

**A Discourse Analysis of Widow Psychosocial Experiences and their  
Self-Identity: A Study in Social Transformation**

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**14096s**

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## DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, declare that this thesis is a product of my own work and is not the result of anything done in collaboration. It has not been previously presented to any other institution. All sources have been appropriately cited and duly acknowledged in full.

I agree that this thesis may be available for reference and photocopying at the discretion of the University.

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## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this work to all widows who through their constant effort strive to ensure that life goes on for themselves and for their children.

May you remain faithful to your call of transforming the world despite the hardships that you go through.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

This task has been long and tiring, though very interesting and educative. I would not have managed to come this far without the support and gratuitous providence from the Almighty God. I desire to acknowledge all the members of my nuclear and extended family. Being constantly on you seeking assistance, you have allowed me to put aside time for this task. Special gratitude also to my supervisors Rev. Prof. Selvam and Prof. Ongiti for their continued guidance. Their expertise and their continued patience with me has been immeasurable. To all the benefactors that made it possible that I raise the fees required for this programme, may the good Lord continue to shower you with his immense blessings. To the director, administration and all coordinators and staff of ISMM, who supported me at all times, my gratitude to you is not sufficient. To all my colleague doctoral students, to the staff of Afro-heritage Consultancies and to all those I work with on a day to day basis, thanks for being there for me in different ways. Finally, to all the widows that participated in this study, and to all other widows and the marginalised, who continue to give me the impetus to keep working on Social Transformation, may the Light of Christ, be with and in you always.

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## **ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS**

CDA:	Critical Discourse Analysis
CDF:	Constituency Development Fund
CEDAW:	Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women
DA:	Discourse Analysis
DP:	Discursive Psychology
DRC:	Democratic Republic of Congo
ECDE:	Early Childhood Development Education
FDA:	Foucauldian Discourse Analysis
FPE:	Free Primary Education
HIV/AIDS:	Human Immune-deficiency Virus/ Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
IHRLG:	The International Human Rights Law Group
KCID:	Kajiado County Integrated Development plan
KNBS	Kenya National Bureau of Statistics
MWIC:	Model of Widow Identity Construction
NACOSTI:	The National Commission for Sciences, Technology and Innovation
NHIF:	National Health Insurance Fund
PTSD:	Post Traumatic Stress Disorder
TUCREC:	Tangaza University College Research Ethics Committee
UN:	United Nations
US:	United States of America
WD	Widow participant

## ABSTRACT

Widow self-identity is an under-explored topic in Discourse Analysis. Consulted literature shows a concentration on identity and on widowhood, but hardly has any study attempted to relate the two factors adequately within a well-coordinated theoretical framework. The present study addresses this gap through four objectives: to explore the psychosocial experiences of widows in an urban setting; to find out how the experiences influence widow self-identity; to identify how the widow deals with these experiences in her attempt to find her position in society; and to evolve a model for widow identity construction guided by Discourse Analysis, for self and social transformation of widows. This study, in social transformation, working within a socio-constructionist epistemology, and permitting the contributions of the interpretivist approach, proposes a Discourse Analysis of widow psychosocial experiences and widow self-identity. Discourse Analysis, espousing that people construct their social world through language, society, culture and identities is deemed suitable in facilitating a rigorous exploration of widow self-identity. The study, a qualitative research, was conducted in Ngong sub-county, Kajiado, Kenya. With no sampling frame, the study relied on non-probability sampling, specifically the snowball procedure. The study focuses on widow participants below the age of 65 years, to allow a focus on psychosocial experiences related to identity, prior to old age. The study, based on satiation (saturation) principle, reached out to a sample of 42 widows, to whom 20-120 minute interviews were administered. Widow experiences were taped and later transcribed to come up with discourse that was analysed. The data collected was subjected to Discourse Analysis and to Boyatzis, Crabtree and Miller, thematic coding process. The findings from the study show that the widow psychosocial experiences as sought in objective one are socio-cultural, spiritual, economic, death and loss, health, education, human rights, illiteracy, psychological and sexed bodies, in that order of intensity. In relation to objective two, existential as well as role-based widow self-identities are explored. The psychosocial experiences and widow self-identities mutually influence each other. In response to objective three, widows cope with their challenges through being positive, being alone, seeking professional assistance including counselling, re-organising the self, spending time at work or in studies, pouring out and deciding to move on. Participants suggest that for the lives of widows to improve, widows need to allow time to heal. In addition, widows should also be focussed, hardworking, patient, principled, responsible, upright and watchful. Also, they should have self-acceptance, self-esteem, self-belief as well as positive relationships with children and in-laws. Widows should avoid being misused and being reliant on others. Finally, they are encouraged to rely on God. In the end, the study suggests that the Government should consider widow economic needs especially fees for the education of their children. To organisations widows appeal for assistance in lobbying. The study suggests that the society needs to be more aware of widow issues, accept them and be open to positively journey with them. In the end, a model for widow identity construction is evolved in response to objective four before giving the theological reflection. The study, therefore, addresses the literature gap where widow psychosocial experiences had not been addressed based on a well-coordinated theoretical framework.



## OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS OF KEY TERMS

**Discourse.** It refers to the systems of thoughts, composed of ideas, attitudes and courses of action, beliefs and practices that systematically construct the subjects and the worlds of which we speak. It is a continuous process of making sense of ourselves and of phenomena and circulating it socially.

**Discourse analysis.** This method of analysis entails a close study of language in use; a rigorous examination of texts not as singular, unified and guaranteed productions, but as emerging out of historical and socio-cultural specific context which has certain inherent intentions.

**Identity.** Identity is the emergence of two questions: Who am I and what is my place in the world? It is the persistent sameness with oneself and as the conception of the individual self in relation to the world

**Identity loss.** This is the inability to be in consistent sameness with oneself and an inability of the individual to positively relate with the others in society.

**Psycho-pathological state.** A situation where an individual is not able to function normally following some psychological disturbance.

**Psychosocial experiences.** The psychological (internal, emotional and thought processes) as well as sociological (relationships, family, community, networks, social values and cultural practices) dimensions of an individual.

**Self-identity.** This refers to how the individual views themselves and communicates this information to others. It refers to how the widow perceives herself and expresses this perception through language.

**Social Transformation.** It refers to a fundamental change in society as

opposed to a gradual or incremental changes that happen naturally over a period of time (Social Change)

**Widowhood.** This is the state of any woman who has survived or outlived the spouse; a woman that has lost her husband or partner through death, a state that is preceded (before the death of the man) by cohabitation, customary marriage and a marriage of ordinance; the western type of monogamous marriage in a magistrate court or in a church.

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY**

#### **1.1. Introduction**

The chapter seeks to put the psychosocial experiences of widows into context, before relating them to their self-identity. To achieve this, the chapter gives an overview of widowhood from the macro to the micro level. Following this, it presents the problem statement. Then it gives an insertion, to show what within the researcher, prompted him to undertake this study. This is followed by the problematization of widowhood within the concept of self-identity after which the objectives and the research questions are presented. Later it gives the significance of the study, the scope and delimitations, as well as the limitations.

#### **1.2. Insertion: Phenomenological Observation**

Twenty years ago, the researcher was engaged with a group of over 120 women on a day to day basis. These women worked in a horticultural production farm where they mainly did manual jobs. With their earnings of 50 Kshs (.50\$) a day, these women, many of them single mothers, were able to take care of their families, amidst heavy challenges. In each of these families, there were between two to six dependent children aged between a few months to 16 years. Working with these women and sharing with them on issues affecting them, led the researcher towards seeing an area that needed address.

Since 2012, the researcher has had further engagement with groups of marginalised women, among them widows in Ngong Sub county of Kajiado County Kenya. Female religious congregations that the researcher has worked with in the same county, have made attempts to reach out to these women and to help them in different ways. One of these attempts has been to

provide for the education of these women's children. In this effort, a challenge emerges in that while the schooling process empowers the child, the mother is not necessarily empowered. Efforts to empower the mothers at times fail to yield sustainable results, as the beneficiaries move towards dependency. This difficulty has largely contributed towards the researcher's interest in women empowerment programmes.

In his desire to make a contribution towards these programmes, the researcher focuses on widows. This is because there are many households run by widows. These households have children whose future and stability depends on the stability of their parents, the widows. A study aimed at empowering these widows would then be a contribution to social transformation.

### **1.3. Background to the Study**

In the US, as women age, they are increasingly likely to face widowhood, "about 800,000 adults in the US become widows each year" (US Department of Health and Human Services, 1999). Also according to Lichtenstein and colleagues (1996) and Cherlin (2010), nearly half of all women over 65 years in the world, are widows; this is almost triple the rate of widowers. These figures point to the severity of the widow problem in the world. In addition, widowhood is an "integral loss" (Matlin, 2004; Vijay, 2010). Widows suffer a "psycho-pathological state" representing the epitome of women's marginalization (Matlin, 2004).

In Africa, the situation of widows calls for continued attention. They are "the discriminated members of society" (Soussou, 2002, p.207). Despite this, they are a significant part of the same society; "15% of all Dakar's households ...are headed by widows" (ANSD, 2013, p.31). These two realities juxtaposed present a worrying African situation; such a large percentage, holding such an important position as head of household, yet being at the apex of discrimination. Additional contribution from South Africa by Rosenblatt and Nkosi (2007),

explores widow poverty. Poverty is a significant pointer bringing to play ill-health, poor household economies, lack of basic needs, as well as violated human rights. These factors contribute to the psychosocial experiences that widows go through as are later discussed in the literature review. In Kenya, several studies on widows exist. Notable is the contribution by Mutong'i (2007) who presents widow ordeals. The ensuing discussions lead to the realization that widows and their families serve the "ideal barometer" of the impact that widowhood has on society. The writer's concern was the tribulations that widows and their daughters go through in the heart of a *Maragoli* patriarchal society.

Gunga (2009), Jemphrey (2011), and Ojore (2013) also explore widowhood, with a focus on re-marriage and levirate relationships. Though they do not dwell heavily on widow challenges, their contribution points towards the need to study widow self-identity. It is supposed that if widows had stable identity, the issue of re-marriage, levirate relationships and/or wife inheritance also called widow remarriage, would have had a different twist. Based on the above premise, a study on widows based on a well set theoretical framework, was deemed essential.

This present study located in Ngong Sub county Kajiado County Kenya, addresses psychosocial challenges affecting widows, and the relation these challenges have on widow self-identity, its construction, destruction and reconstruction. This is based on literature linking women's identity and wellness to marriage (Burton, 2003; Stack & Eshleman, 1998). Further on, DeGarmo and Kitson (1996) state that widowhood is more distressing and disruptive on identity, than divorce. According to these scholars, widowhood is the one largest disrupter of identity. These scholars, however, did not carry out their study within the borders of a well-defined theoretical framework, and did not attempt to have a model for widow identity construction, an objective that the present study addressed.

Further in literature, identity is discussed within three components. The first is the cultural component that includes ethnicity (Calhoun, Gerteis, Moody, Plaff, & Virk, 2009). The second is the social component (McLeod, 2008) and the third is the multiple roles played by an individual (Stryker & Burke, 2000). Identity in this study is therefore a construct, influenced by one's upbringing; it elicits persistent sameness with oneself, and influences the way one behaves and relates to others. Identity therefore dictates the name the society gives to the individual. These studies on identity were conducted in Oxford, Cambridge and New York cities. Not much was found on Africa, let alone in Ngong Sub county Kenya, the area of the present study. In addition, prior to this study, there was no apparent attempt to link widow psychosocial experiences to the discussions on self-identity.

In Africa, studies found on identity were from Kopytoff (2005), who addressed existential and role-based identities within an African family set-up. However, for Kopytoff (2005), women married to the family, and specifically widows are not discussed. Oyewumi (2005) further discussed role-based identities. She looked at the role of the husband as provider, and the multiple roles of the wife as a grower, maker of food and provider of sex. A gap existed in that the widow's psychosocial experiences were not discussed alongside her self-identity in the study by Kopytoff.

Information on the two variables, widow psychosocial experiences and widow self-identity was arrived at mainly through a Systematic Literature Review carried out by the researcher, in 2015. In the review, the association between widowhood and identity was sought, and 32 relevant articles found. The search included the sites listed in Table 1.1. The 32 articles were arrived at based on the following inclusion criteria, articles written in English, be academic researches at tertiary level and be empirical.

**Table 1.1. Consulted databases for literature search**

<b>Database</b>	<b>No. of articles found</b>
1. Academic Search Premier	20
2. Academic Search Premier, and Taylor & Francis	2
3. Ebsco Open Access	4
4. Google Scholar	4
5. Oxford University Journals	1
6. JSTOR	1
<b>Total number of articles</b>	<b>32</b>

Table 1.2 shows 12 of the 32 articles that largely informed the present study, and gives their contribution.

**Table 1.2. Contributions from specific articles**

<b>Study</b>	<b>Contribution</b>
Rosenblatt and Nkosi (2007)	Poverty and social change among South African widows
Peterman (2012)	Widowhood and asset inheritance in Sub Saharan Africa. Also concentrates on widow inheritance and levirate relationships
Sossou (2002)	Woman suffering from human rights violations
Walsh (2005) and Majola (2014)	HIV/AIDS pandemic, relating woman tribulations to widow inheritance and sexual cleansing
Schaal, Dusingizemungu, Nadja and Elbert (2011)	Post-Traumatic Stress Disorders (PTSD) emanating from orphaned widowed genocide survivors
Valdimarsdottir, Helgason, Furst, Adolfsson, and Steineck (2005)	Bereavement support to widows after the loss of the husband from Cancer
Kopytoff (2005)	Self and existential as well as role-based identities; gives the categories of identities
Tribe and De Silva (1999)	Psychological intervention, among displaced widows in Sri Lanka
Pandurang (2011)	Based on a case study, the author gives a gendered narrative of widowhood
CEDAW (2007)	Elimination of discrimination against women
Kounte (2005)	Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's rights on the rights of women in Africa; articles 23 and 24 focus on widows

In the background, therefore, widowhood is discussed at the macro and micro level. Following that, the study discusses identity showing its categories. In the end, the background points to the missing link between widowhood and identity, arrived at through the Systematic Literature Review. In this way, it points to the gap that is further discussed in the statement of the problem.

#### **1.4. Problem Statement**

From literature, widowhood was explored in varied disciplines within social sciences (Ambasa-Shisanya, 2007; Moon, Kondo, Glymour, & Subramanian, 2016). From these explorations, unique challenging experiences that widows go through emanated leading to suggestions on how best to deal with them. These experiences were mainly negative, underpinning ways in which the society is unfair to widows. Ways in which widows manage and deal with their issues, did not feature strongly, hence the need for this study.

It was also noted that identity had been explored leading to groupings of identity (Berzonsky, Branje, & Meeus, 2007; Sharma & Sharma, 2010), and discussions on identity loss and construction (Misra, 2007; Kopytoff, 2005; Thoits, 1999). Systematic ways in which widows construct their identity were lacking. Discussions on levels of identity were not found. This study was therefore found essential in order to come up with a comprehensive understanding of widow self-identity, its construction, destruction and reconstruction.

In addition to the above, attempts to explore widow identity in the East African context failed to yield results. The closest literature got, was to Silberschmidt (2015). Her studies were on the *Kisii* community of Kenya, discussing how the *Kisii* women forgot about their men. The roles that were earlier done by men were taken up by women, following rural-urban migration. In her work, however, there is no attempt to discuss identity, though role-based identity is



inferred. Also, there is no mention on roles played by widows in this community. From this, further studies on widows in Ngong Sub county, Kajiado County, Kenya, was found necessary.

From the systematic literature review, of the 11 articles given in Table 1.2, only one study linked widowhood to identity in Africa (Pandurang, 2011). The author based the study on a single lady's narrative and not based on a theoretical framework. Therefore, this realization identified a gap that set a foundation for the need to carry out a study within a well-grounded theoretical framework, in the field of social transformation.

Finally, the widow is seen as a significant agent of social transformation (ANSD, 2013). She heads the household and forms her children for society. For her to effectively realise this, she is meant to have a clear self-identity. It is only then that she can bring about positive sustainable change to herself, to her children, and to society. Based on this, a study on the psychosocial experiences she goes through, and on her self-identity is essential. In addition, as a way to empower the widow, the study finds the need to evolve a model for widow identity construction.

### **1.5. Research Objectives**

The objectives of the present study were:

1. To explore the psychosocial experiences (socio-cultural, health, economic, and psychological) of widows in Ngong sub county, Kajiado County, Kenya;
2. To find out how these experiences influence the widow's self-identity;
3. To identify how the widow deals with these experiences in her attempt to find her position in the society;
4. To evolve a model for widow identity construction (MWIC), guided by Discourse Analysis, for self and social transformation of widows.

## **1.6. Research Questions**

The questions that guided the study were:

1. What psychosocial experiences (socio-cultural, health, economic, and psychological) do widows in Ngong sub county, Kajiado County, Kenya go through?
2. How do these experiences influence the widow's self-identity?
3. How does the widow deal with these experiences in her attempt to find her position in society?
4. What model best represents the widow identity construction guided by Discourse Analysis, for self and social transformation of widows?

## **1.7. Significance of the Study**

This study explores widow self-identity within the Discourse Analysis theoretical framework. It does so by addressing widow psychosocial experiences, and how they relate to widow self-identity. The language used by the widows in overt and covert ways is addressed within Discourse Analysis. Through this, its findings add to knowledge; Discourse Analysis used to analyse widow psychosocial experiences and their self-identity.

In addition, having gone through the experiences and explored their relation to widow self-identity, the study develops a model for widow identity construction. This will inform institutions and those who interact with widows. It will equip them with a model to use in the reconstruction of widow self-identity.

In the area of development under social transformation, the important role played by household economies and by women, is constantly revisited. In Africa, widows are 7%-14% of all women below the age of 65 (Peterman, 2012). While considering those above the age of 65

years, the numbers of widows among married women, goes to about 50% (Cherlin, 2010). Widows therefore in number and responsibility have an important role to play in social transformation. The present study informs policy on matters of gender and development, as well as on the areas of health, psychology and sociology. Finally, the study's focus is on widows. Through the study, the widows share their experiences and also hear from the experiences of other widows. In the sharing, they bring out different strategies to cope with their situations and ways to deal with their issues.

### **1.8. Scope and Delimitations of the Study**

This section focuses on what the study did not address. This includes the boundaries outside which the study does not concentrate. On the part of the content, the study does not focus on widows in the rural and urban areas outside Ngong Sub county. Despite the snowball engagement, the contacted widow participants were living in Ngong Sub county, Kajiado County Kenya at the time of the interviews. Also, much of the found literature on widows is in the area of gerontology, focussing on ageing widows; this study however, does not focus on the ageing widows. It is with this that this study reached out to widows below the age of 65 years.

Additional literature relates to cultural widow rites in Africa (Rosenblatt and Nkosi, 2007), and on widow inheritance (Majola, 2014). The present study, however, focuses on the psychosocial experiences that widows in Ngong Sub county Kajiado County Kenya, go through. This means that other issues relating to widows were only looked at in their effect to widow psychosocial experiences. The task was therefore to use Discourse Analysis to explore the psychosocial experiences of widows and their self-identity construction, destruction and reconstruction.

Finally, the study concentrated on widows from Ngong sub county of Kajiado County,

Kenya. Due to its location near Nairobi, the capital city of Kenya, it accommodates widows living in the Sub county but originate from other Counties or are even from countries outside Kenya. Through snowball sampling technique, the study was able to reach out to widows having different category levels living in the Sub county.

### **1.9. Limitations of the Study**

A notable study limitation was founded in the epistemology; social constructionism. This epistemology realized that the researcher could not be detached from the participants. Through social constructionism, the Discourse Analyst acted on the world such that the world also acted on him and on the research assistants (Taylor, 2001). This meant that the researcher and the assistants impacted on the participants (the widows) and vice versa, a factor that, if not well checked, could have interfered with the validity and reliability of the findings. To avoid invalidity and unreliability of the data collected, the study closely followed the procedures set by Discourse Analysis in data collection and analysis. The processes and procedures that this study followed are elaborated in section 3.9 (Procedures of Data Collection), and also under the researcher's reflexivity in 5.4.3.

