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Research Article

THE INFLUENCE OF WIDOWHOOD TRADITIONS ON ACADEMIC SUCCESS IN NIGERIAN SECONDARY SCHOOLS: A GUIDANCE PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

The study examined the influence of harmful widowhood practices on academic achievement of secondary school students in Nigeria: implications for Guidance. The study was guided by it one specific objective, one research question and two null hypotheses. The research design for this study was a descriptive survey research design. The population of this study comprised of all secondary schools in Nigeria. A sample size of three hundred and seventy (370) respondents was sampled for the study. The instrument was a self-designed questionnaire titled "Influence of Harmful Widowhood Practices on Academic Achievement Questionnaire (IHWPAAQ). Frequency counts and percentages was used to analyse the demographic data while Mean scores and Standard Deviations was used to answer the research questions also ttest was used to test the hypotheses. The study revealed among others that harmful widowhood practices play key role on students' academic performance as well as their academic achievement as the practices often leads to depression, substance abuse, emotional abuse among others which often lead to low self-esteem, gender inequality and school dropout. The study recommended among others that the Counsellors and other stakeholders in education should make more efforts to provide adequate counselling services for victim of harmful widowhood practices in order to bring to the barest minimum the negative influence it has on students, this effort should be irrespective of gender or location.

Keywords: Harmful Widowhood Practices, Academic Achievement,Secondary School Students, Guidance and Counselling, Nigeria

Introduction

In Nigeria, like any other African Country, traditional practices like the issue of widowhood are still consciously and unconsciously upheld by significant proportion of the population. Widowhood is a tragedy that befalls a married person as a result of the timely or untimely death of the spouse, either the husband or the wife, thereby making the survival a widow or a widower a difficult one. Widowhood practices are observed by almost all the ethnic groups in Nigeria, particularly among the Yoruba, Igbo, Hausas and Igala. The culture of widowhood has been in existence from time immemorial and transmitted from generation to generation. The issue of widowhood, particularly in Nigeria, appears to have gender implication as there are certain cultural imbalances in the practices of widowhood by widows and widowers (Chukwu- Okoronkwo, 2016).

Traditions are particularly hard on widows because widowhood involves varying degrees of physical hardship, deprivation, ritual contaminations; the travail of a widow begins as soon as the death of her husband is announced. The in-laws immediately demand for the list of the man's property and bank accounts, after which she is subjected to series of rites and ritual practices to mourn the death of her husband (Chukwu-Okoronkwo & Nwankwo, 2012). However, this involves torturing and dehumanizing of the widow and making her to undergo series of rituals. Okoye as cited in Adeyemo (2014) summated that a widow is made to feel miserable, wretched and guilty over

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death of her husband. George (2013) cited in Oguche, Afu and Osagie (2024) also reported that in different parts of the country, widowhood is associated with rituals and taboos, which are degrading and inhuman. Part of the ritual include the initial seven days confinement in a particular room, though where people could have access to her, putting on black or dark cloths and in most cases, having her hairs shaved. The proper mourning could last for three months initially, while the duration of wearing dark clothes ranges from three months to one year, depending on culture, religion and family position on the matter. If she fails to mourn, it is believed that she may become mentally deranged or forfeit the right to any benefit. After this, she goes into mourning proper, which could be for a period of three or four months, during which she is to be of impeccable behaviour so that her late husband's spirit may gain quick entry into the community of his ancestral spirit (Oguche et al., 2023).

At the end of three or four months, a widow will perform the outing ceremony, which include being washed in the night after having the final wailing, making some rituals which are expected to finally put the spirit of the departed soul to final rest and performs the "outing" rites which involves changing of dresses and being led to the market. The outing rites also involve the widow going into elaborate parties which mark the outing. With this a widow will have to spend all she had left in shouldering the responsibilities of the ceremony. The widow then steps into the shoes of a provider, becoming the breadwinners of their family (Awoh, 2004). On the inheritance right, the deceased husband's property is shared among his children. But if the family is a polygamous one, the property is shared among the number of wives he had, (Olaniyi, 2010). If on the other hand, the man left a will, his property will be shared in accordance with his will. Widow in Yoruba Land does not have rights to inherit the husband's property, instead the relatives of decease decide what happen the property.

