes the fact that a woman can become a widow as a result of several factors at any point in time. In view of the patriarchal nature of the ancient Israelite society, inaccessibility of women to landed property, economic dependence of women on men and the plausibility of maltreatment of women who were bereaved of their husbands, Yahweh put in place certain measures and injunctions within the Old Testament legislations to ensure the protection of widows from harrowing experiences. According to Patterson (1973), in the Pentateuch, right from Exodus to Deuteronomy, and in both the historical and prophetic books the widow, orphans and the poor came under the protection of God himself, where the latter is represented as the Supreme judge who has the interests of these sets of people in the society at heart. He legislated against anyone maltreating these category of defenseless people in the society (cf. Ex. 22:21-24; 23:6; Deut. 10:18; 16:11; 14:28-29; 24:17-22; Job 14:1-4; 31:16-17; Isa. 1:23; 10:1-2; Jer. 7:4-16, etc.)⁴

In addition to the various injunctions on the care for the widow by Yahweh in the Old Testament, there was also the institution of Levirate marriage. This is a custom of a widow marrying her deceased husband's brother in order to raise a son for the deceased and to ensure the protection and care of the widow.⁵ Leggett (1974) gave examples of such a marriage system among the Hebrews to include the story of Judah and Tamar in Genesis 38 and that of Ruth and Boaz in the book of Ruth. He added also that the duty of the Levir, did not stop at raising a son to perpetuate the name of the deceased but also extends to the future security and status of the woman, who is the widow of the deceased.⁶ This also confirms that the purpose of this measure by Yahweh was to ensure that widows were not abandoned or left unattended to after the demise of their husbands in the Israelite society.

The story in 2 Kings 4:1-7 is a perfect example of Yahweh's great care for widows in the Old Testament. It is a story of a certain woman, one of the wives of the sons of the Prophets, who had just lost her husband and had started facing the realities and challenges of a disempowered widow. The story is not straight forward but thorough a reflection on it reveals certain hidden experiences of the widow concerned. Certain lessons could be drawn from such reflections. From the story, the widow first gave the credential of her late husband as one who feared God so as to attract attention and sympathy from Elisha. The husband is one of the sons of the Prophets, meaning he was among the disciples of the Prophets. She did not go to the King of the town or to any influential person but rather to the constituency of her husband, where he worked for God and was known.

From the story, there are three main challenges facing this widow. First is the fact that her late husband, instead of leaving property and estate behind for his wife and children, left a debt for them to pay. The Bible does not reveal how much the debt was or what he used the loan for. However, Adam Clarke in his commentary has conjectured that the man is likely to be Prophet Obadiah who borrowed money from Jehoram, the son of Ahab, to feed some prophets as he would not support them from the property of Ahab.⁷ Be that as it may, it is glaring from the coming of the debtor that he has not been able to pay back the debt before he passed on, neither has the duration of the loan reached seven years. This conclusion is arrived at as a result of certain biblical injunctions that regulate activities between creditor and debtor. For example, all loans to fellow Israelites were to be forgiven every seven years (Deut. 15:2).

The second challenge of this widow is the coming of the creditor to take away the only two sons she has who could serve as consolation to her in the future. This action of the creditor is not out of place among the Hebrews. Children, according to the laws of the Hebrews, were considered the property of the parents, who had the right to dispose of them for the payment of their debts. And in cases of poverty, the law explicitly permitted them, to sell both themselves and their children (Ex. 21:7; Lev. 25:39). It was by extension of this law that creditors were permitted to take the children of their debtors as slaves in lieu of their money.⁸ This custom was known to Jesus also for he alludes to it in the parable of the wicked servant in Matthew 18:25-35. In addition, because of the provision of loan cancellation for Hebrews at the end of the seventh year, it is expected that creditors would avail themselves of all possible avenues for the recovery of their loans before the expiration of the seventh year. The creditor could therefore not be blamed for taking the step to recover his money, no matter how harsh the step may seem.

