

**Effects Of Widowhood Rites On The Psychological Distress
And Life Satisfaction Among Konkomba Widows In The
Saboba District, Northern Ghana.**

Gladys Barkei Djankpa,* Anthony K. Nkyi. **

Department of Guidance and Counselling, Faculty of Educational Foundations
College of Education Studies, University of Cape Coast, Cape Coast, Ghana

*Email: mrsdjankpa@gmail.com

**Corresponding author: Anthony K. Nkyi Email: ankyi@ucc.edu.gh

ABSTRACT

The study investigated the effects of widowhood rites on the psychological distress and life satisfaction of Konkomba widows in the Saboba District of Ghana. The descriptive, cross-sectional survey design was adopted for the study. The multistage sampling techniques, comprising purposive, stratified sampling technique, snowball sampling technique, and convenience sampling techniques, were used to select 120 widows from the Saboba District for the study. Data were analyzed using frequency distributions, means, standard deviations, regression analysis, and Kruskal Wallis H-Test. Findings indicated that widows who underwent widowhood rites experience a high level of psychological distress. Also, the psychological distress of widows affected their satisfaction with life. Based on the findings, it was recommended that government institutions, NGOs and health practitioners should incorporate a more comprehensive approach where the attention is not only on the physical needs of widows, but also on their psychological and social well-being.

KEYWORDS: Widowhood Rites, Psychological Health, Satisfaction with Life, Widows

Introduction

Several studies have documented that the negative effects of widowhood rites far outweigh the positive outcomes (Ojo, 2019; Azumah & Nachinaab, 2018; Kotzé et al., 2012; Kalu, 1989). In these studies, findings revealed that widowhood rites impose inhumane treatment on widows. The practice is painful and brings discomfort to widows. However, due to fear of punishment and the possible displeasure of the departed spouse, widows painfully undergo the process. According to Owen (2001), widows are seen as the devils that cause

evil situations, including the death of their husbands. Seen as witches who kill their husbands, widows are deprived of their property and comfort. Some are treated like people without dignity, while others are beaten and left without shelter or food.

Widows are subjected to hostile treatments, including forced marriage, harassment, rejection, loneliness, poverty, loss of status, restriction on social activities, fear of the unknown and alienation (Azumah & Nachinaab, 2018; Manyedi et al., 2003; Gunga, 2009; Sossou, 2002). In many instances, the husband's property is seized from the widow and her children by the family (Korang-Okra & Haight, 2015). In addition, the practice exposes the widow to health risks. Starvation, use of an unsterilized razor, brutality and untidiness that characterize the practice, may cause illnesses such as malnutrition, anaemia, rashes, HIV/AIDS transmission, heart disease, Mellitus, digestive disorders, and may even result in death (Edemikpong, 2005). The insults, psychological trauma, frustration and hopelessness may lead to suicide. The most disturbing part of this cultural practise is that men are not similarly subjected to such indignities when their wives die. The consequences of these widowhood rites are enormous and there must be greater effort and campaign to abolish the act. It is due to the cruel nature of widowhood rites that researchers and non-governmental organisations have advocated for the end of its practice and observance (Atindanbila et al., 2014; Korang-Okrah & Haight, 2015; Sossou, 2002 & Tasie, 2013).

Widowhood rites as a Gender-Based Violence.

Gender-Based Violence refers to violence-activity perpetrated against a partner, close relative, or a person, in the form of assault, rape and murder, due to the individual's gender (Merry, 2006, p. 21). Keck and Sikkink (1998) noted that cultural practices, including female genital mutilation, violence against refugee women, sexual harassment, and widowhood rituals, are regarded as a form of gender-based violence. Violence against women is closely connected to both structural and cultural factors that are intentionally or unintentionally carved to relegate women to the background in society (Abraham & Tastsoglou, 2016).

According to Merry (2006), violence against women denies them from enjoying their basic human rights and fundamental freedom. Although widowhood rites are culturally legitimate, they are harmful to women. Research findings have shown that activities that go with widowhood rites bring economic hardships, confinement, and ill-treatments (Anugwom, 2011; Samuel 2011). It could be asserted that widowhood rites are among the fundamental issues around which gender-based violence is conceptualized as a harmful traditional practice. The oppression and health hazards associated with widowhood rituals, though justified by traditions, should be seen, and defined as a violation of women's rights. Ajayi et al. (2019) recommended that result-oriented policies and structures must be put in place to get rid of the effects of

widowhood rites in Nigeria and other parts of Sub-Saharan Africa. Ghana has the responsibility to protect the rights and dignity of its citizens, as enshrined in its constitution and other legal instruments, by eliminating cultural and traditional practices that are regarded as dehumanising or harmful to women. It is important to uphold the epitome of human rights relating to the effects of widowhood rites on the widows of the Konkomba people of Northern Ghana.