Since the researcher was a man relating with women, there was time taken to build rapport. The researcher also employed social skills such as the seating-squarely arrangement, the open posture, the leaning forward, the eye contact and relaxation (SOLER), to achieve a conducive and interactive natural relationship, throughout the encounter (Ministry of Health, 2013).

During the data collection, the hurdle of the researcher (a man) reaching out effectively to the widow participants, was realised. With this, the study engaged five women research assistants, two of whom were widows. This helped mitigate the challenge.

## **1.10. Summary of Chapter One**

The chapter has given the background to the problem. In so doing it has provided the background to the study variables, psychosocial experiences of widows and widow self-identity. After this, the problem statement pointing to the gap that the study was addressed followed the insertion. Later, research objectives and subsequent research questions showing what is achieved by the study, are given. Following this the significance of the study was presented. This helped show the anticipated contribution of the study. Later, the scope and delimitations of the study were discussed, pointing to the areas that the study concentrated on while showing those that were not addressed. This paved way for a discussion on the limitations of the study.

With that in mind, the study delves into the second chapter whose concentration is on the literature related to the study variables, and to the theoretical framework that guided the study. At the end, the chapter presents a conceptual framework that diagrammatically shows the process that was followed in the study.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1. Introduction**

This chapter explores literature related to the study topic "A Discourse Analysis of widow psychosocial experiences and their self-identity: a study in social transformation". It provides four sections. The first is the theoretical literature review. This section gives a comprehensive understanding of identity, laying the foundation for the understanding of widow self-identity. It then links widow psychosocial experiences to widow self-identity. The second section is the empirical literature review. This section has four subsections addressing the four study objectives. The third section focuses on the theoretical framework, while the fourth is on the conceptual framework.

#### **2.2. Theoretical Literature Review**

This section includes literature on identity. It also gives the categories of identity as well as factors influencing it. This sheds light on the understanding of this variable, setting the ground for the exploration of the study objectives.

##### **2.2.1. Understanding identity**

To understand identity, this chapter starts by looking at the definitions of identity. Identity, the persistent sameness with oneself, and the conception of the individual self in relation to others, is significant in understanding the person (Bailey, 2006; Kopytoff, 2005). From a structural symbolic interactionist perspective (Stryker, 2008; Thoits, 1991), the self is partially composed of the social positions that an individual holds and enacts. The self is hence conceptualized as a set of social identities, where identities refer to positional designations

assigned by others and accepted by the individual him-or herself (e.g. spouse, parent, employee, student, church member).

Attached to positions are sets of normative behavioural expectations, or roles (Rimal, Real, & Morrison, 2004). Roles are "scripts" for the enactment of particular positions. Thus, role-identities not only help define who one is/was, but suggest how one ought to behave. Roles and role requirements give purpose, meaning, and guidance to one's life. From this perspective, one's sense of self as a meaningful, purposeful entity is derived in part from the social roles one accepted and enacted (Thoits & Virshup, 1997). This position was also held by Burke (1991) as he said that identity is taken to be the internal dynamics of the self-process, and how these affect social behaviour.

From these understandings, identity in this study is seen as a construct that is influenced by one's upbringing and includes roles. It elicits persistent sameness with oneself, and influences the way one relates to the others and behaves. It is that which allows the society to name the person with persistence and permit him/her to take up varied roles. In these literature on identity, however, there was no link between identity and widows. This is the gap that the present study addresses. With this understanding, the study looks into the categories of identity.

### **2.2.2. Categories of identity**

Different adjectives are used to categorise identity. Kopytoff (2005) has brought-in the concept of existential identity (identities based on who the person is, for instance feminine or masculine), and "role- based identity" (those that are based on what a person does). Role-based identities are more negotiable than the existential ones; some of these last categories are culturally defined and the individual has little choice. These identities therefore remain intrinsic and immanent (Silberschmidt, 2015).

Other categories of identity in literature included "social identity" (Oyewumi, 2005, p.129), "feminist identity" (Matlin, 2004, p.123), and "alternative gender identities" (Oyewumi, 2005, p.140). While social identity falls under the role-based identity, the feminist identity falls within the existential identity docket. The third category, the alternative gender-based identities include nuns (and priests), spinster (bachelor), and widow (widower). Some viewed these alternative gender identities as incomplete, because they are relative to a status or a situation; representing an unachieved journey towards the mature identity of a married person (Oyewumi, 2005). This incompleteness was of interest to this study whose concern was on widows who may be viewed as having an incomplete, disrupted or even lost identity. In dealing with widow self-identity, the study sought to fill the gap that existed in literature; little link between widow psychosocial experiences and widow self-identity.

Additional literature on identity brings forth "marital identities". These are created through the desire and actualization of getting married to gain utility of being in the category of the married (Watson & McLanahan, 2009). In the present study, widows enter into marriage and so acquire marital identity. Later, this is disrupted by the loss of the husband leading to widowhood. Marital identities are therefore important for this study as they help the study understand widow self-identity.

Finally, in the categories of identity, Burke (1991) discusses "lingering identity". This is referred to as disrupted identity as may be experienced when an adult or child loses a parent (Umberson & Chen, 1994). This also sheds light on the study since widows, like the adult or child that has lost a parent, had lost a significant other. How they negotiated this lingering identity is of concern to the study.

Though not overtly referred to as an identity category, feminine mystique, appears to define some form of feminine identity. This term associated strongly with Butler Judith is



discussed at length by McCann and Kim (2013). This theory of bodies mediated by a variety of culturally-specific roles discusses the different roles women bodies play. Though the scholars have not addressed this as a specific identity, it determines the position of the woman in society and is of interest to the present study.

These discussed categories of identity shed light on the understanding of the human being in general. They also assist the study look at the different identities that the widow is part of. The present study relates this understanding to widow self-identity, thus addressing the literature gap.

Role-based identities are signified by the specific numbers of role relationships enacted by individuals. Identities were the sum of social positions held by the individual at each point in time. In this discussion, different social positions were given, designating different social roles. The Chicago panel gave six social positions designating the different roles: spouse, parent, employee, relative, friend, and group member, while the New Haven panel had eight positions: spouse, parent, employee, student, organizational member, church member, neighbour, and friend (Lutters & Ackerman, 1996; Thoits, 1991). However, these identity indicators overlapped. This meant each position had numerous roles leading to role sets, a concept started by and strongly associated with Mead (Mazotta & Myers, 2008). Having looked at identity and understood the different categories, the study moves on to look at the factors influencing the widow's self-identity.

### **2.2.3. Factors influencing the self-identity of the widow**

There are various factors that influence self-identity. In this part, three factors are selected and discussed, based on their wide inclusivity. The first among these is life events. These create alterations in a person's identity and that disruption of a salient identity has a

negative impact on one's wellbeing (Burke, 1991; Dutton et al., 2010; Thoits, 1991). Life events incorporate the significant others, one's upbringing, socio-cultural and economic issues.

Another factor that affects identity is loss. Widows are highly influenced by the significant other; the former spouses. From this perspective, loss influences one's identity, the core loss being that of a spouse (DeGarmo & Kitson, 1996).

Another component associated with identity and linked to identity conflict, is disruption of identity. This means that identity could be constructed but also disrupted. The concept of identity disruption is operationalized by a measure that has items concerning confusion over identity, interruption in and a change in identity (DeGarmo & Kitson, 1996). In this identity continuum, a model for identity construction is lacking. The present study addresses this gap.

From the above discussions, literature fails to adequately link widow psychosocial experiences to widow self-identity within a well-grounded theoretical framework. The closest literature gets, is while discussing the disruption of identity (DeGarmo & Kitson, 1996). In it widowhood is seen as leading to identity disruption. In addition, Burke (1996; 2006) links social identities to psychosocial stress. The information on identities and on psychosocial issues informs the present study. However, in the present study, there is a comprehensive exploration of the association between widow psychosocial experiences and widow self-identity through Discourse Analysis leading to a model for widow identity construction.

Having explored literature related to understanding identity, categories of identity, and indicators or factors influencing identity, the study delves into the empirical literature that addresses widow psychosocial experiences, and links them to widow self-identity. After that the section addresses how the widow deals to these psychosocial experiences as she attempts to find her position in society. In the end, the section sheds light on the model for widow identity construction.

## **2.3. Empirical Literature Related to the Study Objectives**

This section on empirical literature is divided into four sections in relation to the four study objectives. The first dwells on widow psychosocial experiences while the second concentrates on how these experiences relate to widow self-identity. The following section is on how widows deal with the experiences. The fourth delves into the quest for a model for widow identity construction.

### **2.3.1. Psychosocial experiences of widows**

Socio-cultural, health (HIV/AIDS), economic, and psychological experiences, as well as issues concerning women, are discussed. Also studies on human rights, illiteracy and sexed bodies present issues relating to women. Before discussing the experiences, the study shows the widow prevalence, and sheds light on the link between the widow and identity.

Widow prevalence: In Zimbabwe widows in the population of women aged 15-49 increased from 3.5 to 4.2% to 7.5%, in 1994, 1999 and 2005/6 respectively. Data from 15 Sub-Saharan countries: Benin, Congo/Brazaville, Democratic Republic of Congo, Guinea, Mali, Namibia, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe, studied between 2005 and 2008, shows a 5.03% of women between 15-49 years being widowed (Peterman, 2012). This indicates a high prevalence of widows, pointing to the significant challenge of widowhood and self-identity. Though not part of Peterman's study (2012), a study in Ngong Sub county Kajiado County, Kenya was deemed essential; it would add to information on widows in Africa.

Psychosocial experiences refer to the dynamic relationship[s] between the psychological and social dimension of a person, where the one influences the other. The psychological dimension includes the internal, emotional and thought processes of a person – his or her feelings and reactions. The social dimension includes relationships, family and community

networks, social values and cultural practices (IFRCRCS, 2009).

In this section, the study explores the psychosocial experiences that widows face. It hypothesised that widows struggled with identity, based on various factors. When young in marriage, women tend to move from the identity of belonging to their family of origin towards getting an identity in the husband's family. Also, in the early years of marriage, the woman's identity may be pegged on that of the husband. This is based on the fact that at that age, her children are still solely dependent on her; they are not old enough to give her an identity. She also may not have acquired adequate resources and ground to enable her be financially and professionally stable. This does not, however, limit the troubles that young widows face.

Support from literature in relation to widowhood implies unique experiences of bereavement, identity formation and marginalization. Existing research highlights that bereaved widows struggle for years (Tomarken, 2009), particularly when considering new relationships (Giljohann & Ewart, 2005). This complexity of widows is further reiterated by Mand (2005), as well as Adamu and Yahaya (2016) who say that widowhood often involves taking up new activities in the public sphere due to changes in social and economic status. With this, contemporary understandings of widowhood encompass long periods of widow challenges; becoming a widow implies that women carry this stigma for long (UN Women, 2001). This and the other studies above, show a clear understanding of unique distresses that widows face. Literature however fails to adequately link the experiences to widow psychosocial experiences and to their self-identity. Based on this, a knowledge gap was seen.

Literature concentrating on psychosocial experiences of widows reveals diverse categories. These experiences are thus grouped into socio-cultural, health (HIV/AIDS), economical, and psychological, and are discussed in their direct relation to widows. Additional

categories of challenges/experiences facing widows are discussed under human rights, illiteracy and sexed bodies. However, this second category, relates to women in general and their relation to widows is inferential. Following is a discussion of each of the above mentioned experiences.

Socio-cultural experiences include the silent suffering and grieving of widows, the dehumanizing rituals that widows have to go through, and gender imbalance. Discussing widowhood from a wide perspective, Maseno (2014), Mutong'i (2007) and Owen (2001), see the invisibility of widow tribulations. There appears to be a bias resulting in a lack of interest in widows (Uko, 2011). In endocentrism, the widow is viewed from within and her social-political challenges mildly addressed, while in androcentricism, she is viewed from a masculine point of view that tends to overlook her suffering. The former view appears to lead to the increased challenges of the widow. Owen (2011) calls for the political inclusion of the widow, as a way to limit her challenges. Though these experiences relate to the social experiences relating to the widow, they leave out the psychological ones.

In Africa, Sossou (2002) focuses on the widow's silent suffering under the social set-up of the West African communities. She addresses the mourning practices that increase rather than reduce the widow's grieving. Rosenblatt and Nkosi (2007, p.78) discuss the "*Ukuzila*" practice that dehumanizes the widow, in South Africa. The widow is held suspect (of having killed the husband through poisoning or witchcraft), and is hence forced to exonerate herself from the blame by accepting to go through the set dehumanizing rituals. She is not given time to grieve the loss. These scholars indicate that no such practices are present for widowers. This points to gender imbalance to the favour of men. The experiences that the widow goes through reveal gender discrimination and inequality in society, a factor that is founded and nurtured by the cultural practices. These experiences imply psychosocial challenges facing the widow, though the studies fail to directly address the implication.

Olantunji (2013), in discussing widow experiences in West Africa, brings in the socio-political experiences as well as socio-economic challenges that widows go through. She pegs these on patriarchal socio-economic systems that incorporate ethnic discrimination, legal inequalities, and educational imbalances. These factors lead to unequal representation in public, political and non-political institutions, and in other places of representation (the media for instance), translating into widow unemployment and poverty. Following this, widows are mistreated as second class citizens or as inferior to their male counterparts. The perpetrators claim that they do so in keeping with the customs and traditions of Africa. In addition, Olantunji (2013) links the problems of the widow to land. Women are unlikely to have title deeds in their name. This means that they are blocked from accessing any form of credit when land is required as collateral. Financial challenges affect ones psycho-social situation. However, the studies do not address this effect.

In Kenya, the link of widows to land and to availability of credit, is further discussed by Kimani and Maina (2010, p. 259), "women's lack of agricultural credit considerably lowers their productive capacity, thus adding on to their low levels of literacy". This situation is further aggravated by customary practices that among other issues, dictate that a married woman does not own property during marriage. The practice is that a woman's property, whether acquired before or after marriage, is in the sole control and disposition of her husband. This position is challenged by the Kenya Human Rights Commission (1998), and improves gradually through the new constitution (Constitution of Kenya, 2010; Kenya Land Alliance, 2006).

The subordination of women undermines their social position and adversely affects their economic power; it only enhances discrimination and inequality. This in turn has implications on per capita income and development at large while it perpetuates inequalities between men and women. However, none of the above authors concentrates solely on the psychosocial

tribulations facing the widow; the focus is on the woman in general. In addition, none of the above studies links widow experiences to her self-identity. It is based on this that the present study sought to have a Discourse Analysis of the widow psychosocial experiences and widow self-identity.

Literature on widows also addresses health issues with a focus on HIV/AIDS. Agot and colleagues (2010) discuss the prevalence of HIV/AIDS in a sample of 1,987 widows in Africa. Their findings show a relation between widow inheritance and HIV/AIDS. Though the concentration is on HIV/AIDS, the results are a pointer to other sexually transmitted infections. By extension the results shed light on the health issues (physiological and mental) affecting widows.

Further studies on HIV/AIDS reveal gender inequality, shame, lack of anti-discriminatory policies, and the criminalization of female sex workers (Armah-Attoh, 2009). Uhegbu and Okereke (2006), discussing HIV/AIDS in Botswana, also address the gender discriminatory policies. According to these authors, the dissemination of HIV/AIDS information to rural women, the organisation of conferences and talks, and the use of mass media, is minimal. Studies focussing on health issues, see HIV/AIDS, and other diseases as contributing to widowhood and to the psychosocial challenges affecting the widow. They, however, did not concentrate on how health issues affect the widows' psychosocial condition. Rather, the concentration is on the physiological condition of the woman. Furthermore, there was hardly any link relating the diseases to the widow's self-identity. This is the gap that the present study addresses.

In addition to socio-cultural experiences and health issues, literature on widows also discusses economic challenges. This section links poverty to widows (Peterman, 2012). Among the reasons given for this link, was asset dis-inheritance in almost all parts where patriarchal

systems prevail (Evans & Day, 2011). Women were systematically denied their human rights to access, own, control or inherit property. Linked to the earlier discussion on land, property is highly pegged to land. Ironically though, women in Asia, Africa and Latin America depend critically on land for livelihood (McAuslan, 2010).

This situation, with a focus on Africa shows challenges facing the woman in relation to land and its economics. Based on this, it recommends that there be 1) formal land titling as a precondition of modern development, 2) the abandonment of communal tenure systems in favour of freehold title and sub-division of the commons, 3) widespread promotion of land markets to bring about efficiency-enhancing land transfers, and 4) support for land redistribution on both efficiency and equity grounds (Quan, 2000). These recommendations focus mainly on the constitution and policy, leaving out the psychosocial address.

Therefore, as seen in the earlier discussions on literature, a deliberate focus on widow psychosocial experiences, is minimal. This is despite the realization that after the death of the husband, the widow is often not considered part of the clan and is expected to return to her parents and/or fend for herself (Benschop, 2004). This blind eye to the widow tribulations, in relation to the psychosocial tribulations that the denial of property causes, is what prompted the present study.

Closer to the study objective that sought to explore widow psychosocial challenges, literature on psychological experiences that the widow goes through is looked at. Mood anxiety disorders in widowhood were discussed by Onrust and Cuijpers (2006) and Onrust et al., (2010). These authors see the mood anxiety disorders related to widows as emanating from unclear systems of mourning. The widow is disoriented by the death of the spouse and struggles to be on her feet again; some never manage to rise again. Sinoff (2017) as well as Ungar and Florian's (2004) research on psychosocial adaptation of widows, addresses the psychological challenges



that the widow goes through. They link the coping and overcoming mechanisms to the social support that the widow needs. Nevertheless, the widow self-identity variable is left out.

Valdimarsdottir and colleagues (2005) shed light on bereavement and grieving. While these two aspects are a consequence of the loss of a spouse, they become an insurmountable challenge to the widow, when handled wrongly. This may lead to depression (Lichtenstein, Gatz, Pederson, Bergs, & McClearn, 1996) as well as personality challenges (Behar & Bhardwaj, 2015).

Grieving and bereavement, in addition to mood and anxiety swings, which are basically psychological issues are also discussed in literature in relation to the African woman in Rwanda (Schaal, Dusingizemungu, Nadja, & Elbert, 2011). These authors look into the trauma spectrum and the disorders associated with the widowed genocide survivors. The concentration of the writers is on Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) among widows in the country. These experiences, impact on the widow. In addition to issues of widows in war zones, Domingo and others (2013) link women issues to peace and state building. The present study borrows from these studies, focussing on the psychosocial experiences the widow goes through, and linking them to widow self-identity.

In addition to the above discussed challenges there are other challenge-related experiences affecting widows. Among these, the study looks at human rights issues, illiteracy and the attitude of looking at women as sexed bodies. It also links these challenge-related issues to widow psychosocial experience.

The area of human rights is discussed in relation to works conducted by the civil society. Human rights issues are related to patriarchal attitudes (Chowdhry, 2012). Also, a study by Sleaf (2009) in Burkina Faso, shows violence and abuse experienced by older women as a result of witchcraft accusations. The author pinpoints the barriers preventing older women from

protecting their rights. In addition to human rights issues, the aspect of economic power is also discussed (Communication on the Status of Women, 2016). The first two discuss human rights but fail to link them to widows. The third is a session paper that fails to meet the threshold of a well carried out research.

Illiteracy is also seen as a core challenge affecting women. "Despite advances in labour-force participation, education, and health, women still constitute about two-thirds of the world's illiterates, hold fewer than half of the jobs on the market and are paid half as much as men for work of equal value" (UN, 2002). Illiteracy has hindered the development of women, and their participation in decision making processes. Policies that are pro-women have been left out of the development agenda thus having a negative impact on the woman. Having limited educational openings leads to an influence on their esteem and relations thus influencing their psychosocial standings (Suen, 2013). Nevertheless, this link has been hardly discussed in the contacted literature, in relation to widows in Ngong Sub county, Kenya.