The third challenge of this widow was how to pay the debt and be saved from the embarrassing situation. This was what brought her to Prophet Elisha. She knew that that was her last hope. This became a problem because she herself had not been engaged in any job that could sustain her and her children with or without her husband. It is to be noted that the question of Elisha to her “what did you have in the house?” before the miracle of the multiplication of oil is significant. This is an indication that God does not bless in a vacuum. It is what a man has that can be blessed and multiplied. Women should understand that no one is ready to carry all the responsibilities of another person. Therefore, it is of utmost importance that they prepare themselves for any eventualities by engaging themselves in a job or trade, no matter how menial. Prophet Elisha was able to save the woman from her immediate challenges and was able to provide for her future sustenance through the miracle of the multiplication of oil. The widow was also able to get the miracle that assisted in offsetting her debt as a result of the good relationship she had forged with her neighbours who readily borrowed her pots that were conveyors of her miracle.

The challenges of this widow are nothing dissimilar to what many widows in Nigeria are exposed to shortly after the death of their husbands. The woman in question here was able to come out of her difficulties alive, but not many are this lucky in Nigeria.

The Plights of Widows in Nigeria

The plights of widows are the same in almost every part of the world. Ntozi (1997) corroborates the assertion when he says that widowhood all over the world is characterized by grief, bereavement, rituals, forced remarriages, harassment, rejection, loneliness, poverty and relatively high mortality. However, the situation of widows and widowers largely depends on country, society, religion and economic systems.⁹ The ordeal of widows in Nigeria or any part of most countries of the world is not different from the experience of the widow of one of the sons of the Prophets that has been considered above. For instance, Elliott (1999), while describing the ordeals of widows in China, is of the opinion that they are economically vulnerable, ritually superfluous, and at the same time socially destabilised and sexually threatened, they were archetypal liminal figures - marginalised, caricatured, and feared.¹⁰

Ewelukwa (2002) in the same vein, has split the experiences of Nigerian widows generally into two broad categories: disinheritance and deprivation of property and the mandatory observance of prescribed burial rituals, which however, varies from one ethnic group to another, from state to state, and most often from one town to another.¹¹ The first culturally and ritually defined ordeal is the charge against widows as being their husbands' death by the extended members of the family of the deceased virtually in all cultures in Nigeria. However, this false accusation is not limited to Nigeria for in Taiwan, for instance, many widows come under suspicion from their in-laws or neighbours as the potential cause of their husbands' "bad deaths"; even well-educated Taiwanese women may feel the burden of accusation that without them, their spouses would never have suffered from a bad life that included an early demise. For the rest of their lives, such women will face constant reminders of what traditional Chinese society considers "incompleteness."¹² (Hsu, Kahn and Hsu, 2002, p.315).

Omoigui (2001) and Orebiyi (2001) have documented some of the barbaric and dehumanizing widowhood rites that women are asked to pass through during the periods following the demise of their husbands in Nigeria. Some are expected to cry from the day of their husbands' death to the last day of the funeral. Some are made to drink from the water used in bathing the deceased as a means of proving the innocence of the woman, while some especially among the Igbo are asked to shave the hair on their heads.¹³ Some are prevented from eating their choice food but those prescribed by custom and are restrained from attending any social

gathering.¹⁴ Young succinctly describes the widow's experience as exemplified in many cultures of the world, some of which are being practiced in Nigeria, especially among the Igbo in the Eastern part of the country, thus:

Upon the death of a husband, rituals for the surviving widow can be savage. The hair is cut, or shaved off, in many cases leaving cuts in the scalp, so roughly is this carried out. The clothing and the jewellery the widow wore during her husband's lifetime are cast off, and rags or rough clothing put on. Alternatively, the widow may have to remain in dirty unwashed clothing for weeks, enclosed in one room, being given virtually nothing to eat and even in some cases having to drink the water with which her husband's corpse was cleaned. She becomes a focus of collective repudiation, seen as a bearer of bad luck, unclean, polluting and dangerous. She has to undergo rituals - many of them humiliating, and some life-threatening in these times of HIV/AIDS - to symbolically 'cleanse' her, in order to safeguard the community from her impurity.¹⁵