In most cultures in Ghana, women are the only ones who go through widowhood rites that are degrading. Men do not have to go through vigorous rituals as part of widowhood rites. In cases where they go through, the rituals are friendlier and take place within a short period. It, therefore, follows that the way men and women cope with these rights will also differ. Since women go through more vigorous rituals, the impact may as well be greater on them. Dery (2016) further observes that women, more than men, in the Ga culture in Ghana, go through an elaborate widowhood rite process. The widow cleansing among Ga involves the preparation of chewing sponge, herbs, and water in an earthen pot or bowl. The process can go deep into the night and is performed by an elderly woman who has undergone the rites before (Atinga, 2006). The widower, on the other hand, does not go through these.

Effects of widowhood rites on the psychological well-being and Life Satisfaction of Widows

The loss of a partner brings sorrow, and that leads to several psychological distresses among surviving partners. According to Islam (2019), psychological distress has been common across the world. Though no specific definition can explain psychological distress, it entails emotional suffering that occurs as a result of the stressors humans face daily. Examples of psychological stressors include depression and anxiety. Pudrovska and Carr (2008) assessed the extent to which widowhood in one's 50s or early 60s leads to depressive symptoms, as part of an objective for a study. The findings from the study revealed that widowed men and women experienced high depressive symptoms, and this can persist for two years or more. This reveals that the loss of a partner is one of the most painful experiences in the life of an individual and, therefore, there is a need to provide social support for widows.

Views about the effects of widowhood rites among Konkombas in Northern Ghana are dichotomous, just as views are divided in the world about widowhood rites. While some believe the rites have merits and are beneficial to women, others perceive them as marginalization, isolation, loss of social life, discrimination, disinheritance, stigmatization, abuse of dignity and human rights violation (Korang-Okrah & Haight, 2015). In a typical Konkomba culture, a widow may remarry, but before she qualifies to do so, she must first go through widowhood rites. These rites are often characterised by witchcraft accusations (with some widows ending up in witches' camps), blame games, impoverishment and physical abuse.

Tribal conflicts in Northern Ghana have led to the demise of many men, thereby increasing the number of widows among Konkombas. With the increasing number of widows going through widowhood rites, there is bound to be an increasing effect of widowhood rites and their consequences among these women. Knowledge of the effects of widowhood rites on these women will be very useful for government agencies and stakeholders who are engaged in peacebuilding and reintegration of conflict victims into society.

In an earlier study, Nkyi and Djankpa (2021) researched the *psychological distress and life satisfaction of Konkumba in the Saboba District*. In their study, no association was found between the demographic characteristics of widows and the experience of psychological distress. Furthermore, no differences were found within the duration categories and employment of widowhood rites in terms of psychological distress. This present study, however, attempts to examine the differences in the psychological distress of Konkomba widows based on age and religion and the effects of the widowhood rites on the satisfaction with life among Konkomba people in the Saboba District

Often, widows end up being beaten for claims of not being faithful to their deceased husbands. Others are maltreated and, in some cases, sent on exile into witch camps on false accusations of killing their husbands and other community members. It is important to undertake this study because the findings may contribute immensely to prospective social reforms and help in pruning the outdated widowhood rites to ensure that widows derive maximum benefits from the widowhood rites, with little or no psychological health problems.

Purpose of the Study

The study sought to explore the effects of widowhood rites on the psychological health and life satisfaction among Konkomba widows in the Saboba District in the Northern Region of Ghana.

Objectives of the Study

The specific objectives of the study were to:

1. Determine the level of psychological distress among Konkomba widows who have undergone widowhood rites in the Saboba district.
2. Examine the effects of widowhood rites on widows' satisfaction with life in the Saboba District.
3. Explore the differences in the psychological distresses of Konkomba widows based on age.
4. Examine the differences in the psychological distresses of Konkomba widows based on religion.

Research Question

1. What is the level of psychological distress among Konkomba widows who have undergone widowhood rites in the Saboba district?