Due to these harmful practice's student tends to be depressed and often perform poorly academically. some of the widows due to the lost of the bread winners could not send their children to school thereby make the students to dropout of school. some of the uncles as a result of this harmful widowhood practices confiscated the belongs of the student's parent and left him or her with nothing and this in turn affect the students academically. Secondary education is that form of education that comes after primary school education (Adikwu, Ogwuche & Usman, 2015). Bolt (2011), explained that academic achievement is the achievement in academic settings rather than overall acquisition of knowledge in non-academic settings. It revolves around the central goal of improving the educational knowledge of the students. It is the progress made towards the goal of attaining educational skills, materials, and knowledge, and it cut across a variety of disciplines.

Adikwu, Oguche, Usman and Olabode (2023) observed that increasing number of students and out of school children hawking and selling goods around the streets, traffics and school premises in Nigeria is alarming. Some of these children look so malnourished and sick, others in the pain of beating and assault by gangsters. Due to the poor economic state and increasing poverty in the country some of these children are sent out by their parents or caregivers to enable them meet up with family needs. The interest of most parents is what the child can bring to the home; many leave schools very early to engage in prostitution while others are used as house helps and other menial jobs to bring in money to the family. All these is associated to harmful widowhood practices. At times, there are usually inconclusive results over which individual factors successfully predict academic achievement, factors such as test, environment, motivation, and emotions which require consideration when developing models

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of school achievement (Afu, Oguche, Usman & Gimba, 2023). it is against this backdrop that the study set out to investigate the influence of harmful widowhood practices on academic achievement of secondary school students in Nigeria: Implication for Guidance.

Purpose of the Study

The study aimed at investigating the influence of harmful widowhood practices on academic achievement among secondary school students in Nigeria: Implications for Guidance. The specific objectives are to:

i. investigate the influence of harmful widowhood practices academic achievement of secondary school students in Nigeria.

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised to guide the conduct of this study:

1. What is the influence of harmful widowhood practices on academic achievement of secondary in Nigeria?

Null Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated and were tested at 0.05 level of significance.

H_{O1}: There is no significant difference between the mean score of male and female students as regards to the influence of harmful widowhood practices on academic achievement of secondary school students in Nigeria.

H_{O2}: There is no significant difference between the mean score of students from rural and urban areas on the influence of harmful widowhood practices on academic achievement of secondary school students in Nigeria.

Conceptual Framework

This section explains, define, explain and discuss, the concepts used in the study

Widowhood Practices

A widow is a woman whose husband is dead and has not re-married. While a woman is an adult female human being. It then follows that a widow is an adult female human being who lost the spouse to the cold hands of death and has not re-married (Oguche et al., 2024). The widow bears the responsibilities and challenges of the immediate family which was formerly borne by herself and the husband, all alone. Widowhood entails the observance of certain rites by the woman. These rites and practices differ from culture to culture in Nigeria. (Agunwa, 2011). Even among the Igbos of the South East under discussion, there are slight observable differences. Hence the death of a male spouse heralds varying archaic, anachronistic and obnoxious practices in the name of culture. A widower is a man who lost his wife and has not yet remarried

The widowhood rituals are immoral traditional practices, which include mourning rituals and food taboos that are enforced on widows, and which inevitably expose them to economic hardship, confinement and ill treatment (Anugwom cited in Afolaya, 2011). These rituals are enforced on widows because of the patriarchal nature of the Nigerian Society, particularly the Igbos of the South East. Women are regarded as their husband's property or chattels. They are compelled by cultural practices to be and remain subservient to their husbands. The subservient nature of women during their husband's lifetime are carried into the death of their husbands and thereafter.

The widowhood rites and practices are found in many parts of Nigeria, including Gombe, Anambra, Imo, Abia, Enugu and Ebonyi States. These practices are dehumanizing, degrading, barbaric obnoxious, anachronistic and grossly immoral. The death of a woman's husband heralds grave suffering, maltreatment and violation of her

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human rights by cultural agents of the community, including her spouse's family. The woman is expected to wail and cry loudly at her husband's death, and show deep sense of grief. In some cultures, the woman is forced to cry aloud morning and night. But men are not to cry in the public or show outward grief as expected from women. The widow is the first suspect at the demise of her husband. Hence (Afolaya, 2011) posits that hardly does an Igbo man die for nothing, and usually the wife is the 1st suspect. So, where she is accused of having a hand in his death, she may have to prove her innocence by drinking the water with which the corpse was washed, eating kolanut offered by the elders or the high priest.