Finally, among the challenges facing women, there is the attitude of looking at women as sexed bodies. The term "sexed bodies" was used by Butler (1993, p.xi) in reference to "materializing" the woman's body and "sexing" it. In this context, the man and other women identify bodies of females that matter and those that do not, thus creating a gendered subject identity. This concept is linked to Friedan's *Feminine Mystique* (Denney, 2017; Vonderer & Kinnaly, 2012) where the female body is associated with a glamour that comes out of being a mystery. This male perception is associated with the woman's roles and identity. However, the focus of the challenge is the woman viewed as a sex object, a factor that relates to her thinking and to her relating to others. In the same area, remarriage is significant. Badhyopadhyay (2008), Pettey and colleagues (2013), and Varun (2013) discuss the issue, linking it to marital identity. Nevertheless, the widow's voice on re-marriage is missing.

In this section therefore, there are two categories of psychosocial experiences facing widows. The socio-cultural, health, economic and psychological experiences are discussed in literature in relation to the widow. Human rights, illiteracy and sexed body experiences, are discussed in relation to the woman in general. However, the psychosocial experiences are not linked to widow self-identity, hence the need for this study. With literature focussing on the first objective having been discussed, the study moves on to look at literature related to the second objective; the influence of widow psychosocial experiences on widow self-identity.

### **2.3.2. Influence of widow psychosocial experiences on widow self-identity**

In the first part of this section, the psychosocial experiences discussed are socio-cultural, health (HIV/AIDS), economic, and psychological experiences. These are given prominence since in literature, they are directly linked to the widow. In the second part human rights issues, illiteracy and the concept of the sexed bodies are discussed. These experiences are discussed in literature in relation to the woman in general. In both parts, the study explores how literature discusses the association between the psychosocial experiences and widow self-identity.

#### ***Socio-cultural, health, economic and psychological experiences***

In the area of socio-cultural widow experiences, bride wealth as a social value is seen (Hakansson, 1994; Jemphrey, 2011 & Silberschmidt, 2015). These authors show the psychosocial importance of paying the bride wealth. They indicate that bride wealth contributes to social value and to the woman's identity in marriage. However, only Jemphrey (2011) addresses the negative aspects associated with bride wealth. It is inferred that the payment or non-payment of bride wealth influence the woman's identity.

Widow health issues are also discussed in literature in relation to HIV/AIDS. Walsh

(2005) discusses HIV/AIDS prevalence among widows. Also under health studies, Valdimarsdottir, and colleagues (2005) have discussed challenges of widows left by men who died from cancer. In addition to the above scholars, Coleman, Morison, Powell, and Walraven (2006), have discussed reproductive health challenges facing women. They see women's reproductive ability as core to community though faced by severe challenges. In these discussions, there is no link to widow self-identity.

The other theme that is prevalent in literature is economic experiences linked to women (DiGiacomo and colleagues, 2015). Literature in this section demonstrates the inability to divorce discussions on women economic empowerment from land issues within an African patriarchal system. In support of land being central to the woman's economic power, Rosenblatt and Nkosi (2007) link loss of land for the woman, to loss of income and hence subsequent poverty (Tripp, 2001). In line with these debates, recommendations on women land and property rights are given; they should be enshrined in statutory law (Whitehead & Tsikata, 2003). The reason for this advocacy is the realization that the woman's vulnerability increases as land access becomes more insecure (Platteau, 2000; Quan, 2000). In areas where agriculture is a major economic activity, as parts of Africa are, a widow whose access to land is limited is prone to even greater poverty.

Finally, under psychological widow experiences, Johnson and colleagues (2009), reveal challenges related to mood and anxiety disorders. They discuss bereavement and grieving in relation to widows. This psychological condition might lead to depression.

All the four areas, social-cultural, health, economic and psychological experiences are linked to widows. However, only the socio-cultural experiences infer the woman's marital identity. The other three have no mention on identity. This gap led to the present study addressing widow psychosocial experiences and widow self-identity.

### ***Human rights, illiteracy and sexed body experiences***

In the area of human rights, Kounte (2005), in the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (Simplified) states in Article 20, pp. 23 & 24:

a) that widows, women whose husbands have died, are not subjected to inhuman, humiliating or degrading treatment, that is a widow should not be subjected to acts that shame or humiliate her or that do not respect her human dignity, for example locking her away in a room for several months or having her head shaved; b) a widow shall automatically become the guardian and custodian of her children and properties, this means that children whose father has died must live with their mother or under her control. Any property that the father left his children must be managed by their mother; c) a widow shall have the right to remarry, and in this event, to marry the person of her choice. No member of her family or that of her late husband's shall compel her to marry a man against her will.

And finally, as stated in Article 21, p.24:

1) A widow shall have the right to an equitable share in the inheritance of the property of her husband. 2) A widow shall have the right to continue to live in the matrimonial house. This means that, the relatives of the husband shall have no right to eject her from this house. 3) In case of remarriage, she shall retain this right, if the house belongs to her or she has inherited it. These rights reiterate the importance of human rights that widows should enjoy.

These articles focus on the humiliation of the widow, her dignity as well as property. They also address the widow's right to re-marry. In addition to dignity, illiteracy is significant, "without literacy, education and training, widows can [hardly] support neither themselves nor their families" (UN, 2001, p.13). This apparently leads to women disempowerment, a contributory factor to gender violence: rape, domestic assassinations and brutality, sexual harassment, trafficking and sex abuse "carried out by people gendered as "men"" (Bennett, Okech, Clarke, Africa, & Jadwat, 2010, p. 2).

Literature on human rights experiences and on illiteracy have some link to the widow. Nevertheless, literature on sexed bodies has no link to the widow but only to the woman in general. All the three sets of experiences, lack any link to widow self-identity thus necessitating

the present study.

The above section has addressed literature responding to objective two seeking to find out how widow psychosocial experiences influence widow self-identity. The literature has shown that the socio-cultural experiences in discussing bride wealth, infer the identity of the woman. The present study seeks to explore the inferred link between the socio-cultural experiences and identity in relation to the widow in Ngong Sub county Kajiado County Kenya.

### **2.3.3. Ways in which widows deal with their psychosocial experiences in their attempt to relate to their social environment**

This section looks at literature addressing ways that widows use to deal with the psychosocial experiences affecting them. It starts by giving ways employed by women, before focussing on widows.

#### ***Women reactions***

The study comes across literature that shows women responding to various gendered experiences. Voices from different women (and like-minded men) on matters of dealing with women challenges are seen (UN, 1995; UNGA, 2010; UN Division for the Advancement of Women, 2000; UNIFEM, 2007). Among these voices, there are those whose focus at the macro level, is on awareness creation. This is based on the different women movements that challenge the patriarchal system that contributes to the dis-empowerment of the woman. In this category, McMichael (2008) presents Boserup discussing American and European injustices under patriarchal systems. Women movements: Women and Development, Women in Development, Gender and Development, Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era, and Women and Environment discussed different ways to empower the woman (McMichael, 2008;

Visvanathan, Duggan, Nisonoff, & Wiegersma, 1996; Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights (ACHPR) on the Rights of Women in Africa, 2003).

In Africa, Tripp, Casimiro, Kwesiga, and Mungwa (2009), focus on the importance of awareness among women. Through the awareness fora, they reiterate the power of the woman. They challenge the focus of the media on the woman as a mere helpless victim of genital mutilation and war. In addition to the discussion, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) (2007) and Women and Law in East Africa (2001), focussing on the East African woman, lay emphasis on human rights. Together with the International Human Rights Law Group (IHRLG) (Jordan, 2002), they champion the voice of the woman on matters of the violation of women rights.

Addressing the woman in Kenya, Nzomo (1994) concentrates on the woman's political empowerment. She looks at the importance of the woman in Kenyan leadership. She also discusses the challenges that the woman in Kenya goes through as she seeks elective positions. This endeavour for political empowerment in Kenya is supported by Presbey (2013) and by Women's Empowerment Opportunities in Kenya (2010). This time the focus is on Wangari Maathai, an environmental advocate. In her struggles of advocacy, the political struggle of the Kenyan woman is demonstrated.

With the support of the Constitution of Kenya (2010), the various policy amendments needed to allow the woman ascend to political power and to leadership, are addressed. The constitution grants voice to the woman in different circles majorly the political. Nzomo, Presbey and the Constitution of Kenya (2010) therefore, represent the interests of the woman in an attempt to getting her contribute to her development and to that of the entire community.

These are efforts from women on ways to improve their lives and society at large. These ways do not openly bring out the role of the widow in a particular way. In the next section the

study attempts to look at ways in which literature brings out the widow attempting to deal with her psychosocial experiences.

### ***Widow reactions***

Widow reactions at the macro level are presented by various authors. Chan and Chan (2011), show how widows endeavour to seek meaning in life soon after the death of a spouse. They grapple with attempting to accept the eventualities. This position is further discussed by Shahla and colleagues (2013), and Shahla et al., 2010 as they address the social support systems given to Iranian widows and their experiences. In the works cited, widows came together and in supporting one another, sought to deal with their loss. This togetherness appears unstructured among Kenyan widows.

Carried out in the context of USA, the study by Nicole and Toni (2007), addresses inner resilience. This is core to the widow's ability to overcome the challenges facing her and contributes largely to a satisfactory regaining of the self. In addition, it helps the widow identify her inner and outer strengths. In this way, a proper tapping of her resources helps her regain her strength and move on with life. This is demonstrated by Kuhlman (2012, p.137), in Europe after First World War, "many war widows developed a sense of identity that transcended the nation state, placing their own experiences in the context of an international community".

These forward looking solutions are lacking in literature on widows in Africa. The address of literature in Africa, concentrates on the tribulations of widows. Koran-Okrah (2012) shows these sentiments relating to the Akan widows. Similar experiences are discussed in relation to South African widows (Rosenblatt & Nkosi, 2007).

Difficulties that widows in East Africa go through are presented by Evans and Day (2011). The authors discuss the cases in Uganda and Tanzania. Mutong'i (2007) also discusses



the challenges facing the widow in Kenya. These East African authors show widows as passive victims of injustices. There is no focus on ways in which these widows respond to their challenges. The present study addresses this gap.

Looking at the two subsections on ways in which the widows deal with their psychosocial experiences, widows have their voices covertly represented in the women organizations. However, the study noticed a gap in that widows have peculiar challenges that may not be fully captured in the agenda of the other woman. One such factor is the widow self-identity that is destroyed during the death of her husband. The other factor is how widows attempt to reconstruct this identity in their widowhood. The present study attempted to address this gap. With the address on literature focussing on the first three objectives accomplished, this study addresses a model for widow identity construction.

#### **2.3.4. Quest for a model for widow identity construction**

Widowhood carries with it false stereotypical narratives that continue to negatively influence the widows' identity and her participation in social transformation. In relation to socio-cultural stereotypes related to widows, several labels feature. Widows are taken to be social victims. They lack an identity other than that acquired through marriage (Parker & Creese, 2016). In this view, they lack a culture save for that of the husband and of the families they are married to. Based on this they are not meant to have a voice after the death of the husband (Radzilani-Makatu, 2015). In addition, widows are considered perpetual beggars who need charity emanating from their "poverty stricken" state (Moring, 2010, p. 215). With this they are taken to be in a constant search for men, as soon as the husband is dead. This is seen as the only way towards their financial sustenance. This study seeks to find out the position of the widow in relation to these stereotypes.

In relation to the in-laws where they “move in fast to salvage whatever resources their brother or son left since the widow has no capacity to manage the resources” is also questioned by this study. Also, widows are taken to be promiscuous. Now that the husband who was providing sexual satisfaction is no more, they need a man to speedily fulfil their sexual desires (Mahy and colleagues, 2014). Based on these wants on the part of the widow, levirate relationships, wife inheritance/widow re-marriage (Ojore, 2013; Okonda, 2017; Varun, 2013), present themselves as the called for remedies. In addition to the above stereotypes, widows are also taken to be murderers to their husbands or at least accomplices in the cause that lead to husbands dying, “widows are still accused of being responsible for their husband’s death” (Jamadar & colleagues, 2015, p.57). These beliefs lead to subjecting the widows to dehumanizing cultural rituals (David, 2010; Koran-Okrah & Haight, 2015; Rosenblatt & Nkosi, 2007).

Contrary to the stereotypes and in essence, widowhood entails loss through the death of the husband. This death for the widows is traumatic (Jannoff-Bulman, 2006). It leads to an in-depth moral inquiry, “a constellation of symptoms including shame, anger, demoralization, self-handicapping or poor self-care, and guilt” (Harris, et al., 2015 p. 1). In such a condition, the widows experience intense grief leading to an identity destruction. While there are models aimed at dealing with psycho-pathology (Rigall, 2016), and those dealing with death and dying (Hall, 2011), a model tailor-made for the widows is lacking. It is based on this that the study’s fourth objective seeks to develop a model for widow identity construction.

In relation to this search, three issues are realised. First is the uniqueness of widowhood. This is followed by the second issue that reiterates the intensity of the widowhood issue in relation to social transformation. Thirdly efforts addressing widowhood and identity are noted.

### *Peculiarity of widowhood as an integral loss*

Despite the different losses in life, widowhood/spousal bereavement is noted as an integral loss (Soulsby & Bennet, 2015). This shows the uniqueness as well as the intensity of the devastation. For widows whose husbands die from long term sickness, there is the pre-death loss which entails loss of health and with it financial depletion. The dynamics of the loss are also influenced by the nature of sickness; whether it carries with it stigma as is with HIV/AIDS (Saki and colleagues, 2015) and alcoholism (Marshall, 2013). This loss is followed by loss of life of the husband through death. For those whose husbands suffer sudden death, the intensity of shock and disbelief on the part of the widows is noted (Ng et al., 2014). In the death of the spouse, the woman loses a life partner, resources that the husband generates, as well as the security that the husband provides (Manyedi and colleagues, 2003; DiGiacomo and colleagues, 2015). These resources include those that may have been accrued in the husband's lifetime. This means that malevolent people from the family and without, may get the opportunity to start interfering in the widow's life (Fasoranti & Aruna, 2007). The widow loses the identity of being a wife (Soulsby & Bennet, 2017). In addition, her children lose a father aggravating the responsibilities on the part of the widow (Glazer and colleagues, 2010). It is therefore understandable that emotionally, widows felt that they were in a "fog" or as if they had "had a stroke", after their husband died (Korb, 2010, p.10). With this understanding of the uniqueness of widowhood, the study finds it important to seek a specialised model to deal with widow issues. Having dealt with this uniqueness, the study delves into literature addressing the relationship between widowhood and social transformation. Social transformation is the field within which widowhood is explored.

### ***Widowhood in relation to social transformation***

Social transformation refers to underlying notions of the way society and culture change in response to such factors as economic growth, war or political upheavals (Castles, Ozkul, & Cubas, 2015). Of interest in this study is societal change in relation to economic and political situations. Another definition of social transformation, shows it as “fundamental change in society...contrasted with social change viewed as gradual or incremental changes over a period of time” (Khondker & Schuerkens, 2014, p. 1). Again the concept of change, this time fundamental is reiterated.

The two definitions are strengthened by the contributions of O’Brien (2012, p. 4) when he looks at transformation as “Transformation can be defined as physical and/or qualitative changes in form, structure or meaning-making. It can also be understood as a psycho-social process involving the unleashing of human potential to commit, care, and effect change for a better life”. With this definition, physical and qualitative changes affecting form, structures and meaning, are brought to play. Also, the psychosocial process is engaged thus relating best to the present study. In the end, human potential, under which woman power falls, as well as commitment and care are considered. This therefore captures the studies understanding of social transformation. The study takes social transformation as the radical sustainable changes that influence society leading it towards improvement of its human beings.

This study focuses on widows and social transformation. The role of widows in social participation is addressed by Adams and colleagues (2011) and Li and colleagues (2016). The authors point to the wellbeing of widows that comes with their social participation. The social roles they play lead to healthy interactions and to productivity. In this way, the undisputed role of widows in social transformation is noted, pointing to the importance of their participation. Nevertheless, a gap is seen in that, ways through which the recovery of widows should be

enhanced to allow them promptly contribute to social transformation is not given. It is based on this that the study explores a model for widow identity construction, as a tool to facilitate this recovery process. In addition to widowhood and social transformation, identity is also a concern of this study.

### ***Efforts dealing with widowhood and identity***

In the psychological field, there are attempts to deal with issues related to widowhood. Among these, there are attempts from the position of human rights. Significant on this is the African Union (2005). The focus of the protocol is on the rights of women in general. Additional information on rights of widows is by Communication on the Status of Women (2016). This is more explicit on human rights relating to economic and humanitarian challenges facing the widow. There is hardly any address of the widows' identity disruption.

In addition to human rights issues, there are those who look at widowhood from the perspective of finances (Peterman, 2012). This author shares on financial related challenges that widows go through. In support of this view, Korb (2010) addresses the importance of journeying with widows as they re-find their financial position. The author notes that after the loss of the husband, widows struggle to meet their financial obligations. Even where the husband had financial stability, the widow has to learn to undertake additional roles in order to manage the estate. Where the widow is illiterate, there is an apparent deeper concern on how she is to manage the additional roles.

There are also efforts from the spiritual perspective (Michael, et al., (2003). These authors present how widows use spirituality to cope with their challenges. Among the spiritual methods of coping, is reliance in Higher Power. In addition to these authors, Tedeschi and Calhoun (2006) also shed light on spiritual related challenges connected to spirituality.

Bereavement brings with it questions related to one's spirituality. The individual widow appeals to spirituality to understand these metaphysical phenomena.

Additional efforts are seen from the psychological position (Bonanno et al., 2004). These authors discuss how widows are called to adopt new methods of resilience. This happens with the loss of the husband. During this phase, widows have to adjust at times having to undertake malfunctioning activities, which may seem abnormal to onlookers who do not appear to expect the widow to undertake the tasks (Carr and colleagues, 2000).

Carr and colleagues (2006) as well as Rosenblatt and Nkosi (2007) discuss social relationships that change with the death of a spouse. When together the husband and wife adopt sets of friends and colleagues dependent on the roles that both play. When one is absent through death, the set of friends and associates changes. This means that the surviving spouse has to adopt new social relationships. This is strongly viewed in the case of the woman, after the death of the husband.

Each of the discussed efforts addresses sections of widow challenges. In them however, a focus on widow psychosocial experiences looked at in relation to their self-identity is not explicit. In addition to this, efforts to bring together the ways of dealing with the widow challenges in an attempt to have a consolidated model to deal with the widow psychosocial experiences and her self-identity is not found. The integral role of widows as social transformers is also not addressed. It is in addressing these gaps that the model for widow identity construction is sought. The sought model is hence intended to contribute towards improving the lives of widows as it addresses their psychosocial challenges and identity issues. In so doing, it shall facilitate the widows' ability to contribute better towards social transformation.

The literature has looked at widowhood and identity. It has explored how these two variables are understood shedding light on the gaps that the present study seeks to address. With

this understanding of the variables, the framework that guided the study is discussed.

## **2.4. Theoretical Framework: Discourse and Discourse Analysis**

This section discusses Discourse and Discourse Analysis. Discourse is looked at as the theory (Potter, & Wetherell, 2001), that makes sense of phenomena, and of the environment, circulating it socially (Whisnat, 2012). Discourse Analysis is looked at as the method which studies the way language is used to disseminate the Discourse (Gee, 2011). In the following section, further discussion on Discourse is given, after which Discourse Analysis, the method that guided this study, is expounded.

### **2.4.1 Discourse**

Originating from Foucault, Discourse is seen as systems of thoughts, ideas, images and other symbolic practices that make up what we are (Blommaert, 2005; Foucault, 1997). It generates knowledge of truth and gives us information on the interlocutors. Discourse encompasses Anthropology, Linguistics, Grammar, Pragmatics, Semiotics, Conversation Analysis, Sociolinguistics and even the Psychology of texts (Henry & Taylor, 2002). In summary it is "a group of statements which provide language for talking about a topic" (du Gay, 1996, p. 43). Based on this realization therefore, Discourse casts its net wide in the area of human communication. It therefore remains vague in the way it would be employed in a specific empirical study. It is due to this that this study narrows down to Discourse Analysis as the method used in the study.