Hypotheses

1. There will be a significant influence of widowhood rites on the life satisfaction of Konkomba widows who have gone through widowhood rites in Saboba District.
2. There will be a statistically significant difference in the psychological distress of Saboba widows on the basis of age.
3. There will be a statistically significant difference in the psychological distress of Saboba widows on the basis of religion.

Research Design

This study is a quantitative study which made use of the cross-sectional descriptive survey.

Study Area

The Saboba District is one of the 261 Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies (MMDAs) in Ghana, and forms part of the 16 MMDAs in the Northern Region. The district was carved out of the then East Dagomba District in 1988, in pursuance of the Government's Decentralisation and Local Government Reform policy, with Saboba as the district's administrative capital. It is located on the north-eastern corner of the Northern Region and lies between Latitudes 24° and 25° north, Longitudes 27° and 13° east, covering a total land area of approximately 1,802 km². The district is bounded by Chereponi District to the north, Tatale Sanguli District to the south, Yendi Municipal and Gushegu Municipal to the west. On the east, is the river Oti, which serves as the international boundary between Ghana and the Republic of Togo. The population of the district, according to the 2021 population and housing census, stands at 95,683, with 47,172 males and 48,511 females.

Inclusion and exclusion Criteria

A total of 120 widows from the Konkomba tribe who have undergone widowhood rites not later than 12 months, and are above 18 years, met the criteria for the study. Also, they were persons who could effectively communicate in Likpakpaaln (Konkomba language), and/or the English language. Participants who did not fall under these criteria were excluded from the study.

Sample and Sampling Technique

Snowballing was used to select participants. In the snowball sampling, we identified individuals who met the criteria for inclusion in the study, with the help of an appointed member of each community visited. Snowballing implies that after identifying a participant, they were then asked to recommend others who they know also met the criteria. Because of the dehumanizing nature of widowhood rites, some widows were not willing to be identified in public for fear of being tagged as a traitor. In this case, snowballing was the best technique to identify and reach out to them. A total of 120 participants were obtained based

on their willingness to volunteer in the study. The obtained sample was also affected by the purposive sampling technique.

Instruments

The instruments consist of demographic data (age, gender, and religion), a Brief Distress inventory and a Satisfaction with Life Scale.

The Brief Distress Inventory (Ritsner, Rabinowitz, & Slyuzberg, 1995) (TBDI) was used to measure the experiences of psychological distress among widows who have undergone widowhood rites in the Saboba District. The self-reporting scale is made up of 24-item questions and measures the global psychological distress of persons with traumatic experiences. It has six subscales, namely obsessiveness (items 1, 9, 23), hostility (items, 2, 5, 10), sensitiveness (items 7, 8, 12, 13), depression (items 15, 17, 19, 20, 21, 22, 24), anxiety (items 14, 16, 18), and paranoid ideation (items 4, 6, 11). The first 13 items are ranked on a 5-Likert scale ranging from 0 (not at all) to 4 (extremely). The next 10 items which measure the experiences of psychological distress over the past month are also ranked on a 5-Likert scale and range from 0 (never) to 4 (Very often). Lastly, item 24 is graded on a 5-Likert scale where 0 = very satisfied and 4 = very dissatisfied. Participants were expected to indicate the extent to which each item corresponds to their psychological health after experiencing widowhood rites.

A criterion mean ($m=2.0$) was determined for the items. An item mean below the criterion mean is an indication that no psychological distress is experienced, while a mean score above the criterion measure indicates that a significant level of psychological distress is experienced. To find the overall level of psychological distress, a criterion mean of 48.0 was determined. This was done by multiplying the number of items by the item mean. An obtained mean greater than the overall criterion mean indicates that a significant level of psychological distress was experienced, while a score below the criterion mean shows that significantly less psychological distress was experienced. According to Ritsner et al. (1995), an overall score can be computed to determine the level of psychological distress. The instrument demonstrated a good reliability coefficient. Cronbach's alpha ranges from 0.60 to 0.89. In this study, the Brief Distress Inventory yielded a good reliability coefficient (Cronbach's alpha = 0.74).

The Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS) (Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985) was used to assess the quality of life of widows in the Saboba District. The scale contains five (5) items that assess the general satisfaction of people with their life (Diener et al., 1985). It is rated on a 7-Likert scale type ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 7 (Strongly Agree). The sum of scores gives an individual's total satisfaction or dissatisfaction with life.