After the mourning period, in the traditional Yoruba society, some are even forced into levirate marriage, in many cases her husband's younger brother, who may be many years younger than she is. However, in most localities in Nigeria this practice has been totally abandoned and rejected especially among women of great economic means and high level of education. They are resisting the rationale for these socio-cultural practices which deny them access to decision-making processes, to productive resources, and even to control over personal matters pertaining to whether they should be inherited once they become widowed.¹⁶ These burial and mourning rituals imposed on widows have been observed to inflict different kinds of losses on them such as the loss of personal dignity, the loss of health, and sometimes, the loss of life.¹⁷ Unlike her male counterpart, the widower, who could re-marry anytime after the mourning period without the raising of eyebrows, a widow is expected to stay for a longer time before she could start thinking of re-marrying.

Economically, the widow is made to suffer after her husband's death, especially if she is one who has the mentality of "me and my husband" when the husband was alive and has not been friendly with the

members of the extended family of her husband. In cases where the husband's property is forcefully taken from the widow, this leads to the breakdown in the economic power of the widow especially if the widow had been a full-time house wife before her husband's death. The bulk of the financial and material responsibilities which had been shouldered by the husband are automatically transferred to her without any adequate preparation for it. This becomes rather worse if the widow in question is a "young widow" with small children to cater for. Ricketson (1991) also corroborates the fact that a young widow faces many problems that cannot even be alleviated if the husband left any property because the fact that the widow is young also indicates that the husband was also young at the point of death and would not have been able to amass or possess much property.¹⁸ The situation is even worse if the husband left debts behind as in the case of the biblical widow considered above. Childless widows and widows with only female children are in worse situations and oftentimes face expulsion from their matrimonial home on the death of their spouse.¹⁹

One of the reasons for this economic disempowerment of widows is not unconnected with the inability of many of them to inherit their husbands' property on his demise. The Yoruba culture frowns at this because they believe that the property belongs to the children and the family, and that the wife was also a property to be inherited.²⁰ The wife would only indirectly benefit from the property that is given to her children. This situation often leads to economic disempowerment of widows, pauperization, impoverishment and marginalization in the society.

Ameliorating Widows' Ordeals in Nigeria

It has been stated above that the socio-economic plights of widows are the same in almost all parts of the globe, the only difference is that while some of the Western countries have been tackling this by taking concrete steps in rehabilitating them back into the society and making them proper subjects of public concern if their husbands did not provide for them adequately, and guaranteeing them some part of their husband's property as observed by Ricketson,²¹ Nigeria lags behind in easing such challenges.

To ameliorate the sufferings of widows, certain measures must be put in place by the women who are yet to become widows, the Church, the society and the government. These fall under Lopata's four factors that can guarantee that widows are integrated into the social support system in

Chicago. The first factor is the society with its composition and culture. Second is the community within which the widow lives which can help her overcome much of her sadness. This includes favourable neighbourhood and working environments. Third, the widow's recovery from her problems depends on the support she gets from the family of her late husband whose attitude towards widowhood is an important factor. Last are the personal resources available to the widow that will assist her. These include people and groups she is associated with such as her parents, siblings, children and friends.²² Widows can live a normal life if proper measures and adequate preparation are made for them. It is true that no one prays to be widowed young, but the fact is that it does happen. Therefore, instead of engaging in wishful unrealistic thinking, it is better to tackle the issue headlong and create institutional structures that will support widows' welfare in Nigeria.

Winchester (1990) has associated male poverty with a lack of jobs, while female poverty results from occupational segregation into low-paying jobs. This occupational segregation of women reflects an underlying societal assumption that women will be engaged in caring and child-rearing, but will be financially supported by men.²³ In reality, one of the causes of poverty and economic deprivation for widows is lack of stable and established source(s) of income and over dependence on the husbands for financial and material responsibilities. Women should ensure that long before the inevitable happens, they engage themselves in jobs or business ventures that can sustain them and the children. Robertson has also observed that the erroneous belief in Africa that women's education is of no use as they will end up becoming builders of another man's home is a systematic attempt at disempowering women economically.²⁴ This should be shunned and vigorous efforts should be made at ensuring equal access to formal education for both male and female genders. Another cause of the pauperization of widows is the ripple effects of joint-ownership of property. In Nigeria, the husband's family tends to assume that all that the man has is solely owned by him and as a result they are seized from the wife upon the demise of her husband.