### **2.4.2 Discourse Analysis**

Discourse Analysis is the method (Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002) that guided the present

study. To allow for a comprehensive understanding of this framework, the study has divided the section into the following subheadings: definition of Discourse Analysis; foci of Discourse Analysis; validity of Discourse Analysis; the tools for Discourse Analysis (areas and tasks); and the Discourse Analysis; a multidisciplinary theory. The study shows how and why Discourse Analysis is best suited theory to guide this present study.

### ***Definition of Discourse Analysis***

Discourse Analysis according to Taylor (2001, p. 5) is “the close study of language in use.” It is "a cluster of related methods for studying language use and its role in social life” (Given, 2008, p. 217).

The first category of Discourse Analysis methods focus on sentence constructions and coherence (Halliday, 1994). The second and third categories are interrelated; they focus on the role of language in constructing the world, and address language in its relation to context (van Dijk, 1997). It is the second and third categories that mainly interested this study. This study, through discourse analysis, addresses the words as well as the phrases that widows use to express their experiences. It also looks at the language of widows in their varied contexts, as they express what is significant to them.

The term Discourse Analysis was first used by Zelig Harris in the 1950s in an attempt to explicate sentence meaning in texts relating one sentence to the surrounding sentences. Later on John Sinsair and Malcolm Coulthard (Gee, 2011) used it to study class interactions. Among the contemporaries, in the 1990s, it took three dichotomies as shown in Table 2.1.

The first is Foucauldian Discourse Analysis (FDA) that works with interview material to socially critique experiences, and in which individuality and subjectivity is produced. The



second is Critical Discourse Analysis (Fairclough, 2003), (CDA) where a social critique and use of analytic concepts from linguistics are discussed. Michael Halliday, is a key proponent of this branch. The third is the Discursive Psychology. Its focus is on the psychological issues that are alive in human practices (Given, 2008).

**Table 2.1. Dichotomies of Discourse Analysis**

<b>Dichotomies of Discourse Analysis</b>	<b>Elaboration of each dichotomy</b>	<b>Relation to the Present Study</b>
Foucauldian Discourse Analysis (F.D.A)	Uses interview material to socially critique experiences.	How widow psychosocial experiences are expressed through language. Which diction do widows use? Why? What sentence structures do widows use? Why?
Critical Discourse Analysis (C.D. A.)	Uses social critique experiences to generate subjectivity and individuality.	How widows use discourse to express their subjectivity hence their identity.
Discursive Psychology (D.P.)	Explores the psychological issues alive in human practice as expressed in language use.	How widows express their grief, feelings and emotions through language.

The present study, in exploring widow experiences and self-identity, has borrowed more from the Foucauldian Discourse Analysis (FDA). This is due to its inclusion of the social critique, the individuality and subjectivity produced through existential tenets and roles, hence identity. From this dichotomy, the present study has addressed the widow’s individuality and hence understand her experiential as well as role identity. FDA, therefore, guides the present study in addressing the objectives. In the exploration of widow psychosocial experiences, and in linking these experiences to widow self-identity, FDA allows a penetration into the widow’s subjective and individual world. Through interviews, the study is able to reach out into the inner world of the participant. In this way the gap that the study seeks to address, to understand the participants’ issues and the way she deals with the challenges affecting her, are addressed.

The study has also borrowed from the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to allow a critique on how the society through the use of language, treats the widow. The widow participant is in a society comprising of members of her nuclear family, her in-laws, members of her family of origin, friends and colleagues at work and in church. How she relates to them and in turn how they relate to her, is of interest to the study. CDA is particular on the way language is used by the participant. In the entire study, CDA guides in trying to understand what diction the widow uses, the way she places emphasis on particular themes through language use. In this way, CDA is able to guide the study in seeking to understand widow psychosocial experiences as well as her self-identity. Through CDA, the study is also able to address ways in which widows deal with these psychosocial experiences as they seek to improve their lives.

Since the study area is widow psychosocial experiences, Discursive Psychology has helped the researcher address the psychological issues relating to widows. This is based on the premise that loss as well as challenges of adaptation after the loss are concerns also in the area of psychology. Hence, verbal and nonverbal communication related to intense emotions have been addressed.

### ***Foci of Discourse Analysis***

Discourse Analysis has three foci (Gee, 2011) as shown in Table 2.2. The first, the utterance-focus looks at the form and the function of language as used by the speakers. This level looks at the phonemes, morphemes, lexicons, syntax and semantic forms used. The present study is interested in the lexicons (choice of words and their repetition) and in moments where grammar is consciously or unconsciously violated to generate specific effect. Also meanings and socio-linguistic components (speech acts) are addressed.

The second focus of Discourse Analysis is situated meaning-type. This looks at the

specific or situated meanings (SM) relating to context of the speakers. Widow participants use language in specific ways to express their experiences and identity prior to marriage, during marriage and during widowhood. They express their social, cultural, economic, and spiritual contexts. Through the situated meanings focus the Discourse Analyst enters the widow's psychosocial contexts, and through this understand her different identities.

The third focus addresses the social practices of the given interlocutors. The focus permits an evaluation of societal values and informs the study on what interactions and relationships are meaningful to the concerned society. Through this, the study comes up with issues in society that need attention since they contribute to the challenges facing the widow. A summary of the foci and how each of the focus facilitates this study is given in Table 2.2.

**Table 2.2. Foci of Discourse Analysis**

<b>Foci of Discourse</b>	<b>Elaboration of each Focus</b>	<b>Relation of the Focus to the Present</b>
<b>Analysis</b>		<b>Study</b>
Utterance-focus	Form and function of language	Sounds, words, syntax and semantics as employed in the widow discourse
Situated meaning-type	Meanings in reference to context	How widows create their contextual identity through language
Social practices of interlocutors	Roles played	The different roles that are played by the widow participants through language

***Validity of Discourse Analysis***

As shown in Table 2.3, validity in Discourse Analysis is at three levels: utterance-type meaning level, situated meaning task level, and the social practices task level.

**Table 2.3. Validity levels in Discourse Analysis**

<b>Validity levels in Discourse Analysis</b>	<b>Elaboration of each validity Level</b>	<b>Relation of the levels of validity to the present study: Questions that guided the Discourse Analyst</b>
Utterance-type meaning level	Observance of the rules of grammar.	Do widows use grammar as it is meant or do they tilt it to generate specific meanings within their psychosocial experiences, and to indicate their self-identity?
Situated meaning task level	Use of non-verbal and para-linguistics as well as context.	How do widows make use of non-verbals and para-linguistics to express their psychosocial experiences and their self- identity in their different contexts?
Social practices task level	Use of language to generate social patterns and interactions.	What social interactive patterns appear in widow discourse and what do these say about widow self-identity?

Firstly, at the utterance-type meaning task level, validity entails ensuring that a particular grammatical theory and function related to the language is achieved (van Dijk, 1997). When it is not achieved, the study is to find the reason. However, the focus of the present study is not on the grammaticality from the phonological to the syntactic level, but mainly at the semantic and socio-linguistic level. The concern therefore is on whether the sentence structures used by widows are able to generate the intended meaning.

Secondly, at the situated meaning (SM) task level, involves the frame problem. This problem focusses on the context which in turn involves the non-verbal cues and the socio-linguistic attributes of language. The former looks at the facial expressions, the eye contact, the proximity and other paralinguistic terms used in passing the message, among them pitch, tone and tempo (Barker & Galasinki, 2001). The latter addresses itself to the beliefs of the interlocutors, the historical, institutional and cultural settings at play in the exchange. This is of interest to the Discourse Analyst since the generated discourse among widows is related to the culture of the participants.

Thirdly, at the social practices meaning task level, there is a dichotomy between the critical approaches of Discourse Analysis and the non-critical ones. The former treats social practices not just in terms of social relationships but also in terms of their implications for things like status, solidarity, distribution of social goods and power. The non-critical approaches of Discourse Analysis on their part treat social practices solely in terms of patterns of social interactions (van Dijk, 1997). These levels ensure validity in the present study. Following are the four parameters that also add to the validity of the process within Discourse Analysis.

According to Gee (2011), Discourse Analysis has parameters of an "ideal" and valid study as presented in Table 2.4: convergence, agreement, coverage, and linguistic structure.

**Table 2.4. Validity Parameters in Discourse Analysis**

<b>Validity parameter</b>	<b>Elaboration of each measure</b>	<b>Relation of the measure to the present study</b>
Convergence	The more the answers to questions converge the more the Discourse Analysis validity.	Frequency of themes and sub-themes helps come up with salient features relating to widows and to their levels of identity.
Agreement	The more convinced the (native) speakers are that the analysis reflects how they socially use language the more valid the discourse is.	Use of local dialects and repetition are noted as means to express significant issues.
Coverage	The more the analysis can be applied to related sorts of data, the more valid the discourse is.	The analysis is applied to literature and to collected widow data.
Linguistic structure	The more the analysis is tightly tied to linguistic structures, the more valid the discourse is.	Linguistic structures are largely observed and whenever orthodox language structures are seen reasons are inferred.

The study has looked at the validity of Discourse Analysis where three levels of Discourse validity have been discussed: Utterance-type meaning level, Situated meaning task level, and the Social practices task level. Also the validity parameters used to enhance validity have been given. These are the convergence, agreement, coverage as well as the linguistic measurement. With this, the study addresses tools in Discourse Analysis.

### ***Tools for Discourse Analysis***

Tools help actualise the Discourse Analysis as a theoretical framework (Wodak & Krzyzanowski, 2008). They guide the exploration of the participant's language use, her individual as well as her socio-cultural context, her psychological state and her identity. In this way, the tools help the study explore the psychosocial widow experiences as well as the widow self-identity.

These tools are in two categories. The first has six areas while the second involves seven tasks. The six areas look at the words and phrases that designated context, relations, figurative language, multiple roles, identities and themes. These are given the titles situated meanings, social languages, figured worlds, intertextuality, discourses, and conversations respectively (Adjei, 2013; Metapedia, January, 2012). An elaboration of each area is given in Table 2.5.

**Table 2.5. Tools: Areas in Discourse Analysis**

<b>Tools of Discourse Analysis (areas)</b>	<b>Elaboration of each area</b>	<b>Relation of each Area to the present study</b>
Situated Meanings	How word and phrase meanings change as per the context.	What contexts are present in the widow discourse?
Social Languages	How language styles realise relations.	What relations are in the widow discourse?
Figured Worlds	What language is normal/usual?	What symbolic-figurative language is present in the widow discourse?
Intertextuality	Multiple roles emerging through the same text.	What words and phrases are showing different participant roles within the text?
Discourses	Different identities in the discourse.	What identities appear in the widow discourse?
Conversations	Emerging themes in each text.	What themes emerge in the widow discourse?

While areas identify that which is in the discourse, tasks focus on what the interlocutor is

doing. Table 2.6 shows the Discourse Analysis tasks. These indicate the participant's use of language to show significance (van Dijk, 1997), to act (Schiffrin, Tannen, & Hamilton, 2001), and show their roles. Also it shows tasks that look at how the participants relate and to whom (Gee, 2011). It also presents tasks that address the participants' show of importance phenomena, and their figurative use of language (Gee, 2011). Table 2.6 shows an elaboration of each task and how each was addressed in relation to the study.

**Table 2.6. Tools: Tasks of Discourse Analysis**

<b>Tasks in Discourse Analysis</b>	<b>Elaboration of each task</b>	<b>Relation of each area to the present study</b>
Significance	Human ability to use language to make things notable.	How does the participant show importance?
Practices: words used in speaking (Speech acts)	What the words do/act?	What does she decide to do?
Identities	Acquired and performed roles that signify language as a social interactive activity.	What role does she play?
Relationships	Language as a social interactive activity.	How does the participant relating to others?
Politics:	Social goods; what a group values.	What social value is the participant revealing?
Connections	Links in the world.	With whom is she relating?
Sign systems and knowledge (Semiotics)	Use of language to build or tear various sign systems.	How does she use figurative language?

The different tasks and areas do not relate to each other in a linear mode, where one automatically comes before or after the other. They also do not interact in a value mode where one is more important than the other. Rather, the interaction is web-like; there is no specific and no preferred order. The interaction is in a complicated mesh that is dictated by among other things, the interlocutors, the circumstances around them, and the tools (verbal and non-verbal) in their disposal. This makes discourse a complex yet informative phenomenon.

Due to its breadth, Discourse Analysis facilitates this study in socially critiquing widow psychosocial experiences as it analyses their language in use. It also allows the study to explore feelings and thoughts of the participants. It does so through focussing on utterances, on situated meanings and on the social practices of the interlocutors. To ensure that proper procedures are followed, Discourse Analysis gives the parameters to assure validity. This is again done at the utterance level, at the situated meaning level and at the social practices level. Validity is also enhanced by four parameters namely convergence, agreement, coverage and linguistic structures. Discourse Analysis is thus used to effectively guide this study.

## 2.5. Conceptual Framework

The study is conceptualised as shown in Figure 2.1.

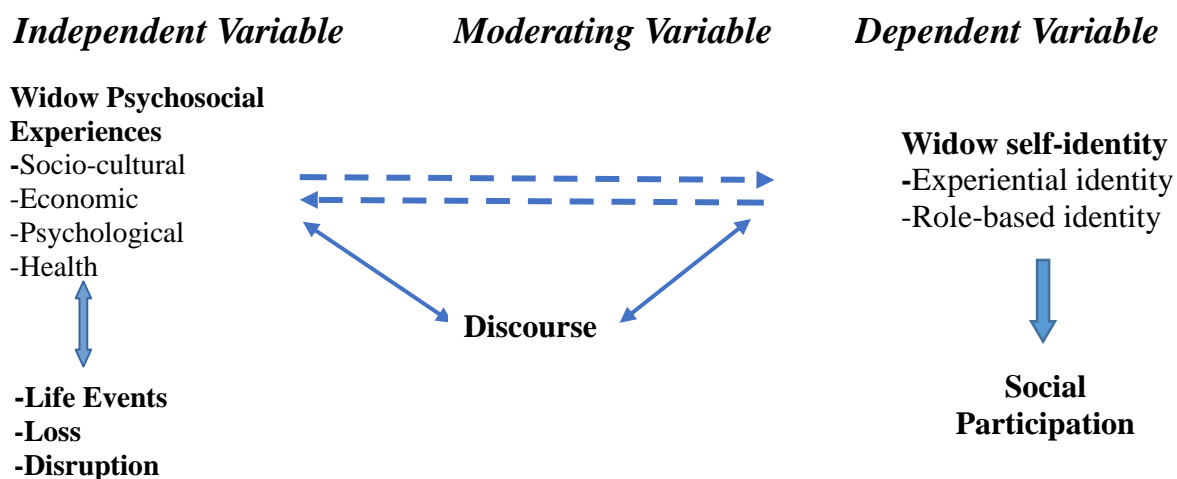


Figure 2.1: A Conceptual framework of widow psychosocial experiences and their self-identity

As seen in Figure 2.1, there is a relationship between widow psychosocial experiences (the independent variable) and widow self-identity (the independent variable). The independent variable, widow psychosocial experiences has four categories as noted from literature. These are socio-cultural, health, economic, and psychological issues. From literature also human rights,



education-based, illiteracy and sexed body categories arise though in relation to women in general. From the study, however, all these nine categories are seen in the widow discourse. In addition, spiritual experiences also have an important position in the life of widows.

In the conceptual framework, widow self-identity is also significant. The identity is divided into two: existential identity and role-based identities. Both are seen in literature and in the widow discourse. From the study, there is a notable relationship between both variables where each influences the other overtly and covertly in different ways; the influence being through discourse.

In addition, life events, loss (especially loss of spouse) and life disruptions, influence and are influenced by widow psychosocial experiences. These widow psychosocial experiences linked to widow self-identity, influence the participant's social participation.

## **2.6. Summary of Chapter Two**

Chapter two has looked at literature relating to the study following the order of the objectives of the study. From the theoretical literature review, identity has been explored, laying ground for the understanding of widow self-identity. In the empirical literature review, literature addressing the four study objectives are explored. In this, widow psychosocial experiences were identified. However, the link between the variables widow psychosocial experiences and widow self-identity was lacking, hence the need for the present study. Also the need for a model for widow identity construction being stipulated.

In the end, the review has looked at Discourse Analysis the theory that guided the study, identifying areas and tasks that facilitated the process effectively. Finally, the chapter has come up with a conceptual framework that showed the independent variable (widow psycho-social experiences), the dependent one (widow self-identity) as well as the moderating variables (life

experiences, loss and disruption). In the end the framework indicated that the widow self-identity would lead to a presence or a lack of self and social transformation that in turn would influence the way the widow related to society.

The study having looked at how Discourse Analysis theoretical framework facilitated the research, as well as the conceptual framework that guided the study, discusses the findings in chapter four. However, before that, the study looks into the methodology used to conduct it, and the related realizations.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1. Introduction**

In this chapter, the study addresses the research design, giving the epistemology that guided the study. It then discusses the study area followed by the target population. After this, the participants including the sampling and sampling techniques are given. This is followed by a presentation of the instruments of data collection and the procedures used. Then the piloting is given and the data analysis procedures. Finally, the chapter gives the ethical considerations that were observed when engaging the participants in the entire study.

#### **3.2. Research Design**

Research design refers to a plan of action that links philosophical assumptions to specific methods (Creswell, 2007; Creswell & Clark, 2007). In this study, the qualitative research design is employed. This design informed four key features namely, the epistemology that informs the research, the philosophical stance underlying the methodology, the methodology itself and the techniques and procedures used to collect data (Crotty, 1998). Finally, it guided the data analysis procedures.

The qualitative design is best suited for this study since the study focuses on the experiences of widows. Quantitative data would reduce the experience to numbers and may not give voice for individuals in the study (Arlene, 2014). Moreover, the advantage of qualitative data is that it allows the researcher to go into the depth of the experiences as demonstrated by the large volume of data handled in this study (Arlene, 2014). Given the volume of data, use of the qualitative method is also justified. The qualitative research method focused on discovering and understanding the experiences (Hennink et al., 2011), perspectives, thoughts of widows, and their practices:

These practices transform the world. They turn the world into a series of representations, including field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings, and memos to the self... qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 3).

For the widow participants, the qualitative research design guided the understanding on the way they related to the world and the way they were attempting to transform the world as they reconstruct their identity.

### **3.3. The Epistemology: Social Constructionism**

This study was based on the social constructionist approach. According to Hacking (1999, p. 33), “Social constructionists tend to maintain that classifications are not determined by how the world is but are convenient ways to represent it”. On this note, “the world is not there to be discovered by empirical research; rather, knowledge is fitted through the theory the researcher adopts” (Keating & Porta, 2008, p.24).

Social constructionism is the prevailing paradigm in Discourse Analysis. Discourse Analysts believe that the detachment role of the researcher is not practicable and that analysts ought to reflexively act on the world such that the world will also act on him/her (Taylor, 2011). The researcher's “reflexivity is not a bias but a position to be acknowledged” (p. 17).

In this study, the researcher's reflexivity was involved as the interaction with widow participants took place. Discourse Analysis guided in fitting the knowledge derived from the psychosocial experiences of widows, into constructs that were used to realize the research objectives. In addition, the interpretivist approach, that allowed the objective and the subjective meanings to intertwine, was employed since it saw human beings as meaningful actors. Through this approach, the meanings that motivate actions were studied (Keating & Porta, 2008). It is this approach that allowed interpretations within Discourse Analysis.

### **3.4. Research Site**

The selected research site was Ngong Sub county, of Kajiado County. This region being in the Nairobi Metropolitan, and only 27 kilometres from the Nairobi City centre, is largely urban. The area incorporates Ngong town as well as Rongai town, both having an estimated population of 94,890 women (KNBS, 2013). This population is largely cosmopolitan, encompassing persons from diverse races, nationalities and local cultures. The individuals from these diversities, brought to the study catchment area varied cultural but also socio-demographic tenets. This diversity was a core factor that led to the choice of the study area.