The highest and lowest scores are 35 and 5 respectively with the following interpretation: The 30– 35 score range: Very high score (highly

satisfied). Persons in this range are regarded as having optimum happiness in their lives because most things in life are going the way they want it. The 25-29 score range (High score): individuals who score in this range like their lives and feel that things are going well. They believe their lives are not perfect, but they feel that things are mostly good. The 20 – 24 score range (Average score): the majority of people here are generally satisfied but have some areas where they very much would like some improvement. Participants within the 15 – 19 score range are below average in life satisfaction. People who score in this range usually have small but significant problems in several areas of their lives or have many areas that are doing fine but one area that represents a substantial problem for them.

Participants who score 10 – 14 are seen to be dissatisfied. People who score in this range are substantially dissatisfied with their lives. Persons in this category experience significant defects in several areas of their lives. Nonetheless, if the dissatisfaction is a result of adverse life events, the individual will, with time, likely bounce back to his or her earlier level of well-being. Extremely dissatisfied individuals score 5 – 9. A score within this range indicates that a person is tremendously affected and unhappy with the course of his life.

Diener et al. (1985) found that the scale had a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.87. A two-month test-retest was high, with an estimated correlation coefficient of 0.82 and a coefficient alpha of 0.87. According to Pavot and Diener (1993), the SWLS can be used as an adjunct scale for questionnaires that assess psychological disorders and psychological wellbeing. This was of particular interest given the present study's aims and objectives. For this study, the SWL resulted in a good reliability coefficient (Cronbach's alpha = 0.72).

Pilot Testing of the Instrument

A pilot testing of the instrument on thirty (30) widows in the Tatale/Sanguli District of the Northern Region was conducted. Reliability of the scales was established, since yielding a Cronbach reliability coefficient of 0.7 is considered appropriate for a study of both instruments.

Data Collection Procedures

An introductory letter from the University of Cape Coast Department of Guidance and Counselling was sent to the Department of Gender of the Social Welfare, Chiefs and 'Bitindam' (Landlords) of the various communities to introduce ourselves and the purpose of our visit to their communities. This was in line with the customs of the Konkomba clan. Upon approval from the authorities, participants were visited in their respective homes, with the help of an elected member of the area. After explaining the purpose of our visit, we engaged eligible widows who voluntarily consented to partake in the study. The questionnaire was administered with the help of three (3) trained research assistants (teachers of the local Likpakpaln language). They are teachers who

can read, write, and speak the local language. The research assistants were also trained on ethical issues - issues of confidentiality and anonymity. Approximately, participants used 30 minutes to 45 minutes to complete the questionnaire. Data were collected within a space of three months. Participants were contacted at a different range of times.

Ethical consideration

This study was submitted to the University of Cape Coast Institutional Review Board (IRB) for approval before data collection, with IRB Ref: CES-ERB/ucc.edu/V4/20-44. An Ethical clearance letter for the study was issued by the Institutional Review Board of the University of Cape Coast after a careful study of the intention of the study.

Data Processing and Analysis

The research question was analysed using means and standard deviation. Hypothesis 1 was tested using simple linear regression analysis. Hypotheses 2 and 3 were tested using a Kruskal-Wallis H test.

Results

Background Data of Participants

The study was carried out in the Saboba District in the Northern Region of Ghana, with a sample size of 120 participants.

Age (Years)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
18 - 29	5	4.2
30 - 39	19	15.8
40 - 49	55	45.8
50 - 59	25	20.8
60 – 65	16	13.4
Total	120	100.0

Length	Frequency	Percent (%)
Less than 1 year	20	16.7
1 year	27	22.5
2 years	24	20.0
More than 2 years	49	40.8
Total	120	100.0
Self-employed	48	40.0
Unemployed	72	60.0
Total	120	100.0

Religion	Frequency	Percent (%)
Christian	58	48.3
Moslem	3	2.5
Traditionalist	59	49.2
Total	120	100.0

Source: Field Survey (2020)

Research Question: What is the level of psychological distress among Konkomba widows who have undergone widowhood rites in the Saboba District?