In cases of joint-ownership of property, it is ideal for the couple to think early of writing a will that will stipulate the sharing formula of those properties after spousal death. It is observed that the writing of wills is an unpopular mode for the disposition of property in Africa because of the belief that the making of wills hastens the death of a testator. In Nigeria, a woman who persuades her husband to make a will is suspected of plotting

his death and is in danger of being accused of murder in the event of her husband's death.²⁵ However, because of the various mishaps that not writing wills cause, it is high time those men who want peace after their death wrote their wills. Dickson, commenting on the importance of writing a will, said:

It is the duty and paramount obligation of every considerate and rational man, as early as possible to make his will, in order to preserve the further peace and harmony of his family and prevent those irremediable disputes among them which are the consequences of intestacy. No person, who is desirous of leaving behind him the character of a just, kind, and wise member of society should delay or defer to perform the simplest and most easy act of human obligation.... This is an obligation binding on all men who are possessed of property, but more especially those who have families, and those who are engaged in the connections of business. Could any man of sense who died without a will, return to this world to see his family almost beggared, his children scattered on the wide world, his business embarrassed so as to be worth nothing; how would he grieve to think that all this confusion arose from his culpable neglect of performing so simple a duty as that of making his will.²⁶

Though this suggestion of formal preparation of the formula for distribution of property after the demise of the man by Dickson is alien to the Nigerian inheritance culture, it is high time such western practice is adopted by Nigerian men to avoid unhealthy rivalry, suspicion and loss of lives over property sharing after their demise.

In addition to the above, the inheritance customs of the Nigerian society should be revisited and a legal framework be put in place that will allow widows to inherit their husbands' property as being practised in some places in ancient Near East. In the ancient Near East cultures, the surrounding cultures where many of the customs in the Old Testament could be located, widows have the right to inherit the property of their husbands. For example, in Babylonia, the widow was entitled to inherit the estate of her husband and to enjoy the use of the land. Among the Hittites, the wife seems to have enjoyed rights of inheritance in her deceased

husband's estate, and documents from Nuzi similarly suggest that a widow could benefit from her husband's legacy. Furthermore, there is evidence that in Ugarit, a man was entitled to bequeath property to his wife, and in one document, written in the presence of witnesses, the husband expressly stipulated that all his possessions would, after his death, belong to her, and a provision was added that she was to give the estate eventually to the son who had honoured her the most. This additional provision was important, since a merciless eldest son could deprive his mother of everything that had belonged to the estate of the deceased.²⁷ However, this provision is alien to widows of both Nigeria and Jewish extractions. This has brought about excruciating pain on both the widows and their children, especially those who are still within school age. Some children have dropped out of school as a result of their being denied access to their father's property. It has been observed that in Africa, children who have lost one or both parents are less likely to be enrolled in school as a result of poverty than other poor children who are non-orphans, especially when the extended family members are not ready to give the necessary support to these children.²⁸

It has also been pointed out that one of the reasons for the neglect of widows by their husbands' family results from the hostile treatment of members of their husbands' family by the widows while the husbands' were alive. Women should understand that in Nigeria, western education has not derobed them completely of the extended family custom. One important characteristic of African life is communal or collective life as reflected in "African personalism" – an emphasis on the wholesome human relationships among members of the group at whatever expense and efforts, including personal sacrifices of various forms. The Africans would go to any length to ensure and maintain wholesome human relationships among members of the community both as individuals and as a corporate body.²⁹ This "African personalism" involves a readiness by the individuals involved to share in the joys and sorrows of one another in the community, and a readiness to accept others as they are; be they of the same race or not.³⁰ This African personalism is the concept of communalism and consanguinity among the Yoruba, expressed in the sense of "I am because we are". Women should not throw this value to the wind, but rather maintain a cordial relationship with their husbands' family while the husband is still alive so that they will not be treated as strangers afterwards.