Ngong Sub county, has individuals from diverse economic abilities and different educational backgrounds (KCIDP, 2013-2017). There are wealthy business persons, as well as middle level earners, not to mention some very poor inhabitants. Incomes range from higher than 500 dollars to a dollar a day. The area also has professionals among them university professors as well as an illiterate population; among them house helps and stone extractors working in quarries. The economic and the educational diversities, enrich the catchment area. The study through snowball reached out to participants from varied strata thus enriching the widow psychosocial experiences. It is based on this that Ngong Sub county was chosen.

### **3.5. Target Population**

The population of widows in Ngong Sub county, targeted by the study was estimated at between 3,329 and 7,608. This was arrived at based on the population of women in Kajiado County that was 281,929 (girl youth population aged 15-29); 233,361 (women in the female reproductive age of 15-49); and 251,618 (women in the labour force aged between 15 and 64). An average of these numbers gave us 255,636 (women between the age of 15 and 64). A total of

64,467 of the total number of women in Kajiado County were said to be in Ngong Sub county (KCIDP, 2013-2017; 2015 projections by KNBS, 2013). From the above, it was estimated that 47,551 of the women were between 15 and 64 years. This is based on the 73.76% of women that are said to be in this age bracket. Based on the 7% -16% widow prevalence given in literature (Peterman, 2012), the study estimated a widow prevalence of between 3,329 and 7,608.

**3.6. Sample Size and Sampling Techniques**

This study used the snowball technique to identify the participants for the study.

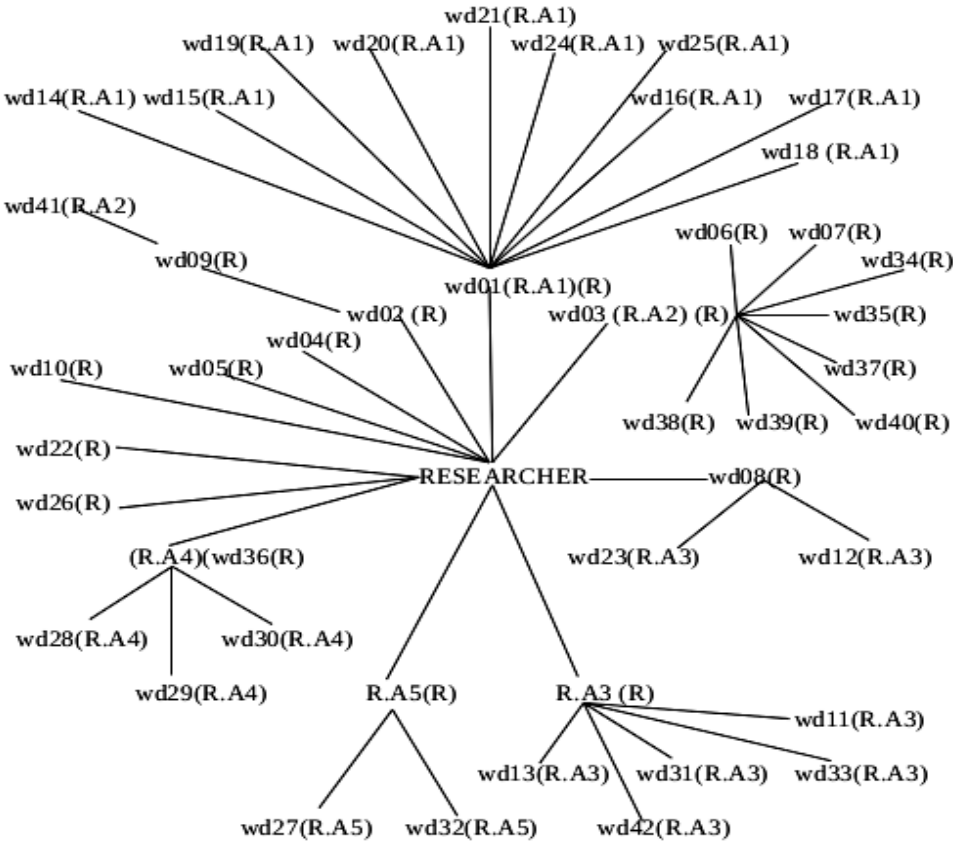


Figure 3.1. Flowchart of the snowball process

In Figure 3.1. “WD” stands for widow, and each widow participant is coded according to the sequence in which they were interviewed. The “R” stands for the researcher while “R.A1 – R.A.5” stand for each of the five research assistants.

Figure 3.1, shows how from the researcher, the participants were contacted. In this design, the concern was not so much on a huge sample of the study population, but rather on the ability to get the needed information. To arrive at the sample, saturation (satiating point) was used. This is when the "repetition of stories occur[ed] among participants and no new information [was] awarded to the researcher[s] by any new participants" (Ishak & Bakar, 2014, p.2). The number at this point was 42 widow participants. The selection of the participants was through the snowball sampling technique, where the first participant, was engaged to reach out to other participants (Gleshne & Peshkin, 1992). Figure 3.1 demonstrates how through snowballing, each of the widow participants, was engaged.

The snowball process started with the researcher engaging nine widow participants (WD01, WD02, WD03, WD04, WD05, WD08, WD10, WD22, and WD26). These widows were known to the researcher prior to the start of the study. The researcher had contacted them earlier in his work with widow groups. Six of the widow participants linked the researcher to other widows as shown in Figure 3.1.

The study made use of five research assistants. Research assistants one and two accepted to assist after having participated as WD01 and WD03. Research assistant four was widowed during the process of data collection. She later accepted to be part of the study as participant WD36. Research assistants two, three and four are counselling psychologists. Research assistant one and two are both teachers. Table 3.1 gives information on the participants and the time spent on the interview. Additional information on the pseudonyms of the participants is given as appendix three.

**Table 3.1. Information of participant's duration of interview**

	<u>Minutes spent with each participant</u>		Interviewer		<u>Minutes spent with each participant</u>		Interviewer
	Off tape	On tape			Off tape	On tape	
WD01	20	29	R: Researcher	WD02	75	216	R: Researcher

WD03	45	101	R	WD04	25	52	R
WD05	50	---	R	WD06	45	50	R
WD07	45	---	R	WD08	25	67	R
WD09	40	54	R	WD10	40	54	R
WD11	30	98	R.A3; Research Assistant 3	WD12	10	15	R.A3
WD13	08	30		WD14	30	08	R.A1
WD15	08	15	R.A1	WD16	25	08	R.A1
WD17	05	07	R.A1	WD18	07	10	R.A1
WD19	20	14	R.A1	WD20	20	15	R.A1
WD21	05	25	R.A1	WD22	60	---	R
WD23	15	58	R.A3	WD24	10	10	R.A1
WD25	30	---	R.A1	WD26	140	---	R
WD27	15	29	R.A5	WD28	20	63	R.A4
WD29	15	37	R.A4	WD30	15	42	R.A4
WD31	35	---	R.A5	WD32	10	11	R.A3
WD33	20	68	R.A3	WD34	90	---	R
WD35	80	---	R	WD36	170	---	R
WD37	30	---	R	WD38	20	---	R
WD39	10	30	R	WD40	40	---	R
WD41	20	---	R.A2	WD42	10	20	R.A3

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In summary, 42 widow participants were interviewed. Of these 31 were tape recorded and 11 were interviewed and notes taken. The tape recording generated 171,500 words amounting to 326 pages of widow discourse. This was in addition to the notes taken from the experiences of those that were not tape recorded. This was deemed sufficient data for the study.

### 3.7. Instruments of Data Collection

In the present study, the in-depth interview instrument (Given, 2008) was used to come up with qualitative data. “The social constructionist interviewing places priority on



individualised interactions and adapting the interview as appropriate to the emergent relationship that is formed between the interviewer and the interviewee in the course of the interview” (Patton, 2015, p. 432). The choice of the interview guide was arrived at following its ability to reach out to the interviewee (Roulston, 2010). Also in qualitative research approach which concerns itself with the meanings and experiences of the “whole” person or local culture and context (Winter, 2000), this instrument is best suited in the collection of data.

The present study investigates how people flexibly deploy available discursive resources within their environment to create and negotiate representations of social reality (Marianne & Louise, 2002; Patton, 2015). The in-depth interviews (Kvale, 2007; McNamara, 2009) focussing on widow psychosocial experiences, cover the widow's demography then her life starting from her childhood, and travelling through her youth, adult, marriage, and life after the death of the husband. Inquiry related to identity construction, destruction and reconstruction, focuses on three phases: before marriage, marriage, and widowhood period. In the end, the instrument sought suggestions on how widows can improve their lives, thus engage in Social Transformation. The instrument is included in Appendix one.

### **3.8. Pilot Study: Testing the Reliability and the Validity of the Instruments**

#### ***Reliability of the instrument***

This seeks to find out whether an instrument of measure “produces the same results when repeated either with the same population or under similar circumstances with another population” (Selvam, 2017, p.53). To realise reliability, the instrument was subjected to five widows at the pilot stage. After each interview, the instrument was compared to the findings, to see whether there were major flaws that were compromising its reliability. This process was also discussed with peers and supervisors. At the end of the five participants at the pilot stage, the

instrument was found to be reliable.

### ***Validity of the instrument***

The encounter with the first widow participant and the subsequent four participants introduced initial data to the study. These participants were arrived at through the snowball technique. At this pilot stage, the validity of the instrument was tested. This meant that the study sought to find out if the instrument of measure “measure[d] what it purport[ed] to measure” (Selvam, 2017, p.53). The study set out to explore widow psychosocial experiences, see how widows linked the experiences to their self-identity, and find out how widows dealt with these experiences in an attempt to improve their lives. In the end, the study set out to evolve a model to empower widows equipping them towards being contributors to social transformation.

The initial data collected at the pilot stage, was juxtaposed with the four study objectives. The findings from the data were found to adequately respond to the needs of the study. This exercise, therefore, rendered the instrument valid for the study.

### **3.9 Procedures of Data Collection**

The entry point of the process of data collection was the consulted literature. From the constant and systematic processes, it emerged that the variables widow psychosocial experiences, and widow self-identity were core issues that needed re-dress in understanding widowhood. Though there appeared to be a link between the two, the association had not been well dealt with within the framework of a well-grounded theory. It is based on this that the study sought to address the literature gap.

With authorization from the Tangaza University College Ethics Committee (TUCREC) and from the National Commission for Science Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI), the

first widow participant was contacted. Having been informed of the interview procedures and giving consent, a meeting time and venue were agreed upon. Following a successful meeting and tape recording of the first interview, subsequent participants were met and interviews done. In the process, of data collection, five research assistants, three of whom were counsellors were contacted and trained. They assisted in reaching out to different participants. This is shown in Figure 3.1. In addition, information on the length of the interviews and on whether the participants were tape recorded or not, as well as the interviewer, are given in Table 3.1.

*Taping:* Of the 42 widows who participated in the study, 31 (73.8%) were tape recorded while 11 (26.19%) were interviewed without being tape recorded. Notes were written to capture their experiences. The goal of the study was to tape record as many participants as possible (till the attainment of satiation point) in order to come up with widow discourses to allow for a Discourse Analysis. However, ethical considerations necessitated that any widow participant that was contacted, and was willing to take part in the study, was to be included whether she agreed to the tape recording or not. Based on this, the above percentages were realised, and information derived from the participants.

*Duration of interview:* This section presents the duration that each of the participants was engaged off tape and on tape. The aim is to seek whether there may be a relationship between the duration a widow participant shares and her level of widow category. In addition, whether the different research assistants influenced the interview duration. The total time spent with the 42 widow participants was 2723 minutes (45.38 hours). On average, 64.83 minutes (1 hour 4.83 minutes) were spent with each participant. Of this total time, 1262 minutes (21.03 hours) was taped, and 1461 minutes (24.35 hours) was off tape.

### **3.10. Data Analysis**

The study sought to come up with widow psychosocial experiences. It also focussed on coming up with elements of widow self-identity issues. In an attempt to realise these two aims, thematic analysis guided by Boyatzis (1998) and Crabtree and Miller (1999) facilitated the study with six stages stipulated in Table 3.2.

**Table 3.2. Thematic analysis and coding process**

Stage	Task	Adaptation of the Task and the Application of the Stages in this Research
Stage 1	Developing the coding manual	This stage identified the coding template (Selvam, 2017). Informed by literature it came up with psycho-social themes related to widows and to women in general. The name or label given to each category guided on knowing the themes as they occurred.
Stage 2	Testing the reliability of the code	This is to determine the applicability of the code to the raw information (Boyatzis, 1998). At the pilot stage, five discourses were tested. Peers were invited to also test the themes, little modification was needed. With this, these five also were incorporated later as part of the larger sample.
Stage 3	Summarising data through the identification of themes and sub-themes	The study re-read the discourse, and came up with sub-themes as well as sub sub-themes generated from the widow discourse. This was to facilitate "consciously processing the information (Boyatzis, 1998, p.45)".
Stage 4	Applying template of codes and additional coding	The study generated thematic trees showing the categories, themes, sub-themes and sub-sub-themes to help in the analytic technique (Crabtree & Miller, 1999). The initial data (315 pages) was subjected to NVivo 12 computerised data management programme, codes developed in stage one guided the NVivo codes. Nodes were matched to related segments of data. Unmatched segments of data were identified as additional codes and were used to describe new themes observed (Boyatzis, 1998).
Stage 5	Connecting the codes and identifying the themes.	This is the process of discovering themes and patterns in the data (Crabtree & Miller, 1999). This process facilitated the connecting of codes and the identification of themes under headings directly related to the study variables and research questions.
Stage 6	Corroborating and legitimating coded themes	Corroborating refers to the process of confirming the findings (Crabtree & Miller, 1999). In this process the study facilitate further clustering of themes identified in the coded text. This helped avoid fabricating evidence while interpreting data.

NB: The six stage process allowed for the credibility of the process and hence the credibility of the findings.

**Note:** Adopted from Fereday & Muir-Cochrane (2006) who in turn adapt their steps from Boyatzis (1998) and Crabtree & Miller (1999).

Also, 13 tools (areas and tasks) of Discourse Analysis were used. Under areas of Discourse Analysis there is conversations, discourses, figured worlds, intertextuality, situated meanings and social languages. Under tasks of Discourse Analysis, the study employed

connections, identities, politics, practices, relationships semiotics, and significance.

From the initial 326 pages (171,500 words), 62 pages (42,217 words) having themes of widow psychosocial experiences were identified. Also another 12 pages (9,691 words) having themes relating to widow self-identity were found. The data of 62 pages of widow psychosocial experiences and 12 pages of widow self-identity was subjected to NVivo 12 Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis System. NVivo 12 is programme for analysing qualitative data (CAQDAS, 2014; Richards, & Richards, 1991). The system presupposes an identification of themes and sub-themes that are keyed in as nodes and sub-nodes respectively (Tehmina, 2003). After this, the analyst goes through the entire transcribed discourse identifying verbatim texts that fall under the given themes. These are dragged and placed under the relevant themes and sub themes. In the end, the system allows for the generation of tables and figures showing frequencies of each entry. This allows the study identify the emphasis given to each theme.

The 62 pages of widow psychosocial themes were used to address research question one: what psychosocial experiences do widows in an urban setting go through? and three: how does the widow relate to these experiences in her attempt to find her position in society? The 62 pages of widow psychosocial experiences plus the 19 pages of widow self-identity were used to respond to the study question two: How do the widow psycho-social experiences influence the widow's self-identity?

Additional information came from the interviews with widow participants, off-tape. From these interviews, notes totalling 31 pages (12,133 words) soon after the time together with the participants. In addition to this data, additional data derived from interactions with persons who were close to widows, as well as information from media, was used to enrich the study. These media debates were from BBC (Skarlatos, 2017) and from Victoria's Lounge programme on Nation Television (Rubadiri, 2017). Finally continued journaling on issues that emerged in

relation to widows, also helped enrich the data.

During the entire process, the three postulates by Sebald (2011) referring to Schutz's, on qualitative data analysis were observed: "logical consistency", to establish the highest degree of clarity of the conceptual framework and method applied; "subjective interpretation": grounded in the subjective meaning of action; "adequacy": consistency between the researcher's constructs and those found in common sense widow experiences.

In addressing objective four, to develop a model for widow identity construction (MWIC) guided by Discourse Analysis, aimed at guiding the widow towards self and social transformation, the study sought what widows suggest as best practice to relate to their experiences. Also it sought suggestions of widows on the best way to construct their identity. Finally, with the entire information the study proposed a model for widow identity construction.

In following the steps laid down by Discourse Analysis, the study observed rigour and enhanced validity. That notwithstanding, in the end, the use of a third party consultant was employed to alleviate researcher biases. This was taken from peers. Also the sharing of the process and of the findings with supervisors helped give feedback and suggestions (Turner, 2010). With these stages, the study was able to look at all tenets of the qualitative data and analysis, and hence construct a set of findings that reflect an authentic Discourse Analysis of widow self-identity. In the end, the process facilitated the formulation of a model for widow identity.

### **3.11. Legal and Ethical Considerations**

This study observed ethical principles, which refer to the standards of conduct of a given profession or group. These standards are defined through a professional code of conduct

(Bhattacharjee, 2012). In this section, the study looks at the standards it observed so as not to fault the ethical considerations.

Before the commencement of the data collection, the researcher got authorizations from the relevant research and ethics bodies. The first came from the university, represented by the university supervisors and the Tangaza University College Research and Ethics Committee (TUCREC). The second authority was from The National Commission for Sciences, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI). In Kenya, this is the national body mandated with authorizing the conducting of research. After the acquisition of these permissions, the study contacted the participants following the stipulated ethical standards.

The first of the standards that the study observed is voluntary participation and harmlessness (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005). This means that the participants were free to join and/or to withdraw from the study at any time without any unfavourable consequences. Participants were explained of the procedure and of what was involved (including the recording) and upon agreement to participate, they signed an "informed consent" form (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005, p.101; Mikkelsen, 2004, p.337) before they started participating. The consent form had clear descriptions of their rights to participate and to withdraw. For a copy of the form, refer to appendix two. There was also a withdrawal form provided, for any participant who would have wished to pull off from the interview. However, this was not used since no participant withdrew.

In line with this first principle, there are some participants who felt uncomfortable having a male interviewer. The reasons given was that widowhood is very much a feminine issue. Following this, five ladies were recruited as research assistants. They were trained and informed of the ordinances of the data collection, before being sent out into the field. Information on the participants that each research assistant interviewed, is given in Table 3.1.

On the second aspect, the participants were informed on anonymity and confidentiality.

This means that the reader of the final report is not able to identify and link particular responses to particular persons (anonymity). Also, the identity of the participants is not divulged to other persons (confidentiality).

The third tenet is disclosure. This means that the researcher had an obligation to provide sufficient information before the participant accepted to take part in the study. This information allowed the participant to make informed choice.

The fourth tenet that the study adhered to was analysis and reporting. The researcher observed ethical obligations to the scientific community on data analysis and reporting. This means that there was no misrepresentation and misreporting (Bhattacharjee, 2012).

In addition to the above tenets, the study was keen on "whom to accept as a sponsor, how much to reveal about the research to the interviewees, how to protect their privacy, how to compensate them for their collaboration, how to keep them informed about the results of the research and how to avoid manipulation". Leedy and Ormrod (2005, p.102) add the "right to privacy" on the part of the participants and "honesty with professional colleagues" on the part of the researcher.

This study remained committed to ensure that all involved adhered to these principles to safeguard the no-harm principle to the participants. This ensured that the persons involved in the research did and will not face any harm. To check on this principle, three research assistants are trained psychological counsellors. Based on this there was a probability of counselling that was availed when needed by any of the participants. Finally the steps ascertained that the planning, the process and the end result are in tandem with the requirements of ethical research bodies.