The Research question sought to discover the level of psychological distress among Konkomba widows with widowhood rites experiences in the Saboba district. Participants were requested to respond to twenty-four items measured on a 5-Likert scale. The instrument for data collection measured six psychological disorders, namely, Obsessiveness, Hostility, Sensitiveness, Depression, Anxiety, and Paranoia. The means of the subscales are as follows: obsessiveness = 6.0, Hostility = 6.0, Sensitiveness = 8.0, Depression = 3.0, Anxiety = 14.0, and Paranoia = 6.0. The findings revealed that, generally, widows who observed widowhood rites in the Konkomba tribe experienced a significantly high level of psychological distress, with the mean and standard deviation being ($M=56.26$, $SD=17.772$). The overall mean score for the level of psychological distress is greater than the mean score for the items (48). This implies that the level of psychological distress among Konkomba widows who underwent widowhood rites in the Saboba district is statistically significantly high.

Furthermore, Psychological Distress subscales, namely Sensitiveness ($M=9.04$, $SD= 3.08$, $t(119) = 28.804$), Anxiety ($M=7.09$, $SD= 3.31$, $t(119)= 15.169$), and Paranoid behaviour ($M=8.72$, $SD= 2.99$) were significantly high.

Hypothesis One

Hypothesis One sought to test whether widowhood rites as practised by the Konkomba tribe influence the life satisfaction of widows in Saboba District. The independent variable is widowhood rites. The dependent variable is satisfaction with life. To test this hypothesis, simple linear regression was deemed appropriate. However, before running the regression analysis test, assumptions were checked. The linearity assumption between the independent variable and dependent variable was checked and the results showed a moderate positive relationship ($R=.42$). Table 3 presents the result of the data analysis.

Table 3: Regression Analysis of the Influence of Widowhood Rite on Satisfaction with Life

Model	R	R ²	t-value	p-value
(Constant)			-1.520	.131
Widowhood rites	.42	.17	5.043*	.000

Source: Field Survey, (2020)

*Significant at $p<.05$

The results from Table 3 revealed a significant influence of widowhood rites on satisfaction with life ($R = .42$, $p= .000$). This implies that widowhood rites of participants explain 17% of the variation in satisfaction with life of participants.

Hypothesis Two

The purpose of research Hypothesis Two was to find out a significant difference in the psychological distress of Saboba widows based on age.

Table 4: Test of Normality Variances for Age and Psychological Distress Among Widows

	Age (Years)	Shapiro-Wilk		
		Statistic	Df	Sig.
Psychological distress	18 - 29	.921	5	.535
	30 – 39	.860	19	.010
	40 - 49	.823	55	.000
	50 – 59	.980	25	.877
	60 and above	.893	16	.062

Source: Field Survey, (2020)

From Table 4, the result for the “18 to 29,” “50 to 59” and “60 and above” groups in the dependent variable “psychological distress” was normally distributed. This is because the Sig. value of the Shapiro-Wilk Test is greater than 0.05. However, for the “30 to 39” and “40 to 49” groups, the dependent variable “psychological distress,” was not normally distributed. This is because the Sig. value of the Shapiro-Wilk Test is lesser than 0.05.

A test of Homogeneity of Variances was conducted to confirm the assumption that justifies the use of the statistical tool ANOVA.

Table 5: Test of Homogeneity of Variances for Age and Psychological Distress among Widows

Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
7.071	4	115	.000

Source: Field Survey, (2020)

From Table 5, the sig. value is less than 0.05; therefore, variances are not assumed equal. This result rules out the use of ANOVA. Hence, the Kruskal Wallis H test was used for the test.

Table 6: Kruskal-Wallis H Test of Ages in Terms of Psychological Distress among Widows

	Age	N	Mean Rank	Chi-Square	Df	p. value
Psychological distress	18 - 29	5	52.70	1.641	4	.801
	30 – 39	19	68.61			
	40 - 49	55	60.79			
	50 - 59	25	57.22			
	60 and above	16	57.44			
Total		120				

Source: Field Survey, (2020)

The Kruskal-Wallis H test showed that there was no statistically significant difference in psychological distress between the different ages ($\chi^2(4) = 1.641$, $p = .801$), with a mean rank psychological distress result of 52.70 for 18 to 29 years, 68.61 for 30 to 39 years, 60.79 for 40 to 49 years, 57.22 for 50 to 59 years, and 57.44 for 60 years and above.

Hypothesis Three

Hypothesis Three sought to explore whether a significant difference exists in the psychological distress of Saboba widows based on religion.