On further clarification, Fasonranti (2006) reported that in some Yoruba communities, a widow is expected to eat from broken plates and cook with broken pots, and on the seventh day, her hair is shaved to sever the bond between her and the dead husband. She is also expected to keep vigils and appears very sorrowful by wailing and crying profusely. If she fails to mourn, it is believed that she may become mentally deranged or forfeit the right to any benefit. After this, she goes into mourning proper, which could be for a period of three or four months (120 days) during which she is to be of impeccable behavior so that her late husband's spirit may gain quick entry into the community of his ancestral spirit. At the end of three or four months, a widow will perform the outing ceremony, which include being washed in the night after having the final wailing, making some rituals which are expected to finally put the spirit of the departed soul to final rest and performs the "outing" rites which involves changing of dresses and being led to the market. The outing rites also involve the widow going into an elaborate party which is referred to as "ijade-opo" to mark the outing. With this a widow will have to spend all she had left in shouldering the responsibilities of the ceremony. The widow then steps into the shoes of a provider, becoming the breadwinners of their family (Awoh, 2004). On the inheritance right, the deceased husband's property is shared among his children. But if the family is a polygamous one, the property is shared among the number of wives he had, Olaniyi (2010). If on the other hand, the man left a will, his property will be shared in accordance with his will.

A widow in Yoruba Land does not have rights to inherit the husband's property, instead, Bamgbose (2005) considers women as part of the estate of their husband who is to be inherited by relatives of the husband. This brings in the issue of leverage in which a widow is handed over in marriage to her deceased younger brother, particularly if the widow is still young. An older brother, by custom, is never allowed the right of levitation of the demise of a younger brother. A widow who refused to cooperate with the family on this ground may be disowned together with her children and left alone to fend for themselves. It does not matter whether the union is blessed with children or not, a widow in Yoruba land is expected to go through these rites upon the death of her husband. In other parts of the country, researches abound on the practices of widowhood. For instance, Olaniyi (2010) provides overwhelming evidences on widowhood practices in Igbo culture of the SouthEastern part of Nigeria and the violence perpetuated against widows from relatives and family members. There, widows are kept in dark rooms for days and are sometimes deprived of access to food, they are forced to weep daily, sleeping on mats or old banana leaves, eating from broken pots, forced to drink the water used in bathing their husbands' corpse, they are compelled to mourn the husband with black clothes and also expected to allow the (Umuada) married daughter of the community to shave the hair on their head and pubic with razor blades, to prove their innocence in relation

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to their husband's death. Widows in this part of the country have to undergo certain traditional rites and practices which forms part of the deceased husband's funeral ceremony in other to show respect to the dead husband. In South-South Nigeria, particularly Delta State, Ewelukwa in Oguche et al. (2024) reveals that after the initial seven days confinement, additional 30 days is made mandatory for widows in a tinning hut. This is done to ensure isolation, restriction of movement and association with people. Also, in the culture of Birom in Plateau State, when a husband dies, he is buried within one week, the widow observes the Takaba, a four-month, ten-day mourning period in seclusion talking to no one and sitting in a place. She wears a sack and has a grass frond round her head, the sack or simple tarred clothe forms all the dressing of the widow. She remains in the house mourning until the male members of the family take a decision as to who will remarry the widow (Okoye, 1995).

On the contrary, widowers across Nigeria rarely go through these ordeals at the demise of their wives. From observations, they are not subjected to indignities when their wives die, they are not compelled to mourn, nor subjected to any of the dehumanizing experiences which widows go through. During the mourning periods, widower sleeps where ever he wants, though may be confined to a particular place, but they are allowed free movement within the house, they are not restricted from visiting certain places (Awoh, 2004). After the mourning period, they simply change the colour of their dress which they used for mourning their wives, whereas, it is a taboo seeing a widow during mourning period in any social gathering, cleansing must take place before she can re-unite with members of the family. Concerning the funeral ceremony, if such a man has a daughter that is married, instead of the man providing money for the wife's funeral, the in-laws are asked to do so.