### **3.12. Summary of Chapter Three**

This chapter has looked at the methodology used in the research. In it the research design including the epistemological framework have been addressed. After this, the study has



addressed the study area and the participants, as well as the techniques of data collection and the instruments used. Finally, it has given the data collection procedure and the data analysis, before giving the ethical considerations.

The section set the ground for data collection and for the subsequent chapters. It has given the introduction to the research, the literature appertaining to the study as well as the methods employed. This paved way for the collection of data and the subsequent analysis and presentation, before giving the conclusions, findings and recommendations.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS**

#### **4.1. Introduction**

This chapter on findings emanating from the data, focuses on widow psychosocial experiences. It starts by giving the demographic data of the participants, then presents findings from data on widow psychosocial experiences relating them to objective one. With these psychosocial experiences, the chapter looks at how these relate to widow self-identity, thus addressing objective two. Having explored findings on the two study variables namely widow psychosocial experiences and widow self-identity, the chapter delves into findings on how widow participants relate to the experiences (their coping strategies). This is followed by suggestions given by the participants on how best to relate to these experiences as they attempt to socially transform their environments. The coping mechanisms and the suggestions deal with objective three. Finally, findings relating to objective four, model for widow identity construction are addressed.

#### **4.2 Demographic Information of the Participants**

This section gives the county and the countries of origin of each of the 42 widow participants. It then addresses the participants' age, level of education and occupation. In addition the section also gives the level of income, the type of housing as well as the location of the housing of the participants.

##### **4.2.1. Origins of participants**

Figure 4.1., shows that 37 of the widow participants interviewed are originally from the Kenya's 18 out of the 42 Counties (marked in bold).

## Participant's county of origin

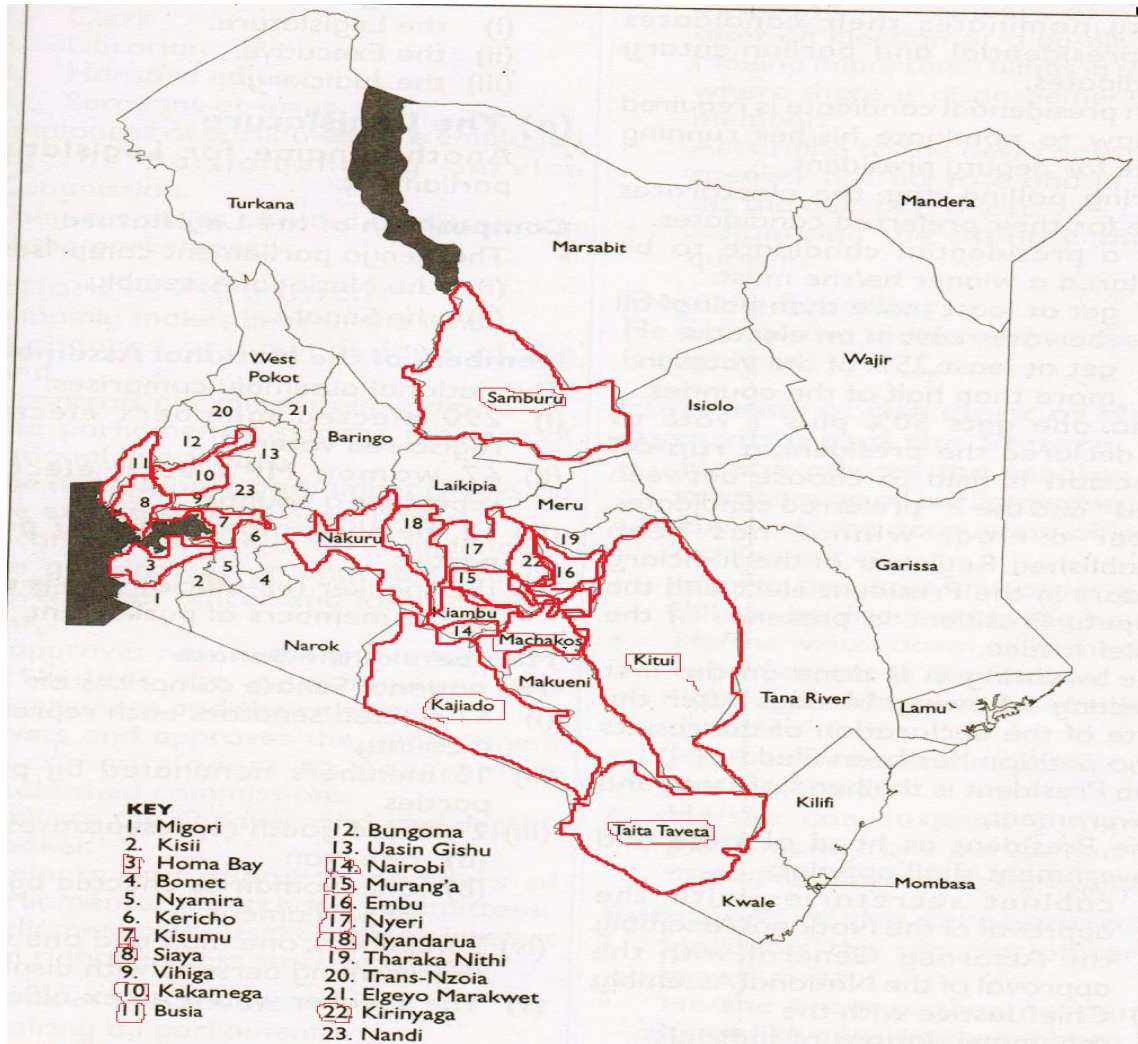


Figure 4.1. Participant's county of origin

In Figure 4.1., the bold lines in the map and circulating the numbers in the key indicate the counties from where participants originally came. Kajiado is leading with 10 participants followed by the neighbouring Kiambu County with eight participants. Kakamega, Siaya, Kisumu, and Embu with two each. This is followed by Nakuru, Nyandarua, Kirinyaga, Kitui, Taita Taveta, Machakos, Murang'a, Nyeri, Busia and Homa Bay each having one participant. Almost all the participants have had some stay in Nairobi though none originated from there.

Five of the widow participants came from outside Kenya, three from African countries (D.R.C., Eritrea and Somali). The other two came from Greece and Italy. Despite this diversity in place of origin, all resided in Ngong Sub county at the time of the interviews. This distribution enriches the widow discourses, and gives a representation of Kenya.

#### 4.2.2. Age at which the participant was widowed

The study sought to find out at what age the participants were widowed. This would help inform the number of years each had undergone the widow experiences.

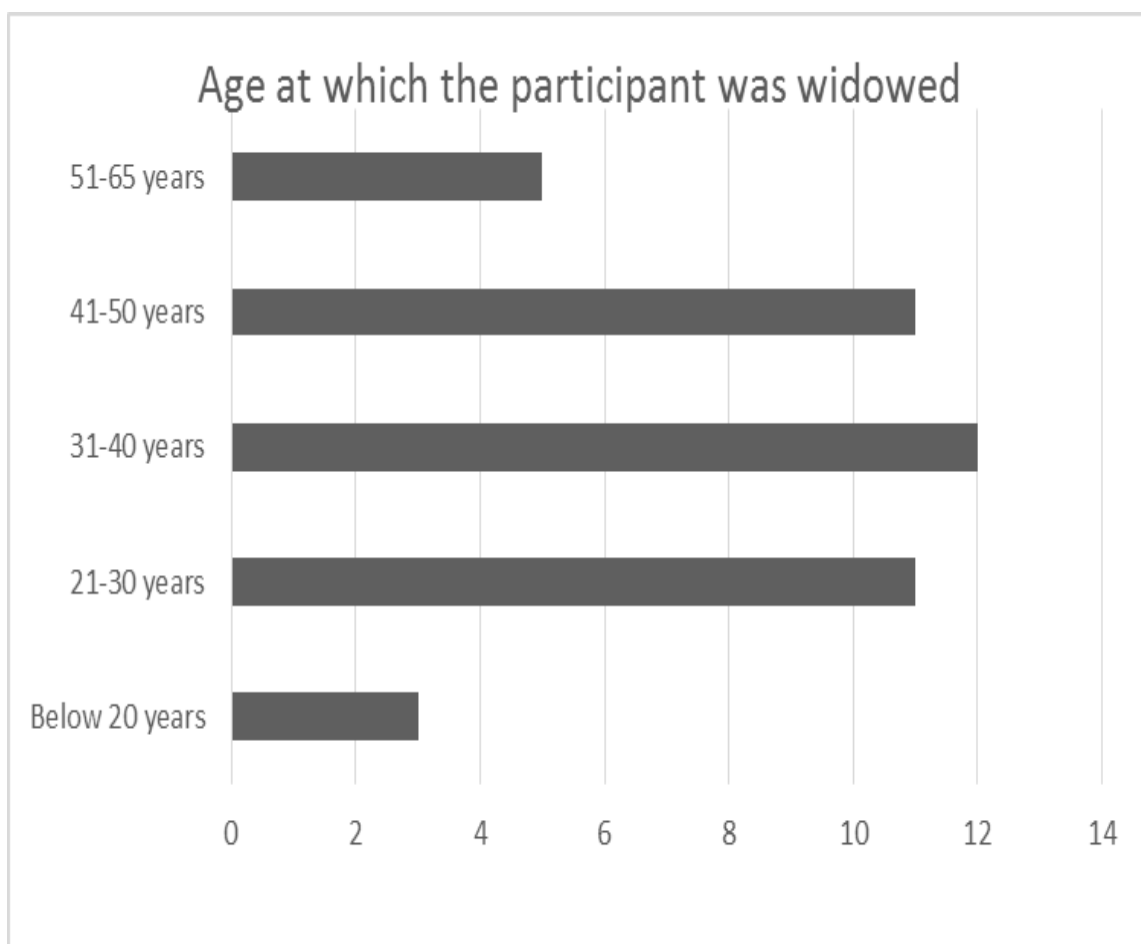


Figure 4.2. Age at which the participant was widowed

The number of those widowed below the age of 20 years is three. This points to teenage marriages which tend to go hand in hand with incompleteness of formal primary and secondary schooling. However, the average age of time of widowhood is when one is between the age of

31 to 40 years. This is closely followed by ages 41-50 and 21-30 years. The low number of those widowed after the age of 50 years is not an indication that widowhood reduces with age. On the contrary, according to literature, it increases. Nevertheless, since the study sought to reach out to widows below 65 years, those who were introduced to the study, tended to be young. With that information, the study went further to find out the present age of the participants. This is shown in Table 4.1.

**Table 4.1. Present age of participants**

<b>Participant's age</b>	<b>Frequency of occurrence</b>	<b>Participant's age</b>	<b>Frequency of occurrence</b>
Between 31-40 years	2	46	2
Between 41-50 years	1	48	2
Between 51-60 years	5	49	3
30	1	50	3
33	2	51	1
35	2	52	2
36	1	55	2
40	1	56	1
42	1	61	1
43	2	65	1
44	2	67	1
45	1	68	1
		Unknown	1
<b>Total number of participants</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>Total number of participants</b>	<b>21</b>

As seen in Table 4.1, the ages of the first three participants were not given and so could only be inferred. The last participant's age however remained unknown and no inference was possible. The youngest age of the widow participant is 30 years while the eldest is 68 years. The average age of the widows is 49 years. Based on information from Figure 4.2 and Table 4.1, the average age that the participants were widowed is 45 years. With this information, it follows that the participants on average had had four years of widowhood.

### 4.2.3. Level of participant's education

The levels of education of the widow participants range from Primary to Masters level as shown in Figure 4.3.

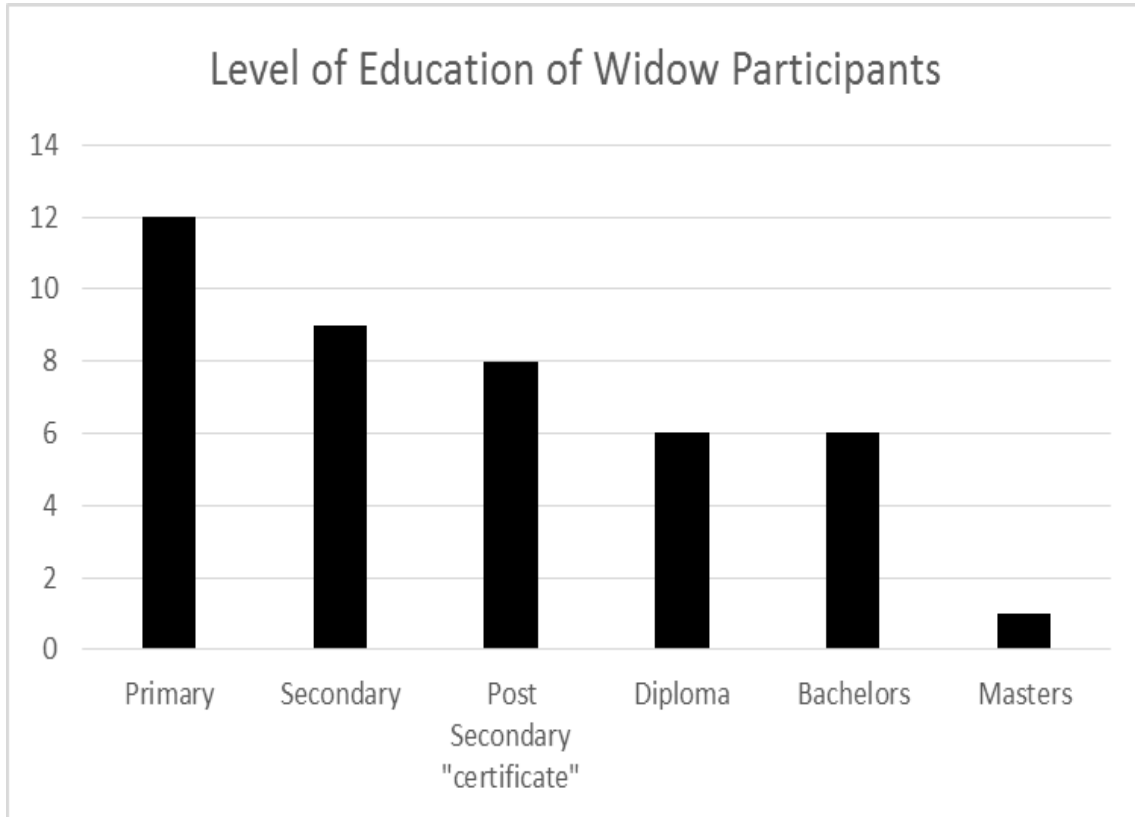


Figure 4.3. Level of education of the participants

Figure 4.3, shows that all participants had formal education. However, the entry in a particular level, does not mean that the participant completed the level. The gradual reduction in the number of participants that move from primary all the way to Masters level, is an indication of persons who due to various reasons were not able to move to higher levels of education. Among the reasons indicated were lack of fees and other upkeep money related to schooling. This is based on the fact that Free Primary Education came into existence in Kenya from 2003 (Abuya and colleagues, 2015) and subsidised secondary education later in 2008 (Brudevold-Newman, 2017). In this way educational level becomes an indicator of levels of economic

muscle of the participant.

#### 4.2.4. Occupation of the participants

The level of education presented prior, appears to have a relationship with the participant's occupation.

**Table 4.2. Occupation of the participants**

<b>Value Label</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Valid Percent</b>
Casual labour	9	21.43
Low cadre support staff	5	11.90
Middle cadre support staff	6	14.29
High cadre support Staff	2	4.76
Low cadre professional	3	7.14
Middle cadre professional	3	7.14
High cadre professional	2	4.76
Business	12	28.57
<b>Total</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>100.0</b>

All participants in the professional cadres had above-secondary school education. The participants in the casual labour cadre had not gone past secondary level education. The casual labour and the business do not fall into the category of formal employment. The business category has the largest number of participants (12). This is due to the large number of businesses that participants engaged as they search for financial sustenance. The categories of businesses determine the varieties of earnings as shown in Table 4.3.

#### 4.2.5. Levels of income of the participants

**Table 4.3. Levels of income of the participants**

<b>Income Level</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Valid Percent</b>
above 100,000Kshs	5	11.90
50,000 to 99,000Kshs	6	14.29
20,000 to 49,000Kshs	6	14.29
10,000 to 19,999Kshs	14	33.33
Below 10,000Kshs	11	26.19
<b>Total</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>100</b>

The distributions of occupations does not appear to directly relate to the incomes. There is a notable difference between persons employed by the Government and those employed by international bodies. As noted earlier there is a variety of businesses leading to difference in earnings. A participant could be a vegetable vendor or one that sells food in construction sites and earns barely three dollars a day. On the other extreme a business lady may be earning over 500,000Kshs a month from real estate business and from rental houses. Both these persons are in business.

Income, appears to have a direct relationship with the type of housing the participant lives in and even where the house is located. This is presented in sections 4.2.6 and 4.2.7 respectively.

#### **4.2.6. Type of housing of the participants**

Housing carries with it, various situations relating to the category of the participants. Ownership of the house is to a large extent in-tandem with land ownership.

**Table 4.4. Type of housing of the participants**

<b>Type of housing</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Valid Percent</b>
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<b>Type of housing</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Valid Percent</b>
Own house permanent	14	33.33
Own house semi-permanent	13	30.95
Rental House permanent	3	7.14
Rental house semi-permanent	11	26.19
No given/ inferred response	1	2.38
<b>Total</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>100</b>

Owning a house is important in the societies that the participants come from. This is given by 64.28% (27) who own a house compared to 33.34% (14) who lived in rental houses. In one of the cases, this importance of a house is noted when a dead man has to be placed in a house before burial, "...And by the way I did not have a house there at [my rural] home. So they just constructed a small house so as to place the body there (Patsy)<sup>1</sup>". Being in a rental house, and not having a steady income, appears challenging to the participants.

#### 4.2.7. Location of the participant's house

In addition to the type of housing, the locality of the house is noted. Those whose houses are in the upper middle class locality are five (11.90%). Another 45.24% (19) have houses in the middle class quarters. The remaining 18 (42.86%) have houses in the low class quarters. These houses are either owned or rented. Throughout the discourse, the participants show deliberate effort to own a house. The participant's income determines where the house is located. These efforts are seen prior to and during the widowhood period. Even those who at the time of the interview did not have own houses, prayed that they get them.

This section on demography has looked at the place of origin of the participants. Following that the age and the educational level of the participants has been presented. The

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1 Patsy is the pseudonym given to the participant. Each of the participants is given a pseudonym; cf appendix 3.

section has also addressed findings on the occupation of these participants. The type of housing the participants occupy and the location in which the house is, have been of interest to the study. With the findings on the demographic data, the study has given a face to the categories of participants that it related with. Having given the demographic information, the study presents the widow psychosocial experiences in response to objective one.

### 4.3. Widow Psychosocial Experiences

This addresses objective one of the study. The study identifies ten categories of widow psychosocial experiences as shown in Figure 4.4. The categories of widow psychosocial experiences and the frequencies with which they occur in the widow discourse, is presented. The ascending order indicates the importance given to each category as derived from the widow discourse. This means that the socio-cultural experiences were given prominence while the sexed body experiences received the least attention.