Table 7: Test of Normality Variances for Religious Affiliation and Psychological Distress among Widows

	Religion	Shapiro-Wilk		
		Statistic	Df	Sig.
Psychological distress	Christian	.945	58	.011
	Moslem	.750	3	.000
	Traditionalist	.788	59	.000

Source: Field Survey, (2020)

From Table 7, the result for the “Christian,” “Moslem” and “Traditionalist” groups shows that the dependent variable “psychological distress” was not normally distributed. This is because the Sig. value of the Shapiro-Wilk Test is lesser than 0.05.

Table 8: Test of Homogeneity for Duration of Widowhood and Psychological Distress among Widows

Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
8.434	2	117	.000

Source: Field Survey, (2020)

From Table 8, the sig. value is less than 0.05; therefore, variances are not assumed equal. Hence, the Kruskal Wallis H test was used for the test.

Table 9 Kruskal Wallis H-Test of Religion in Psychological Distress

	Religion	N	Mean Rank	Chi-square	df	p-value
Psychological distress	Christian	58	63.13	.825	2	.662
	Moslem	3	66.33			
	Traditionalist	59	57.62			
	Total	120				

Source: Field Survey, (2020)

The Kruskal-Wallis H test showed that there was no statistically significant difference in psychological distress between the different religious affiliations of participants, $\chi^2(2) = .825$, $p = .662$, with a mean rank psychological distress result of 63.13 for Christian, 66.33 for Moslem and 57.62 for Traditionalist. The findings imply that no significant difference exists in the

religious affiliation of widows regarding psychological distress. In other words, Christians, Traditionalists, and Moslems experienced a similar level of psychological distress.

Discussions

The research question sought to discover the level of psychological distress among Konkomba widows with widowhood rites experiences in the Saboba district. The findings revealed that, generally, widows who observed widowhood rites in the Konkomba tribe experienced a significantly high level of psychological distress. It was also found that specific psychological distresses of widows include sensitiveness, anxiety and paranoid ideations. Widows in the study reported a significantly low level of depression. Overall, the findings of the research question imply that widows from the Konkomba tribe experienced significant psychological distress in the form of being sensitive to issues and people, feeling anxious and becoming paranoid after undergoing widowhood rites.

According to the measurement of psychological distress, sensitiveness among widows was manifested in the form of being emotionally hurt, feelings that people dislike them, feeling worthless, and having a sense of guilt. Anxiety was experienced in the form of panic attacks, being nervous, and anxious. Also, paranoid ideation included mistrusting people, loneliness despite the presence of friends and family, and feeling unappreciated. Similarly, Kalmijn (2017) found that the experiences of traumatic and stressful events (divorce or bereavement) are associated with episodes of depression. In this study, widows experienced paranoid ideation, sensitiveness, and anxiety. No significant level of depression was observed. The absence of depression could be explained on the basis that participation in formal and informal social activities and social connection with family ties could reduce depressive symptoms during the bereavement period in widowed older adults.

Concerning the results of the study, it could be established that among the Konkomba tribe, widows who undergo widowhood rites experience an adverse effect on their psychological health. In other words, the practice of widowhood rites adversely affects the psychological well-being of widows.

Consistent with these findings, Ohiaegbe (2017) found that the harmful and dehumanizing nature associated with widowhood rites imposes negative effects on the psychological and emotional health of widows. It was not surprising to observe in the current study that widows who underwent widowhood rites in the Konkomba tribe experienced a significantly higher level of psychological distress.

Contrary to this study's findings, Amlor and Owusu (2016) argued that the widowhood ritual is rather a mental enhancement to help the widow take up a single parent's role rather than causing any mental health challenges. This line of argument is also supported by Pazzack and Imam (2015). In a study of widowhood rites among the Dagombas, Pazzack and Imam argued that the

practice is harmful, but traditional practices are not instituted to devalue women. Several studies (Nyongkak, 2018; Okoro & Nkama, 2018) have also explored the benefits and justification of widowhood rites. According to these studies, widowhood rites accord the deceased partner a peaceful and befitting burial, and an opportunity for widows to show their love and respect for the departed husband. Again, the rites are meant to fulfil the cultural beliefs of a community, as well as pacify the spirit of the dead and to separate them from the affairs of the living wife, child, family, and the society at large.

Hypothesis One sought to test whether widowhood rites as practised by the Konkomba tribe impact the life satisfaction of widows in Saboba District. Results indicated a statistically significant influence of widowhood rites on satisfaction with life.