Causes of Harmful Widowhood Practices

The following are some of the influence of harmful widowhood practices:

1. Illiteracy

Illiteracy status of majority of widows is also a significant factor responsible for the unhealthy widowhood practices in Southwestern Nigeria. In the time past, formal education for girls has been secondary to that of the boys. Women have been considered intellectual inferior to men. This is seen in the belief then that it is unwise to invest in the education of the female child because "the natural place of a woman is in the kitchen" (Okoye, 1995). This severe but general discrimination and neglect of the female child's education hinders their progress and expose them to all forms of abuses and unhealthy cultural practices like the strict observance of widowhood rites. This has affected and still affecting women till date. Illiteracy status of women has really contributed to the plight of widows. The illiterate widows are particularly disadvantaged as illiteracy has rendered them socially and economically venerable. Olumukoro (2011) confirms that women's illiteracy position perpetuates poor health, inadequate diet, early entering into motherhood, frequent pregnancies and continued cycle of poverty. Okonkwo (2004) further pointed out that illiteracy of widows in this part of the country has put them at disadvantaged position. According to him, it is illiteracy that would make a widow to be stripped naked and forced to lie with her husband's corpse in a final embrace as a mark of severing all sexual relationship with the dead man and with the belief that this love-making between the widow and her dead husband will soothe the spirit of the dead man. Studies have also shown that widowhood rites and practices, meted on widows who are educated and have a means of livelihood are not the same as those who are less educated and are not economically empowered. The

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educated widows are economically empowered and are able to fight for their rights because of their financial capability Emewu (2003).

The educated widows are economically empowered and are able to fight for their rights because of their financial capability Emewu (2016). Babalola (2010) also pointed out that women who are in the best position to withstand the pressure to comply with widowhood rites are usually those who are educated and enlightened enough to challenge those trying to impose rites on them or wealthy enough to provide a sum of money in lieu of compliance. Adeyemo (2014) added that the issue of staying in-doors for a long period for mourning rites is more pronounced among illiterate widows than the educated once. While the illiterate widows are compelled to stay indoors for as long as it is required by the family of the deceased, the educated and working-class widows will have to resume work latest three to four weeks after the incident. Evidence in this regard shows that widows who are educated and gainfully employed have sufficient resources to shield and secure themselves from any inhuman and degrading widowhood.

2. Male-Dominance Influence

Male-Dominance influence is yet another factor influencing widowhood practices in this part of the country. Maleness is usually associated with superiority, an attribute men ascribe to themselves as divine right and as a fact of natural selection (Okoye, 1995). Right from the time of creation, when the first human, Adam was created, and Eve was created as a companion for him out of his ribs, women have been treated as inferior sex. They are regarded and treated women as second-class citizens, for instance, in the religious circle, the men hold firmly to the biblical details of the story of creation that woman was taken from the side of the man; therefore, the man stands out to be the real creature (Ahonsi, 1996).

The man also determines the woman's personal physical, psychological and even emotional needs. The bible recorded that "a woman desired shall be to her husband, and he shall rule over her" Gen. 3:16b. Therefore, the man is given ample opportunities to acquire leadership qualities while the traditional role ascribed to women was to be the housewives and general helpers to their husbands. Moreover, in a male dominated world, marriage is the only measure of attainment for women, this explains why a woman worships her husband and calls him "my lord, and the husband is deified". The divinity ascribed to the husband by culture influences the performance of rites and rituals such as impurity, defilement, cleansing and purification as well as period of seclusion when the man dies (Okoye, 1995). The male-dominance influences greatly the practices of widowhood. This is seen in way widowers remarried shortly after the death of their wives, while the widows mourn for months. Also, the act of bride price payment by men has made them regard women as commodities to be exchange with money or materials things. As the man paid the bride price, he owns the women in totality and she must under strict cultural demand mourn with all her heart and body (Okoye, 1995).

3. Poverty:

Poverty is the inability to live a decent life with respect to food, shelter, health care, and other social amenities. This is seen in the attitudes of most in-laws and villagers as they cling on to customs and traditions in the handling the deceased possessions. The poor relations always feel that the death of their rich relative is a golden opportunity for them in elevating themselves from abject poverty. This is seen in the show of affluence demonstrated during

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the burial ceremonies by some families. Some wicked relations usually force the widow and her children into emptying their deceased father's bank account, all in the pretence that the most befitting burial must be accorded their late brother. They see this as an avenue to lavish the late brother's money and to ensure that the widow does not remove any property from the dead man's house. It is therefore not surprising that the widow loses all her deceased husband's property to the male successor within the late husband's family. Poverty is also seen as the root cause of the insistence on lavish cooking and drinking part of widowhood rites in most places. The poor and the hungry relations see this as a golden opportunity to feed themselves at the expense of the widow. Attesting to this, Okoye (1995) confirms that the daughters of lineage with the belief of taking care of the widow within that period, brings their babies and hidden spoons in their handbags to feed as parasites on the widow within that period. These acts have pauperized widows and add to the suffering of the immediate family.