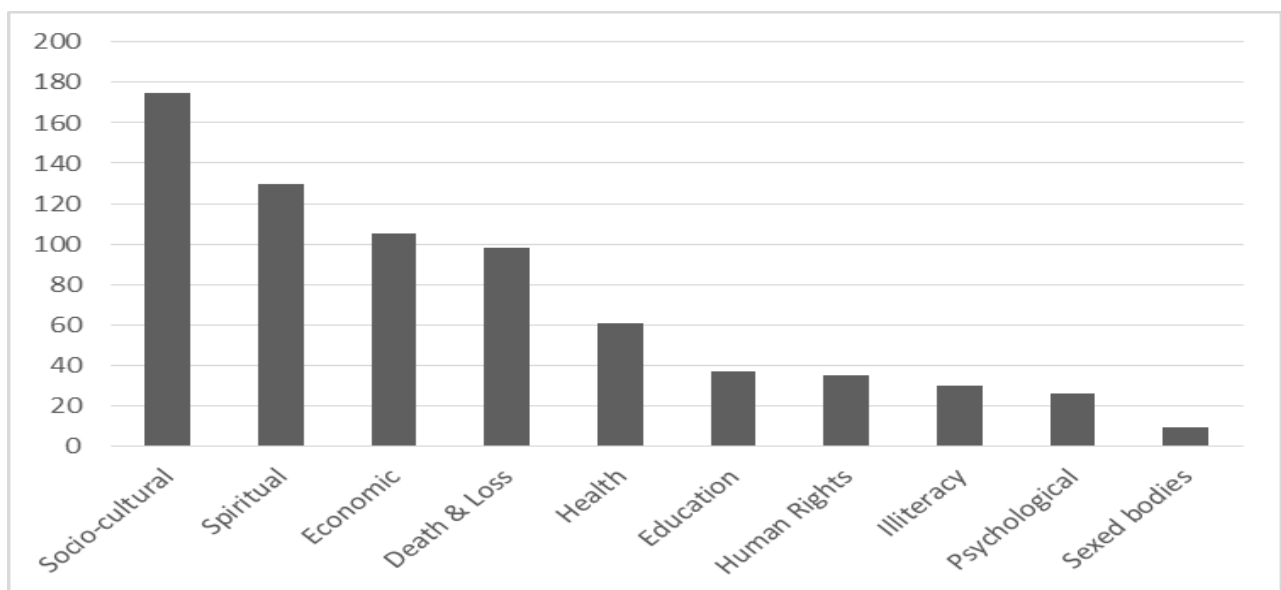


Figure 4.4. Categories of widow psychosocial experiences

In the following sections each widow psychosocial category is elaborated, giving the sub-themes that fall under it. Selected texts of the actual words or paraphrases from the participants are given to demonstrate how the participants communicated the category. To avoid treating the participants as tools and to enhance confidentiality, invented pseudonyms are used for the participants. Appendix four gives the pseudonyms.

#### 4.3.1. Widow psychosocial experiences related to socio-cultural issues

This category incorporates ethnic community, family, friends, issues of polygamy, re-marriage as well as beliefs in witchcraft. The sub-themes and the sub-sub-themes that emerge under each as well as the number of entries under each title are indicated in Table 4.5. Due to the large frequency of entries, the family ties are presented first incorporating family of in-laws, nuclear family as well as family of origin. This is followed by the themes of friends and workmates. The two leading themes show the importance of socio-cultural relationships in the lives of the participants.

**Table 4.5. Widow psychosocial experiences related to socio-cultural issues**

<b>Themes, sub-themes and sub-sub-themes</b>	<b>Number of entries</b>
Ethnic community	7
Family ties	5
Family of in-laws	22
Brother-in-law	4
Father-in-law	5
Mother-in-law	11
Rejection	14
Sister-in-law	3
Nuclear family	14
Family of origin	8
Father	12
Mother	19
Siblings	15
Friends & workmates	11
Polygamy	11
Re-marriage	12
Witchcraft	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>175</b>

Later, the issues of re-marriage are given. This is mainly seen as pressure from outside rather than from the inside of the participant. Finally, the theme of ethnicity is presented together with witchcraft and rejection. These three appear intertwined in the widow discourse.

### *Family ties*

These ties incorporate the themes of family of in-laws, nuclear family and family of origin, are significant for the participants as shown by Angy, “My mother is my mentor...and also my brother...every time we were together.” Angy, a teacher with adult literacy, is widowed before she acquires any post-secondary education. Being in her early twenties, with two children and expectant, she is thrown out of the house of the in-laws where they were living with the husband before his demise. She turns to the mother and to the siblings. This relationship started early before she was married.

Bensie, though a high cadre professional, experiences attempts of invasion from the in-laws soon after the death of the husband. However, her family of origin come in swiftly to shield her. Also her earlier formation from her parents is noted, “My mum was very patient to just show me how to wash the dishes and practically she could show me but both of them [mother and father] played a big role and helped a lot in shaping who I am today”.

These family ties experienced at an early age, long before widowhood inculcates values in the growing child. “...dad who was empowering us... he wanted us to be strong and firm so that we can always take care of ourselves.... Dad always used to say most of us the bond between us siblings was very important and the sharing...” (Finly). These values later feature strongly in the life of the widow. For Finly, the relationship with her siblings inculcated during childhood, supports her in her widowhood. Since she had been married to one from a different ethnic community, when the husband died, the brothers came to her rescue.

In the case of Bencie, the brothers and other close relatives support her as she is nursing the husband who is struggling with Cancer. As he eventually passes on, they move into her home to take up all the arrangements.

I had a lot of family support even with the preparations for the burial and even after with even my brothers they were always there for me and had been always there for me and I must also say even if it is a study you are doing you have also been there for me..... (Bencie).

This support allows her to gradually get back to her feet. She is able to change homes, carry on with her professionalism and take care of her children. With this therefore ties with the family of origin is noted as significant. These ties have to have begun in childhood, instituted by the parents.

As noted, a core challenge is within the family ties. This is mainly coming from the family of in-laws. "But my father-in-law hates me, he does not want to see me and he does not want to speak to me but I tell God, the bad thing is for me to insult that old man" (Oila). This participant only managed primary school education. Following early pregnancy, she got married. After years of struggle, living together with a husband who was an alcoholic, she has to endure additional pain after the demise of the husband. The father-in-law attempts to throw her out of the family land. She is at the time trying to feed her large family through casual jobs, as she follows the dues of the late husband.

Nevertheless, this animosity from the in-laws, should not be taken as the norm, "...my father in law, when my husband passed on, he used to come to visit us, to see the grandchildren, even when he had something he would say take this ... so when he died, I saw that, another problem again" (Bilian). Bilian goes through immense pain when the father-in-law died three months after the demise of her husband. Two men who were of great support to her followed each other closely. She expresses the difficulties she finds herself in after these two deaths, "I

am not able to go to the home.” She expresses that the closeness with the in-laws was only on the part of the father-in-law.

Closer relations with the family of in-laws is expressed by Zuk. She is a career woman, who following extensive travelling, is well exposed. She gets married to one from a different nationality. She however fits so well within the family of the husband and hence says, “My family was his family and his was mine”. This relationship helps her in widowhood. She gets a lot of support from the family of the husband when she loses her husband. By the time her siblings who are in a far country join her, she already has immense support. This continues throughout her widowhood.

Family ties are significant in the lives of the participants. While the relationship with family, is magnified during widowhood, how it was prior to widowhood is important. For the family of origin, the relationship all the way from childhood is significant. This is what builds one’s relationship with siblings. Relationship with in-laws is also important when the husband is alive. Through this, the participant is able to gain support after the loss. This leads the study to the second theme within the socio-cultural category, namely friends and workmates.

### ***Friends and workmates***

Friends and workmates play a significant role in the socio-cultural lives of widows. This is seen in the sharing of Zuk, who earlier was noted as having an amicable relationship with her in-laws. In this instance, she expresses support from friends.

They [friends] were very supportive. They were very very supportive...I could not believe the crowd that came up from my work place. They were very many and I was very encouraged. They were very very many...cooks came and everybody. They were very very many...they would come and do the house chores every day. Even when we came back from the burial, they were there waiting for us in the bus station (Zuk).

This support is even more instrumental since she is in a foreign country, away from her siblings and members of her family of origin. From her discourse this is pegged to the

relationship she had prior to the husband's death. With her education and professionalism, she seems to have nurtured an atmosphere around her that attracted her in-laws as well as her friends and colleagues.

As it is with the case of family members, a blanket statement stating they are good or bad, cannot cover all friends and workmates. The experience of Casey is not so pleasant. "...come to friends, whom I thought they were friends, (laughter and sigh) you know I realised, women who used to call no longer call. And I realised it is me calling." Casey receives support from her working colleagues, but soon after, they "abandon" her. She faces immense struggles generated by the brothers of the late husband who attempt to take property off her as soon as the burial is over. She feels abandoned even by those she thought were close to her. This is especially so for those that were family friends. The case applies to both male and female friends.

From these discourses, there are friends who knowing the participant, support her soon after the death of the spouse. There are those among these who continue with the support as the widow goes through the healing process. However, there are those that keep distance leaving the widow feeling abandoned. These friends are both male and female. They may be also neighbours, workmates or both. When family and friends offer support to the widow, the challenges of widowhood appear lessened. How these relationships are in widowhood, appears linked to relationship prior to widowhood. With this understanding of family ties, friends and workmates, the next theme is re-marriage.

### ***Re-marriage***

This relationship also affects widows. Among the participants that the study interviewed, re-marriage carried with it several complications:

Yea it's one married woman who told me that...Once your children are big you can remarry and I'm thinking like first that is not in the bible secondly you just don't go... so that day I

was angry... I broke down I was hurt, why are these people not sensitive to us ... (Bensie).

Bensie, a devoted Christian, seeks solace in the church groups. She and the husband were active members of the church. After the husband's demise, she meet a woman who is a fellow church member. From Bensie's position, the woman does not listen to her or spend time trying to find out how she is fairing. Rather, she advises her on matters of re-marriage. Bensie is hurt by the insensitivity in the words of this married woman. It appears she expected married women to be more empathic and understanding to widows. This position sheds light on the importance of listening to widows. If only the society would listen more, it would understand the position of the widow better.

The theme of re-marriage is also discussed by Patsy who though left with almost nothing after the death of the husband, prefers to toil for her upkeep. She cautions on the dangers of "rushing" into marriage.

Because we have heard of many cases you find that a person has rushed to go and get married. For example I would have rushed to go and get married, I would have arrived in that place, [and] I have been left children who are in fact eight. There is no one to take care of them. And there is no one that I would have said I am going to his place when I have eight children. Then the second thing you may be married by this man and he may decide to start [sexually] using these children. Now he may make even the lives of these children to be ruined. And even you as the mother will have no future. Because there in that house there will be chaos. Now perhaps a corpse may be found, divorce may result. There may be many problems. I usually pray a lot that a person can at least stand and even if she will get married but she should take time to first think. Not just to rush since you can meet you are running then you fall into temptation.

Patsy had had a strong background founded on the post-secondary education that she had. Throughout her marital relationship, she portrays strength that is also seen in her widowhood. On the issue of re-marriage, she highlights several points. There is the issue of children. She fears that in re-marriage, the care of children is compromised. She infers that the new man may not take as much care of the children as the previous father. In this way, she feels that the



children may not be accepted in this new family. Worse still, the girls children may be sexually abused by their new father. In this, chaos may arise that would even lead to divorce or even murder. For her, when the life of the children is ruined through re-marriage, her future is also damaged. Towards the end, she does not totally rule out re-marriage. She however cautions that it should be well thought lest it becomes a quick temptation. This information sheds light to those journeying with widows and especially those who may look at re-marriage as a widow's quick fix.

### ***Polygamy***

Still on Patsy, polygamy featured. "... the time he married me by the way he was a person who had a wife and children." While this is not really a widowhood issue, it affects it. This is because apparently a marriage relationship stands out significantly in determining one's identity and the subsequent widowhood experiences. Patsy justifies her entering into marriage as a second wife.

...the wife was going (away), even she wanted to leave, and now my husband used to ask her when you leave whom do you leave the children with? Now the wife used to point at me...I liked children and I never liked to see a child suffering or lacking peace and I am there.

It also appears that the first wife did not challenge the coming of the second wife. It is not clear what transpires between Patsy and the co-wife. However, on being widowed, she loses her property to the brothers-in-law. There appears to be an underlying disempowerment on the part of the woman in this community. The concentration of the widow is on the children, a stand that is jeopardised by her being disinherited. Further research on the intricacies of African marriage including polygamy, calls for continued research.

### ***Ethnicity, witchcraft and rejection***

These three elements are intertwined in the widow discourse and so are discussed together. "...I got married to someone who was not from my tribe so that also was an issue so it was an issue to others but my mum kept on telling that even if he is from another tribe and you are getting a, b, c, d just try it". In this relationship, Finly, who meets her husband in her course of duty, finds resistance from her in-laws. This is based on her being from another ethnic community. She manages through the support of her husband. As soon as the husband passes on, she is quickly side-lined.

Marrying from a different ethnic community is not welcome by some members of the family. With ethnic rifts, the woman is suspected of causing or having a hand in the husband's death. This quickly culminates in total rejection after the husband's death, and with it, the widow is denied inheritance.

Rejection and accusations of "killing" the husband, and the subsequent injustice of being denied inheritance, is not unique to widows from different ethnic communities. Even where the husband and wife come from the same community, the widow is seen struggling to be accepted. The struggles appear to have started even when the husband was alive, and intensify at widowhood, "... I felt so low and as if I didn't belong to that family so I even told my father that I feel like I didn't belong to my husband's family. I feel rejection, I feel like I don't belong there" (Casey).

In this way, negative ethnicity and rejection at times realised through accusations of having a hand in the killing of the husband, are noted. At times this "killing" hand on the part of the widow is called witchcraft. Through the accusation and the rejection, the relatives get a chance to deny her the property.

This section on widow psychosocial experiences related to socio-cultural issues has

looked at family ties, friends and workmates as they relate to the widow. It has also looked at re-marriage, polygamy and ethnicity as affecting the widow. In the end, it has addressed how ethnicity leads to accusations of sorcery, leading to the rejection of the widow. The next section addresses the second category namely the widow psychosocial experiences related to spirituality.

#### 4.3.2. Widow psychosocial experiences related to spirituality

Spirituality is expressly presented by 41 of the 42 participants who were interviewed. The question that was posed was, “How have you managed the widowhood?” The responses from the participants brought out their reliance on “Higher Power”. They demonstrated immense faith as practiced through prayer and involvement in church and religious practice. The varied themes and sub-themes under spirituality, as brought out by the participants are shown in Table 4.6.

**Table 4.6. Widow psychosocial experiences related to spirituality**

<b>Themes and sub-themes</b>	<b>Number of entries</b>
Church and Religion	31
Relationship with Higher Power	14
Faith	51
Prayer	16
Extrinsic religion/ high religiosity	3
High spirituality/intrinsic religion	15
<b>Total</b>	<b>130</b>

This section presents relationship with Higher Power. This incorporates the sub-themes of faith and prayer. Under the same theme, extrinsic religion/high religiosity and high spirituality/intrinsic religion are given. The terms “extrinsic religion, high religiosity, high spirituality & intrinsic religion are explained in this section, after the themes “relating with higher power and prayer” and “faith”. Later the theme of church and religion is presented.

### ***Relating with Higher Power and prayer***

These theme and sub-themes take precedence in the widow discourse. They are presented together since prayer is the tool through which the theme, relating with Higher Power is shown. In the following texts, the widow's reliance on the Higher Power is evident.

I thank God I got my son at daytime and God heard my prayer...God should be first because He is our provider and we will be able now to make it no matter what no matter difficulties we will now be able to make it (Angy).

On being widowed, Angy is left expectant. Her concern is on the day of delivery. This concern is aggravated by where she lives and her financial state. In case the labour pains came in the night, she would need a taxi to take her to hospital meaning she needs money. Also in the night, she would need an escort for security reasons. This is because she lives in a slum-like dwelling where insecurity especially for women is an issue. She nevertheless, prays unceasingly and the labour pains come during the day, she is able to walk to a nearby health facility where she delivers without complications, she attributes this to God.

Reliance on Higher Power is seen in providence. Shina, is jobless, when the husband passes on. Though she does not have to pay for rent, provision of food is such an issue. The one who had employed the husband, had promised assistance that never was to be. The husband died suddenly following a robbery attack at the work place. She however, turns to God in prayer and this is what she has to say,

God gives...I continued and continued and continued and by the way I see God. Because even at this time, there is a place where there are people that I am cooking for and when there are no people I stay. Only God plans, it is said when the day arrives when you are called you will be called and you will go and you will be told how it is. And if God desires that your aid to be from a certain side, God will make the aid be from there.

She mentions "God" five times in a discourse that has a total of 91 words. This shows the key position that God occupies in her life. To support this point, the following text is given in full. The aim is to see the number of times each mentions the word "God" and pronouns

referring to God:

There is one thing that I thank God because God he is with the widows and orphans. Because for him when he did that, he is the one who stands with you in all these things and true when we hope in him, we will live life that is making him happy (Ginnie).

Ginnie, refers to God 10 times in a discourse of 52 words. In her challenges that are mainly financial, she continuously relies on God. She reiterates the importance of being straightforward in relation to one's values. In this state, she trusts that God shall be her stronghold.

Bensie's reliance on God starts when she is at the husband's deathbed. This happens as he is ailing with Cancer. When the doctors inform her of the worsening condition of the husband, she responds, "We are not depending on the doctors we are depending on Jehovah and it is Jehovah who gives us life up to death". Also after the death, as she undergoes her mourning, and at the commencement of widowhood she again turns to God, "It drained me emotionally but I held on to my faith and I prayed." Finally, when giving suggestions on how to manage in widowhood, Kutlie, asks them to turn to God, "To the widows. I can tell them this, life without Jesus is difficult. Widows should take refuge in Jesus Christ. He is the one with the power, he has the ability to do anything. Yah on his side surely you will get well." Kutlie uses these words as she shares about the challenges of poverty that she was going through in the compound of the in-laws. Following immense strain she opts to go and get hired as a house-help to fend for her children. Together with reliance on Higher Power, widows portray strong faith.

### ***Faith***

In Table 4.8 faith leads the other spirituality based themes, with 51 entries. Participants share of occasions when they are so hard up and in dire need. As they turn to God in faith and prayer, the issue is resolved. Casey says, "I didn't have the money. And I was being asked to pay

40,000Kshs”. The money was needed to help her process the letters of administration after the death of the husband. After attending morning Mass, having prayed overnight, she walks into the bank seeking an overdraft and, “[she is] told you can’t take an overdraft because you have overpaid your previous loan, you have about twenty-four thousands of yours which we have never told you...” She is given that money instantly and is able to settle her payments and links this to her trust in God.

These situations of widows totally abandoning themselves to the Higher Power are quite common in widow discourse. They demonstrate deep faith. On many of the occasions, they shared how they had got what they were asking for, after being in deep prayer.

***High spirituality and high religiosity***

This refers to a spirituality of quest and intrinsic religion (Selvam, 2013).

**Table 4.7.** Multidimensional matrix

	3	4
<b>High Spirituality</b>	Spiritual-but-not-religious Spirituality of Quest Sacred or secular search for significance	Religious-spirituality Intrinsic Religion Sacred and secular search for significance
	2	1
<b>Low Spirituality</b>	Neither religious nor spiritual ‘Secular’ worldview Searching or no search for significance	‘Empty’ Religion Extrinsic Religion No serious search for significance
	<b>Low Religiosity</b>	<b>High Religiosity</b>

Selvam, (2013, p.138)

In it there is a sacred and secular search for significance as elaborated in Table 4.7. The participants, in the case of this study, the widows encounter questions related to death after they

lose the husbands. Some participants struggle further as they lose their children and other close relatives. In this situation, they are led to deep questions where they seek to understand God and happenings in the world. They turn to the Supreme Being in search of meaning.

Values and morality are part of these participants. These attributes take the participants far back to their childhood experiences. Bencie is brought up by Christian parents who among other core things instil religious values in their children. Part of these values, include fear of doing bad and of offending God. When Bencie later while in a tertiary college, engages in sexual activities that lead to conception, she feels guilty. "So I really prayed about it and really prayed about it, I knew I had done something wrong and I was wondering whether this man was a Christian...now I'm pregnant so I prayed and repented". The participant knows right and wrong and is mature enough to seek forgiveness when she feels guilty of a wrong doing. This disposition is seen as she seeks to live an upright life after the death of the husband. As a widow she keeps turning to church in search of meaning. She challenges the reception she receives in church where the position of the widows appears ignored. Though this widow position is not solely unique, since challenges of life tend to lead the human person towards finding solace in religion (Schieman and colleagues, 2006), the widows' reliance in spirituality and in religiosity is notable.