Consistent with this finding Trivedi, Sareen and Dhyan (2009) posited that widowhood is a traumatic event and is highly associated with psychological distresses and reduced well-being. Equally, Qarshiyev (2020) examined the impact of widowhood rites on the psychological, physical and social well-being of widows in some selected states of South-Eastern Nigeria. Findings from the study revealed that widows were forced to engage in certain inhumane practices. Such widowhood rites negatively impact the life satisfaction of widows.

In a related study, Nnodim, Albert, and Isife (2012) explored the impact of widowhood on the well-being of rural widows in Nigeria. The study determined the livelihood of widows, income generation and the level of satisfaction with life and well-being. Findings revealed that widowhood rites affect livelihood opportunities, reduce income earning capacity and, as a result, greatly affect the well-being of widows. Among the widows, when compared with married women, perceived life satisfaction was very low. In the same vein, the World Bank (2000) reported that factors associated with widowhood rites, such as confinement and restriction from social activities, long periods of mourning, cultural rituals, disinheritance, and resource deprivation of widows, affect their income generation and their satisfaction with life.

Hypotheses two and three sought to identify the differences in ages and Religion in terms of the Psychological Distress of widows in the Saboba District. Results of hypothesis two showed no significant differences in psychological distress based on age. The results imply that regardless of the different categories of Konkomba widow's age, widowhood is associated with similar experiences of psychological distress. Contrary to these findings, Hahn et.al. (2011). This is because with time widows may receive support from family. However, the impact of age on the life satisfaction of aged widows and widowers living with family or in old age homes, has been studied (Shabnam Ansari & Ragini Mishra, 2019). The overall results indicate that no significant impact of age was found on life satisfaction of subjects of both categories, that is, widows and widowers. A highly significant impact was observed in the areas of personal status for widows and the health status of widowers. The researchers explained that with increasing age the elderly widows' role within the family and society gets

affected, which had a deep impact on their self-esteem and self-identity. They also concluded that subjective well-being may decline in old age, especially among the oldest old due to debilitating health conditions, functional impairment and personal losses.

Hypothesis three also showed no significant differences in religious affiliation concerning Psychological Distress. There may be a possible explanation for this finding. It can be said that, Africans' understanding of Religion is not only an intellectual, and cognitive experience, contrary to that of the Western culture. Religion encapsulates the whole human being. Humans stand in a holistic relationship with reality. All of life has to do with religion. Beyers (2010) attests to this by saying that religion is the foundation of all life. Religion is 'the source of life and meaning' (Opoku, 1993). Invariably, meaning is always spiritually understood by Africans (Turaki, 1999). The important questions in life revolve around the spiritual and not the physical (Turaki, 1999). It may not differ, and such explanation could be attributed to an increase in participation in religious activities after spousal loss. Such participation may provide widows with needed emotional support, new friendships, and a sense of community and belonging. Women tend to prefer socializing with friends and others and participate more in formal leisure activities than men (Janke, Nimrod & Kleiber, 2008)

Limitations

It would have been appropriate to use a qualitative or longitudinal study to investigate a study of this nature to obtain in-depth information on the experiences of widows in Saboba district. However, the quantitative research the cross-sectional survey was adopted for the study. Participants were likely to act unnaturally and give socially accepted responses rather than reality. This is likely to affect the trustworthiness of the findings of the study.

Conclusion

The study highlighted that the psychological health and well-being of Konkomba widows are significantly affected as they mourn the death of their husbands and observe widowhood rites. Based on the findings, the following interpretations were made. Widowhood rites are harmful and are associated with high levels of psychological distress. The general well-being or quality of life of widows is affected by the death of their spouse and the harsh, inhumane widowhood rituals they endure. The findings of the study provide support for the notion that mental health well-being has a strong relationship with the quality of life of widows.

Recommendations

Given the findings and the conclusions arrived at, the following recommendations are made:

- i. The government of Ghana, the Ministry of Gender and Children Affairs, Traditional councils and other stakeholders of women empowerment

should intensify education on the effects of widowhood rites. This way, changes can be made in the performance of the rituals to be devoid of inhumane practices or abolished altogether.

- ii. It is also recommended that government institutions, NGOs, counsellors, and health practitioners incorporate a more comprehensive approach where the attention is given to widows' physical needs, psychological needs and social well-being, which are all affected by widowhood practices. This will optimize the services and aid what widows receive.
- iii. The Ministry of Health and the Mental Health Authority are entreated to set up easily accessible counselling and psychological services centres in areas with high rates of this cultural practise, to attend to the psychological effects of widowhood rites on women.

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