Influence of Harmful Widowhood Practices on Widows in Nigeria

The plights of widows are the same in almost every part of the world. Olanisebe (2015) 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. Thus, 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 as cited in Olanisebe (2015) 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 destabilized and sexually threatened, they were archetypal luminal figures - marginalized, caricatured, and feared. Ewelukwa (2012) 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.

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." (Hsu, Kahn and Hsu, cited in Afolaya, 2011). 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.

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More so, this becomes rather worse if the widow in question is a "young widow" with small children to cater for Ricketson cited in Oguche et al. (2024) 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. The situation is even worse if the husband left debts behind. 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. harmful widowhood practices often lead to poor academic achievement as well as deviant behaviour such as substance abuse among others.

Academic Achievement

Academic Achievement is defined as a student's ability to complete academic assignments, and it is assessed using objective criteria such as final course grades and grading point average (Naser & Hamzah, 2018). Many scholars have identified several factors that affect a student's academic achievement (Lei, 2018). In this day and age of globalization, increasing economies, and rapid development, improving educational output and retention rates is critical to the prosperity of any nation. Thus, education is seen as extremely important for an individual because it is required for obtaining good jobs, achievement, and prospects for better living (Mishra, 2019).

With the growing number of educational institutes, there is a greater need to place focus on providing students with specialised knowledge and technical skills in order to boost their productivity and prospects for better living, which leads to a country's economic progress (Stanca, Dabija, & Păcurar, 2021). Indeed, the primary goal of educational institutes is to assist students in understanding course material and obtaining a grade that allows for academic and professional advancement (Indrawati, & Kuncoro, 2021). Gender, study habits, age, discipline, the contribution of a teacher in academic achievement of students, class attendance, time management, socialization, sleep patterns, socialization, partying behaviours, socioeconomic status, educational background of parents, and other factors all have an impact on students' learning performance. In recent decades, there has been an increase in research on characteristics that contribute effectively to the quality of academic accomplishment of students (Al-qadi & Naser, 2022).

Academic achievement also known as Academic performance is the range to which a student, teacher or institution has attained their short or long-term educational goals. Completion of educational benchmarks such as secondary, school diplomas or bachelor degree indicates academic achievement. And it is often measured through examinations or continuous assessments but there is no general agreement on how it is best evaluated or which aspects are most important (Mcbrown, 2023).

Theoretical Framework

The study is based on the following theory as its theoretical framework: Queer Ladder Theory (1940) by Bell Daniel:

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1. Queer Ladder Theory (QLT)

The Queer Ladder Theory (QLT) was propounded by Bell Daniel in 1940. The theorist coined the idea of "queer ladder" in an attempt to explain the instrumental essence of organized crime as a desperate means of socio-economic empowerment and social climbing. The basic assumptions of QLT are; organized crime is an instrumental behaviour; it is a means to an end; it is an instrument of social climbing and/or socio-economic advancement; and it is a measure to accumulate wealth and build power. Often ascribed to Queer Ladder Theory is of the notion that organized crime thrives in contexts where the government's capacity to dictate, sanction and deter crime is poor; where public corruption is endemic; and where prospects for legitimate livelihood opportunities are slim. Under these circumstances, the incentive to indulge in crime is high, while deterrence from criminal living is low. In other words, the benefits of committing a crime surpass the costs and/or risks involved. This creates pretext for criminal impunity and franchise.

The QLT enables one to come to terms with the prevalence of organized crime in Nigeria. In this regard, it is observed that the phenomenon of harmful widowhood practices in Nigeria has been driven by criminal quest for economic accumulation in an environment. This has been worsened by the prevailing socio-economic discontent and attendant livelihood crisis in the country, in addition to the seeming indolence of justice system to prosecute offenders in arresting the ugly situation. The concept of "Ladder" in QLT signifies untoward pattern of social mobility. Hence, those who take to organized crime, such as harmful widowhood practices among others, do so as a desperate means of economic accumulation and socioeconomic empowerment. This theory forms the foundation of this study as it explained the reason for harmful widowhood practices and how it can be eradicated.