At the level of the Church, leaders of the Church should realize that God cares for the widows because He knows that they are a vulnerable set of people. As a result, there are certain biblical injunctions put in place by Yahweh which condemn the oppression of widows and orphans. For instance, "You shall not afflict any widow or orphan. If you do afflict them, and they cry to me, I will surely hear their cry; and my wrath will burn, and I will kill you with the sword, and your wives shall become widows and your children fatherless"(Ex. 22:22-24). Here Yahweh, himself, would enforce this law. Such laws also would provide guidance to individual Israelites concerning right or righteous conduct, and to judges or courts in resolving disputes. The prophet Isaiah, in Isaiah 1:16-17, condemns those who preyed upon widows and orphans, and calls on fellow Israelites to correct such oppression: "Cease to do evil, learn to do good; Seek justice, correct oppression; defend the fatherless, plead for the widow."³¹ As a matter of fact, the Old Testament is full of various humanitarian legislations in favour of the widows and the poor among the Hebrews.³²

In addition to the above, during the developmental historical stages of the Jews, it has been established that charity was part of the social, religious and communal norms that regulated inter-personal relationships and bonding among the people. Bird (1982) has observed that in ancient Israel, early rabbinic Judaism and early Christianity, these religious traditions encouraged a variety of charitable practices including hospitality to strangers and generous private assistance to the needy (Ex.22:25-27; Lev. 19:9-10; Deut. 14:22-29; 15:7-11; Ruth 2:7, etc.,). Recipients of such charity include orphans, widows, Levites, guest workers or strangers and indentured servants. As a matter of fact, right from the Old to the New Testaments, the issue of caring for widows has been emphasised. God himself understands the plight of this group of people, hence the provision of an adequate support system for them.³³

During Rabbinic Judaism, widows, orphans, impoverished travelers, temporarily needy families, and aspiring scholars all qualified for assistance. The rights of widows and orphans were spelled out much more clearly here than in the Hebrew Bible. For example, a widow was given the right of inheritance to her husband's property (instead of his relatives) and the guarantee of remaining in her husband's house even if it meant having to sell some of his belongings. These temporarily needy persons along with more permanently impoverished widows and orphans could qualify for assistance from a weekly distribution of money and

supplies, called the *kuppah*. Other transients, who included otherwise economically self-sufficient traders, scholars, and immigrants, were assisted from a daily disbursement of food, called *tamhui*. Local communities supervised these charity programmes by appointing as trustees, two men to make weekly collections and three men to make weekly allocations. When disputes arose regarding loans, rights of widows or the rights of poor persons to gleanings, communal councils arranged for special courts to be established to settle disputes. Contributions to these charity programs were made probably through weekly offerings, solicitations by the trustees of charity funds, and by some forms of communal taxation or tithing.³⁴

Examples abound both in the gospels and in the other New Testament corpus on how the needy, especially the widows should be taken care of by the church (Matt. 25:31-46; Lk. 18:18-30; Jn. 13:34-35; Acts 2:41-47; 6:1-7; I Tim. 5:3-16; Jam.1:27). Cooney (1997) asserts that the early Church's concern for the widows follows a long established tradition among the Jews, whose scripture (the Old Testament corpus) is full of references to the responsibility of the people towards the most vulnerable (widows, orphans and foreigners) amongst them.³⁵ The Church must not abdicate this responsibility to the widow. Just as Prophet Elisha came to the rescue of the widow in question in our passage, the Church must continue to rise up to the challenge of supplying the needs of widows as many times as occasions demand.

The Church in Nigeria should also do much more than the biblical injunction of providing for the needs of the widows from the Church's fund, they should also help in fighting for their rights and help in drawing the attention of political leaders to their plights so that definitive laws could be promulgated by government as regards their protection and also provision for their welfare. This has been demonstrated in Kenya, where for 19 years, the missionaries were battling with the customs that determined the future of the widows. They took various steps in the protection of the rights of widows. The various Christian missions in Kenya formed themselves into a United Conference and became a pressure group, lobbying the government to change the native laws and customs that disinherited the Christian widow of her husband's property that forced her to be inherited by her brother-in-law. After series of struggles which lasted 19 years, enactment was eventually made that embodied many of the reforms sought by the missions. The enactment declared that a Kenyan Christian woman, upon widowhood had reached

majority age, and thus faced no obligation to reside with her brother-in-law or any other relative. It insured that her departure from custom would not remove from her, the right to support herself and her children from the husband's brother or other relative. Furthermore, after her husband's death she became her children's guardian, and as long as she remained a Christian and until her children reached the age of sixteen, she remained their guardian and could dispose of her wards in marriage. The ordinance required, however, that the bride price in such cases would be governed by native law and custom.³⁶

At the governmental level, there should be institutionalized support programmes for widows. If there is any extant law protecting the rights of widows, the judiciary should ensure the enforcement of such law. The Ministry of Women Affairs should come up with concrete welfare development social security programmes for widows. In addition, government should encourage and support the various Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) whose main focus is the protection of widows' rights and the amelioration of their sufferings. The Association of Women Lawyers which has been assisting some widows to recover their husband's property through legal means should be empowered by the government to continue the good work. It must be realized that failure on the part of widows to adequately cater for their children as a result of lack of an institutional structure to support them, will automatically lead to the failure of the society because such children may eventually become social menace to the society.

Conclusion

The paper has been able to discuss the plights of widows in Nigeria. The ordeals they have been subjected to have further increased their disempowerment, compounded their dehumanisation and heightened their marginalisation within the Nigeria society. However, for these problems to be ameliorated, if not completely solved, widows themselves have critical roles to play. They must take their destiny in their hands. Just like the widow in the biblical passage, they must take concrete steps to seek help. Where they have been denied of their husbands' property, they must seek redress in the courts of law. Also, in order to forestall such future ordeals, women must not allow themselves to be reduced to full house wives but they must engage in whatever job or trade of their choice through which they could be economically empowered. Finally, both the government, the religious bodies and the public must have a positive perception toward caring for the widows and not engage in acts that will further injure the personality, dignity and the humanity of widows.

Notes and References

1. M. T. Sheykhi, "A Sociological Review of the Reflections and Dimensions of Quality of Life of the Widows in Tehran," *Social Indicators Research*, Vol.78, No. 2 (2006), 252.
2. J. A. Adetunji, "HIV/AIDS and Young Age Widowhood in Sub-Saharan Africa," *Journal of Health and Human Services Administration* 24, no. 3 (2001), 259-260.
3. Interview with Mrs. Salako Adetoun aged 52 years at Aroro Olomoyoyo, Ibadan on 7th August, 2014.
4. R. D. Patterson, "The Widow, Orphan, and the Poor in the Old Testament and the Extra-Biblical Literature," *Bibliotheca Sacra* (July 1973), 228-234.
5. S. O. Olanisebe and O. A. Oladosu, "Levirate marriage amongst the Hebrews and widow's inheritance amongst the Yoruba: A comparative investigation," *Verbum et Ecclesia*, Vol.35, No.1 (2014), 7. <http://dx.doi.org/10.4102/ve.v35i1.826>.
6. D. A. Leggett, *The Levirate and Goel Institutions in the Old Testament With a Special Attention to the Book of Ruth*, (Cherry Hill, New Jersey: Mack Publishing Company, 1974), 29-62.
7. Adam Clarke, *Clarke's Commentary on the Bible*, (Power Bible CD, Electronic Version by Online Publishing Inc. 2000).
8. Adam Clarke, *Clarke's Commentary on the Bible*.
9. J. P. M. Ntozi, "Widowhood, Remarriage and Migration During the HIV/AIDS Epidemic in Uganda," *Health Transition Review* 7, Supplement (1997), 125.
10. M. C. Elliott, "Manchu Widows and Ethnicity in Qing China," *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol.41, No.1 (1999), 33.
11. U. U. Ewelukwa, "Post-Colonialism, Gender, Customary Injustice: Widows in African Societies," *Human Rights Quarterly*, Vol.24, No. 2 (2002), 433-434.
12. Min-Tao Hsu, D. L. Kahn, and Mutsu Hsu, "A Single Leaf Orchid: Meaning of Husband's Death for Taiwanese Widows," *Ethos*, Vol.30, No. 4 (2002), 315.
13. M. I. Omoigui, "Tradition, Poverty and the Church: Challenges for the African Woman," *African Culture and the Quest for Women's Rights*, edited by D. O. Akintunde (Ibadan: Sefer, 2001), 117-118.
14. O. A. Orebiyi, "Dynamism in the Bible and Yoruba Culture: Issues in the Quest for Women's Rights," *African Culture and the Quest*

for Women's Rights, edited by D. O. Akintunde (Ibadan: Sefer, 2001), 77.