Research Design

The design adopted for this study is descriptive survey research design. This is a research method that describes a given state of affairs at a particular time (Afu, Oguche, Usman and Gimba, 2023). This research design permits the gathering of information through the use of questionnaire from a population based on appropriate sampling techniques. Also, descriptive survey research was considered suitable since it would solicit for information or responses from the respondents on the problem under investigation. It was on this basis that the researcher decided to use descriptive survey design.

Population of the Study

The population of this study comprises of all secondary school students in Nigeria.

Sample Size and Sampling Procedure

The sample size for this study is three hundred and seventy (370) students, that is ten from each state and the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja.

Instrumentation

The instrument used in data collection for this study was a self-structured Instrument Influence of Harmful Widowhood Practice on Academic Achievement Questionnaire (IHWPAAQ) constructed by the researchers. The instrument consisted of two sections: A and B. Section A comprised personal data of the respondents while section B consisted of ten items on the influence of harmful widowhood practices on academic achievement of secondary school students in Nigeria: implications for guidance. The instrument was designed along the four-point scale

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format of Strongly Agree (SA - 4), Agree (A - 3), Disagree (D - 2), Strongly Disagree (SD - 1) where the respondents indicated their options on the items of the instrument. **Method of Data Analysis**

The collected data was analysed using simple percentages, frequency count, mean score and standard deviations for demographic data and the research questions. The research questions were graded on a score of 2.50. Any item with a mean score of 2.50 and above was considered as "Agree" while those scores below the mean score of 2.50 were considered

"Disagree". The hypotheses of this study were tested using t-test at 0.05 level of significance.

Data Presentation

The data presented and analyzed were demographic data, answering of research questions and testing of hypotheses. The data presented was based on a sample size of 370.

Analysis of Demographic Data

Table 1: Distribution of Respondents by Gender

Gender	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Male Female	183 187	49.46 50.54
Total	**370**	**100.00**

Source: (Field Survey, 2024)

Table 1 shows that out of the total number of 370 respondents, 183 representing (49.46%) were male. The remaining 187 representing (50.54%) were female. This implies that the number of female respondents is more than that of the male respondents.

Table 2: Distribution of Respondents by their Location

Location	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Urban Rural	175 195	47.30 52.70
Total	**370**	**100.00**

Source: (Field Survey, 2024)

Table 2 indicate that out of the total number of 370 respondents, 175 representing (47.30%) were from the urban area. The remaining 195 representing (52.70%) were from the rural area. This implies that the number of respondents from rural area exceeded that of the respondents from urban area.

Answers to Research Questions

This section contains data of the research questions raised to guide this study

Research Question One: What is the influence of harmful widowhood practices academic achievement of secondary school students in Nigeria?

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Table 5: Frequency scores of respondents' opinions on the influence of harmful widowhood practices academic achievement of students in Nigeria:
N=370

S/no	Statement	Mean	Std. Dev.	Decision
3.	I often absent myself from school to hawk due to the way my uncles confiscated our properties after our father demise	2.97	.22	Agreed
4.	Harmful widowhood practices lead to depression among students there by affecting their academic achievement.	2.51	.54	Agreed
5.	Harmful widowhood practices lead to substance abuse among students.	2.55	.43	Agreed
6.	Harmful widowhood practices lead to socio-economic and psychological trauma thereby causing students to drop out of school.	2.64	.76	Agreed
7.	Harmful widowhood practices lead to emotional instability.	2.78	.56	Agreed
8.	Harmful widowhood practices lead to stigmatization among peers and family members.	2.82	.39	Agreed
9.	Harmful widowhood practices lead to children dropping out of school due to financial constraints.	2.59	.61	Agreed
10.	Harmful widowhood practices lead to gender inequality.	2.52	.48	Agreed
	Sectional Mean	**2.67**	**.50**	**Agreed**

Table 5 presented the influence of harmful widowhood practices on academic achievement of secondary school students in Nigeria and yielded a sectional mean score of 2.67. From the analysis it was discovered that all the items mentioned in table 5 were given favourable responses as none of the mean score were below 2.50. It was therefore concluded that, all the items mentioned in table 5 were some of the influences of influence of harmful widowhood practices on academic achievement of secondary school students in Nigeria and this is in line with the decision rule that item with the mean score 2.50 and above be agreed and below be disagreed.

Hypotheses Testing

The following Null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance:

H_{O1}: There is no significant difference between the mean score of male and female students on the influence of harmful widowhood practices on academic achievement of secondary school students in Nigeria.

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Table 4: t-test results of the significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female students on the influence of harmful widowhood practices on academic achievement of secondary school students in Nigeria.

Variables	N	X	SD	df	t-value	Sig.(P)	Decision
Male	183	2.69	.54				
				368	.321	.004	Significant
Female	187	2.65	.46				

***=significant at 0.05 level (p<0.05)**

The analysis on Table 4 was carried out to determine whether there is any significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female students on the influence of harmful widowhood practices on academic achievement of secondary school students in Nigeria. A significant value of .004 (less than the 0.05 level of significance) was recorded. This shows that there was a significant difference. The null hypothesis was therefore rejected in favour of the alternative hypothesis. This implies that there is a significance difference in the mean ratings of male and female students on the influence of harmful widowhood practices on academic achievement of secondary school students in Nigeria.

H_{O1}: There is no significant difference between the mean score of students from urban and rural areas on the influence of harmful widowhood practices on academic achievement of secondary school students in Nigeria.

Table 5: t-test results of the significant difference in the mean ratings of urban and rural students on the influence of harmful widowhood practices on academic achievement of secondary school students in Nigeria.

Variables	N	X	SD	df	t-value	Sig.(P)	Decision
Urban	175	2.66	.52				
				368	.454	.003	Significant
Rural	195	2.64	.49				

***=significant at 0.05 level (p<0.05)**

The analysis on Table 5 was carried out to determine whether there is any significant difference in the mean ratings of urban and rural students on the influence of harmful widowhood practices on academic achievement of secondary school students in Nigeria. A significant value of .002 (less than the 0.05 level of significance) was recorded. This shows that there was a significant difference. The null hypothesis was therefore rejected in favour of the alternative hypothesis. This implies that there is a significance difference in the mean ratings of students from urban and rural areas on the influence of harmful widowhood practices on academic achievement of secondary school students in Nigeria.

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Major Findings

The study revealed that:

1. Harmful widowhood practices play key role on students' academic performance as well as their academic achievement as the practices often leads to depression, substance abuse, emotional abuse among others which often lead to low self-esteem, gender inequality and school dropout.
2. The study also revealed that there is a significance difference in the mean ratings of male and female students on the influence of harmful widowhood practices on academic achievement of secondary school students in Nigeria, as women are often subjected to these barbaric practices while their male counterpart rarely go through this harmful widowhood practices.
3. The study further revealed that there is a significance difference in the mean ratings of students from urban and rural areas on the influence of harmful widowhood practices on academic achievement of secondary school students in Nigeria, as students from rural areas are more affected than their urban counterpart due to their lack of basic amenities and ignorance.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, the researchers concluded that harmful widowhood practices play key role on students' academic performance as well as their academic achievement as the practices often leads to depression, substance abuse, emotional abuse among others which often lead to low self-esteem, gender inequality and school dropout. The study also concluded that there is a significance difference in the mean ratings of male and female students on the influence of harmful widowhood practices on academic achievement of secondary school students in Nigeria, as women are often subjected to these barbaric practices while their male counterpart rarely go through this harmful widowhood practices. The study further concluded that there is a significance difference in the mean ratings of students from urban and rural areas on the influence of harmful widowhood practices on academic achievement of secondary school students in Nigeria, as students from rural areas are more affected than their urban counterpart due to their lack of basic amenities and ignorance.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were made based on results of findings:

1. The Government should make provision of counselling unit centre for widows that are victims of harmful widowhood practices in order to reduce the physical and psychological trauma and the negative influence it has on academic achievement.
2. The Counsellors and other stakeholders in education should make more efforts to provide adequate counselling services for victim of harmful widowhood practices in order to bring to the barest minimum the negative influence it has on students, this effort should be irrespective of gender or location.
3. More efforts should be made to create information and sensitization on the various factors responsible for harmful widowhood practices so as to eradicate or bring to the barest minimum the menace of cultural harmful widowhood practices especially in the rural areas.

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