15. K. Young, "Widows Without Rights: Challenging Marginalization and Dispossession," *Gender and Development*, Vol.14, No.2 (2006), 200.
16. E. L. M. Gwako, "Widow Inheritance among the Maragoli of Western Kenya," *Journal of Anthropological Research*, Vol.54, No. 2 (1998), 179-181.
17. Ewelukwa, "Post-Colonialism, Gender, Customary Injustice: Widows in African Societies," 437.
18. W. F. Ricketson, "To be Young, Poor, and Alone: The Experience of Widowhood in the Massachusetts Bay Colony, 1675-1676," *The New England Quarterly*, Vol.64, No. 1 (1991), 113-127.
19. The researcher has witnessed many of these cruel and awkward treatments of widows with female children been sent packing from their matrimonial home while growing up in many places in the Southwestern part of Nigeria and who suffered greatly to raise their children because they were economically sterile.
20. P. E. Okeke, "Reconfiguring tradition: Women's rights and social status in contemporary Nigeria," *Africa Today* 47, no. 1 (2000): 55. Also A. A. Adeoye, *Itopinpin Orirun Asa Pelu Agbeyewo Awon Isenbaye* (Oyo: Immaculate, 2003), 33.
21. Ricketson, "To be Young, Poor, and Alone: The Experience of Widowhood in the Massachusetts Bay Colony, 1675-1676," 113.
22. J. P. M. Ntozi, "Widowhood, Remarriage and Migration during the HIV/AIDS Epidemic in Uganda," 125.
23. H. P. M. Winchester, "Women and Children Last: The Poverty and Marginalization of One-Parent Families," *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, Vol.15, No. 1 (1990), 71.
24. C. Robertson, "Developing Economic Awareness: Changing Perspectives in Studies of African Women, 1976-1985," *Feminist Studies*, Vol.13, No. 1 (1987), 114.
25. Ewelukwa, "Post-Colonialism, Gender, Customary Injustice: Widows in African Societies," 435.
26. A. Owens, "Property, Gender and the Life Course: Inheritance and Family Welfare Provision in Early Nineteenth-Century England," *Social History*, Vol.26, No. 3 (2001), 303.
27. E. W. Davies, "Inheritance Rights and the Hebrew Levirate Marriage: Part 1," *Vetus Testamentum*, Vol.31, No. 2 (1981), 138.

28. A. Case, C. Paxson, and J. Ableidinger, "Orphans in Africa: Parental Death, Poverty, and School Enrollment," *Demography*, Vol.41, No. 3 (2004), 483-484.
29. J. A. Sofola, *African Culture and the African Personality* (Ibadan: African Resources Publishers, 1978), 67.
30. J.A. Sofola, *African Culture and the African Personality*.
31. R. H. Hiers, "Biblical Social Welfare Legislation: Protected Classes and Provisions for Persons in Need," *Journal of Law and Religion*, Vol.17, No. 1 (2002), 64.
32. C. F. Kent, "The Humanitarian Element in the Old Testament Legislation," *The Biblical World*, Vol.18, No. 4 (1901), 270-283.
33. F. B. Bird, "A Comparative Study of the Work of Charity in Christianity and Judaism," *The Journal of Religious Ethics*, Vol.10, No. 1 (1982): 153-154.
34. F.B. Bird, "A Comparative Study of the Work of Charity in Christianity and Judaism"
35. D. A. L. Cooney, "Twenty Reduced Widows," *Dublin Historical Record*, Vol.50, No.1 (1997), 40.
36. L. P. Spencer, "Defence and Protection of Converts: Kenya Missions and the Inheritance of Christian Widows, 1912-1931," *Journal of Religion in Africa*, Vol.5, No.2 (1973), 115-123.