In another instance, Casey shares about the struggles she went through with an alcoholic husband. She suffers providing for the family almost single handed. At one time, she finds herself praying that the husband dies. Deep in her religiosity, she sees the husband's habit as a stumbling block causing her daughters and herself pain. At a later stage however, her position on the drinking habit of the husband changes. Though she does not condone the behaviour she accepts the condition and seeks higher values. In this case she seeks inner peace. She prays for a happy ending for the husband. This demonstrates high spirituality that surpasses bitterness and

looks into a deeper understanding of significance. Together with her sacred search, she also engages in secular search in her work and continued professional upgrading.

But you know at one point, my prayers changed to a Christian point of perspective and I told myself, "If this man died today, he won't go to heaven," considering how he had denied us peace, he had not taken care of his children...yea.. And all that. I now started telling God to change him...

Together with the earlier themes of relationship with the Higher Power, prayer and faith, continuous search for significance is an indication of high spirituality. The sampled widows are able to go beyond bitterness and worldly struggles and focus on divine providence. In this way, they get hope and the drive to carry on. Contrary to this position, some persons that are in close contact with these widows, demonstrate low as well as high religiosity.

### ***Low spirituality and high religiosity***

Low spirituality coupled with high religiosity refers to an 'Empty' Religion that is extrinsic. In it there is no serious search for significance (Selvam, 2013). This extrinsic practice is noted when Casey asks her brother-in-law why they had abandoned their brother. This brother, Casey's husband was down with alcohol related complications and was nearing death. Casey feels abandoned by the in-laws. On entering into a conversation with one of the brothers, this is what she is told, "I asked him why they abandoned their brother then he said that the fact that his brother married a [mentions a particular religion] then it means he'll die poor". This is a naïve connection between religious practice and poverty. It portrays spite against a particular religion of which Casey is a member. This is being insensitive to Casey's feelings showing low spirituality and high 'extrinsic' religiosity.

In the second instance, still involving another of Casey's brother-in-law, the prayer that is offered as Casey's husband is breathing his last is inconsiderate. While the study sees no harm in



prayers and in attempting to bring to reality the death that is imminent, lack of consideration for the widow's emotions is unwelcome. This is seen in the words of Casey.

He was in hospital. The elder brother came and prayed, you can imagine someone is in the hospital bed ailing and struggling then the brother prayed, "God, because you are the one who gives death, when you give it to mama Casey please give her the strength to be alone. "So I wondered, did he know that my husband was dying? Did he know the cause of the death? I kept wondering at that particular time. Did the brother contribute or knows something about the condition of my husband? Actually I had developed a hatred towards him.....

The second instance demonstrates a low spiritual level though high level of religiosity that is empty and extrinsic. In both the first and the second instances, insensitivity to the challenges that widows go through leave them hurt. This is especially so when the insensitivity is linked to the Higher Power, that they so much rely on.

### ***Church and religion***

Spirituality, church and religion appear to overlap. Spirituality denotes "beliefs in the possibility of some form of transcendent reality, the possibility of experiencing this transcendence in some way (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2006, p.106)". It is closely linked to religiosity which refers to an organized group and shared beliefs (Koenig, McCullough, & Larson, 2001). On this note therefore, spirituality becomes an individual focus while religiosity is a group one (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2006). However, an attempt to address the two together reveals overlaps that lead the study to look at spirituality and religiosity as "beliefs and practices that are grounded in the conviction that there is a transcendental dimension of life (Peterson and Seligman, 2004, p.600)". Church becomes the institution within which spirituality and religiosity are formally practiced.

These three phenomena are significant to widows. Since the previous section concentrated on spirituality, this section puts weight on church and religion. The Church plays a

significant role in education and in modelling admirable life, "...I thought I could become a [...] nun because I went to a Catholic school where there were nuns and I admired a lot being a nun". As noted, Casey's relationship with the church is implanted in her during her childhood. This link with the church continues to be seen in marriage and later in widowhood. The church for Casey, plays a formative role in childhood, and a supportive role in widowhood.

On the contrary, within the Church, the widows also feel burdened. Bencie shares how she feels hurt when she goes to church and members are insensitive. "Go to church women group what do they talk about? They tell women how to go and live with their husbands. To a point I asked one of them, what about us we don't have where do you want us to come and do?" These sentiments are supported by Casey who says, "I don't go to church women group, by the way my uniform is new in the wardrobe...full uniform...but I said I don't belong. I don't belong". As a widow, she feels that she does not belong to the women church group. The two participants feel insulted when women talk in the church groups, expressing insensitivity to the existence of widows.

Despite this unwelcoming challenge that the Kenyan widow faces among church members, assistance also comes from the same church. After Oila, widowed in her mid-thirties, was deeply hurt following a life of soliciting comfort in other women and in alcohol, she seeks solace in the church.

...I am trying to get back to the church. These things of worldly leisure is doing what? It is attracting me. It reached a place and I went to Fr-A... [after being listened to, guided and prayed for] I liked the church, I liked prayers and I saw truly that when you depend on God, He will support you.

Based on the experiences given, getting solace or disillusionment in the church depends very much on who the widow meets in church. There is a call to be sensitive to matters of widows.

This section on widow psychosocial experiences related to spiritual issues has demonstrated how the participants express deep faith. They do so as they surrender themselves to the Higher Power. They are persons of constant prayer. Despite hurting experiences from church members, they seek solace in the same Church. In their lives they demonstrate high spirituality and religiosity as they forgive and accept the conditions of those causing them pain. They even go out of their way to pray for the pain-causers. Some close friends and relatives however, at times demonstrate low spirituality with high religiosity that is extrinsic. This happens when they insensitively invoke the Supreme Being on matters hurting to the widow, in her presence.

The study has presented the two first categories of widow psychosocial experiences, namely socio-cultural and spiritual related issues. The study then moves on to the third category of widow psychosocial experiences. This category involves the widow psychosocial experiences related to economic issues.

#### **4.3.3. Widow psychosocial experiences related to economic issues**

In sharing widow psychosocial experiences, economic issues are found in the discourse. These issues are related to the participant's level of education, professionalism and occupation which in turn influences her income. The economic issues are also related to the businesses that the participants carry out. To a large extent, the earning of the participant before the husband passed on, is significant. Themes and sub-themes under this category as well as the number of entries for each is given in Table 4.8.

This section gives the theme basic needs under which the sub-themes of housing and land take prominence. The other two themes of financial constraints and occupation follow. Under occupation, job and income are the sub-theme.

**Table 4.8. Widow psychosocial experiences related to economic issues**

<b>Themes and sub-themes</b>	<b>Number of Entries</b>
Basic Needs	3
Food	3
Housing	24
Land	16
Other needs	6
Financial Constraints	22
Occupation	12
Job-income	19
<b>Total</b>	<b>105</b>

### ***Basic needs***

This is a concern in the widow discourse. Though the words “basic needs” do not appear in the widow discourse, various terms are used to infer the needs. The main term that features is “food”, which also includes educational fees. In this text, Denny says, “...I was so happy I realised now I shall be getting food”. She had secondary school education. That meant that securing a job other than the casual ones was a challenge. The casual jobs were almost directly related to the low salaries. Feeling devastated after the death of the husband, coupled with physical abuse from her in-laws, she felt relieved when she started earning. This was a move towards financial independence. With her level of education, the participant is excited that after the loss, she is able to have basic needs for her and her children.

### ***Housing***

This becomes another concern in the lives of the participants. Casey was a middle cadre professional. She lost the husband in her mid-thirties. She shares of her commitment to get a house for the family. This quest goes back to times that are before widowhood. At widowhood, the housing enables her to avoid the hostile attitude of the in-laws. She is able to cater for her

children.

She shares how she invested in a house since the husband was not taking charge of constructing it, “With my own salary, I had put up a house and there are so many times that he [husband] wanted to sell [the house]”. This participant goes on to explain its value. This position is also supported by the words of Patsy who says, “I was lucky to get my own house.” A similar sentiment is echoed by Fynn. A high cadre professional, in an even stronger way:

Anyway when I was working I was working for a very good company...[my boss]... understood all my problems and there are times he would come into my office and he would see me crying so he would say what’s the problem already and I would say I’m not happy I want my own home... I worked it out and whatever I was earning was not enough to buy a very expensive house but a reasonable home.

From the interviews, it is clear that housing is important to the widows. They go out of their way to ensure that they get a house. Even when it does not appear a priority in their marriages, they play a significant role in getting the husband to build. In widowhood, a house is a treasure to the participants.

### ***Land***

Issues of land are a large contributor to economic challenges facing women in general and in this case the widows. It features prominently and with it several other issues as seen in widow discourse. The first of this is wrangles over land between the widow and her in-laws. Despite attempts by her father, Casey still feels aggrieved by the denial of ancestral land that belonged to the family when the husband was alive, “My father has really tried talking to me, to forget that we owned [...] and he told me if I need land, he is willing to give me land”. These sentiments show the importance of land to the participant. Despite the father promising her a piece of land, she still feels aggrieved by the in-laws. This leads to a strained relationship between her and her in-laws. The issue is pegged on denial of inheritance land.

A similar case is presented by Finly who says, “We were given a plot when we got married or rather he [husband] was given let me say he was given and we started constructing a house and they took it back... So literally I can say we have nothing there...” This is the participant who was married to a different ethnic community. That coupled by land issues, leave her devastated. One can feel the helplessness in the participant for not having land. There is also inferred pain as she expresses how the in-laws “take back” the land after the demise of the husband.

From widow discourse, land is seen as a source of income. This perhaps is one of the reasons behind its taking prominence. Oila, had below secondary school education. After the death of the husband, despite having no steady income, she sells a portion of the ancestral land and is able to put up some rental rooms that uplift her economic status.

So God had a reason because that person [who had started the process of buying land when the husband was alive] reached a particular place and said no I shall not give you money again, sell that piece of land again. We sold the piece of land again. Now this person who bought, came when my husband [had] died, he gave the money.

Lack of land to the widow leads to pain as one misses a place to be buried or to bury the members of the nuclear family. In some cultures failing to bury in the ancestral land and opting for a public grave site is an intense state of poverty and dishonour (Adamu & Yahaya, 2016). Burying a family member in one’s land is the honourable norm. This position explains the following text:

Yes, it is as if they have refused with it [land] because they would have let us to bury because, even if she was married but she had separated with the husband. There is clearly nothing that we had received (as dowry), they abandoned us and they did not come close to us. They showed us that she was not a wife in that homestead. So we took our burden and we said, let me carry my burden, but those others refused.

Switny, a mature widow in her mid-fifties is forced to look for another land where to bury her daughter. This comes after the in-laws deny her access to what was her ancestral land, when

the husband was alive. She remains bitter as she shares her suffering during this phase when her daughter died. Her concentration on providing for basic needs does not allow her to invest for the future. As noted, if she had had land, she feels that her woes would be lessened.

Finally, this importance of land is seen in the prayers of Kutlie, who is left in a rental house by the death of the husband. She has to struggle to get food, as well as monthly rent for the building. She earnestly prays for assistance, “What I am asking God is to help me I get my own place and stay there.”

### ***Financial constraints***

This is an umbrella word for all challenges related to finances. These range from inability to purchase food, clothing, health facilities, to lack of school fees. Even after the Free Primary and secondary education, the uniforms, books, meals also pose a challenge.

These woes are far from the participants who were from high level cadres. In particular Lyna had rental units that gave her additional income. In expressing contributors to a reduction of financial constraints, Lyna says, “The Lord was gracious to us at least I didn't have financial challenges because I had a good job...then my late husband had some insurance policies so that one came in handy and that's why I was able to settle and to have a home of my own.” Though the participant is sharing about lack of core financial challenges, she mentions the importance of having a good job, the security in insurances and having an own home. These are key in reducing financial constraints.

Financial muscle mainly comes from the ability to earn. In situations where the husband was the sole breadwinner, the widow struggles to look for any work in order to pay for her bills. Even in cases where both the husband and the wife were earning, the death of the husband shifts the shared burden to one person. The widow has to work extra hard to ensure financial matters

are settled. The following texts show struggles by participants in attempting to ensure that they sustain themselves and their families financially.

The first text expresses how Casey did her best to earn even when the husband was alive.

Casey's motivation towards work is her children.

Fifteen years I never slept, fifteen years I hardly can say I enjoyed a meal in my house. I went out of my way to do work extra work and even during my leaves I was forced to do extra work and go an extra mile now to get an extra coin for my children. I didn't want to see them struggle.

A similar scenario is seen in the case of Shina. For her, following a lack of education that would have facilitated her professional growth, she does casual jobs. Like the case of Casey, her motivation is also children:

...I depend on soap that I sell, by the way so that I get flour (maize) for the children, I get maize flour for the children, I get school fees, I get and I only see that these children are standing on their feet, they are not shaming me and I am not shaming them. That is the way you get life moving on.

Apart from finances allowing the widow to provide food, she is able to take care of health issues. When she lacks money, she is even more scared of what would happen if any of the family members fell ill, "Even money to go hospital was *ilikuwa shida* (it was problems)" (Milny). In addition, finances are also strongly linked to education and the progress of children. This is expressed by participant Villy and Switny, both leaving in a slum, as they share the pain of lacking fees.

I lacked money that year that he [son] did class eight [end of primary education]. I told him to repeat. So he repeated...after finishing form four he never continued he never continued forward. And the second one reached class eight. For him he never continued with studies.

My second born son who did his standard eight exam and I never got money to take him to school and he never proceeded to the next level and neither did he continue with his course. That is how he ended up.

In an attempt to deal with the financial challenges, widows are ready to engage in any task



that will facilitate financial sustenance.

Then I found a job of washing classes. I used to go there at 8 in the morning and I leave there at 8 in the night. This is because the washing of the classes was my job, I was also meant to slash and even babysit the child of the owner (Denny).

Government subsidies, though appearing minimal, support the financial challenges of widows. Switny expresses how she seeks bursary as she also does other casual jobs.

Eeh I am now requesting for bursary, which is sometimes impossible, I even do casual jobs, just like that. I sell my small kales and whatever I get be it five hundred shillings I take it to school and plead with the teacher till now that my child finished school.

Widow psychosocial experiences related to economic issues occupy a significant part in widow discourse. Issues of basic needs particularly housing and land are given. Also financial constraints and ways through which widows attempt to mitigate the negative effectives are presented. Participants express their attempts to search for work and also government subsidies among other efforts. These efforts show widows working towards self-sustenance. The following category of widow psychosocial experiences is death and loss. Though this is linked to psychological issues, it is treated separately. This is because its focus is on the deaths of the significant others, and what the deaths mean to the widows.

#### **4.3.4. Widow psychosocial experiences related to death and loss**

Death and loss in widow discourse take the fourth position after socio-cultural, spiritual, and economic issues. This shows the significance it has in the lives of widows. Table 4.9 shows the themes and sub-themes that come under this category. Death and fear emanating from it, as well as mourning are core themes in this category. In Table 4.8, the notable entry is mourning that is not directly mentioned in the widow discourse. Rather it appears under the sub-themes acceptance, blame, confusion, denial, depression, despair, loneliness, pain and shock.

**Table 4.9. Widow psychosocial experiences related to death and loss**

<b>Themes and sub themes</b>	<b>Number of entries</b>
Fear of Death	1
Mourning	0
Acceptance	10
Blame	2
Confusion	19
Denial	10
Depression	1
Despair, suicide	4
Loneliness	5
Pain	12
Shock	3
Death of child	4
Death of parent	3
Death of parent-in-law	1
Death of spouse	10
Breaking the news	8
Support	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>98</b>

The following paragraphs present the issues of death and loss starting with death for the widow. After that the section addresses mourning. This is done in the following order: shock, confusion, blame, despair, pain, breaking the news, loneliness, and the insensitivity of community.

### ***Death and fear of death***

Death causes anxiety also called “thanatophobia” (Sinoff, 2017). Bleek, a well- educated widow takes time to accompany her husband, a foreigner to hospital. Though courageous at the time for the sake of the husband. She narrates of her fears. “... I'm like I get scared and if I get scared of dying I don't go. If it's just random sickness I will go.” The expression is her fear of dying. It is not clear whether the death of her husband was scaring. She does not go on to give reasons for this fear and does not give further explanation.

However, in the case of Bencie, when death carries away her husband and she is starring

at his lifeless body, this is what she says about fear of death, “I don't know what they were afraid of because I don't know why people are afraid of corpses. This is my husband and I really loved him so much so I didn't know what to do without him.” Other emotions as discussed in this section appear to surpass fear, on the part of the participant as she comes face to face with the death of the husband.

### *Mourning*

This state is prevalent as participants share on their experiences of death and loss. The first reaction appears to be *shock*. When Bensie watched the husband dying, “I was shaky shaky and I didn't expect anything like that... and I was not believing what I was seeing.” The sight of death and the realization that the spouse is dying is such an intense and incomprehensible scenario. Further on in her sharing she says, “Imagine I didn't even cry during the whole thing I was just in a shock! Some kind of shock that I didn't know Shock is also expressed by Zuk.

Actually I was shocked, I was very shocked....I stayed in a shock mood I didn't know what to do. So I was like no you are not sure of that. Coz I remember when I was there and he was telling me about him coming. And he was telling the way they had..... a guard, the way they rushed him to the hospital, so I was telling them maybe he has not died properly, go and check on him.

With shock there is *confusion*. Confusion prevails when the participants are informed of the death of the husband.

God, I do not know...I was asking God now I was not seeing as if I can... I was asking God, My neighbour had gone and arrived there earlier. And when something is about to happen things are like...Do you see that I used to wake up well and alight at the National hospital.

So everything was actually done for me to a point that me I was just there waiting for everything to be done although sometimes I feel like I was in a trance where people are just so busy doing things and it's like you even don't know who you are you even don't know what is happening

The confusion is seen in the words and phrases the participants use, “God I do not

know..." and "trance". Also the incomplete sentences when they are trying to recall their situation explains a confused state. This was happening as they shared during the interviews, at least three years after it had happened. So one can only imagine how the situation was, when the death happened.

With the confusion comes *denial*. Denial of the husband dying or of the husband's death is common among the participants. This appears as Bencie is questioned by the husband whose health is deteriorating from Cancer, "...if I die will you remarry? And I was wondering and I got very annoyed and I didn't want that discussion and I stopped him and actually that conversation died." She shares of her total block any time the death of the husband was mentioned. In her sharing, despite the deterioration of the husband's health, she never saw death coming. This happens even when the doctor strongly points towards the death of the husband. At one point the doctor told her, "it [chances of the husband surviving] was a fifty- fifty situation but we are trusting in God so I was so happy a whole fifty you know and the way he was...".

Denial is also seen in Casey. She is part of the people taking the husband to hospital after he collapses in the house. On arrival at the emergency bay at the hospital, all others appear to know that the husband has died, but for Casey, he is still alive and needs immediate attention.

To me he looked asleep but he didn't respond so I went to my friend and I told her, can you go and call him and see whether he is going to respond. She called, he didn't respond but she didn't tell me. You know to me, he wasn't dead, actually all this time to me he wasn't dead so I went to this young man and I asked "why aren't you removing him from the car?" So he went, picked the stretcher, brought it and they removed him. Put him on the stretcher and it didn't click to me, actually he was still alive. I don't know what was running in my mind...so... then... he was put outside and immediately it began drizzling. A sudden drizzle from nowhere and...Eh... I asked them, "Why don't you cover him?"

As the participants deny, they also *blame*. Blame amidst anger fills the widow as she gets to terms with the reality of death.

You know that time after my husband passed I think apart from being angry with him I think I was very angry with God and then the finality I wished he had gone abroad and

disappeared there I wished it was sickness, I wished he had been taken by other women and you know those ones you can pray and I mean that one you can't pray... (Bensie).

In the anger, Bensie is venting out at God and at the dead husband. She is blaming them for this death asking God, "How could you allow this? Where were you when this was happening? Why did you do this?" To the husband she is asking, "How could you do this to me?" In deed these very questions are inferred in other parts of her sharing.

*Despair and depression as well as desire to die* are part of a widow as she undergoes the issues of the death of the husband. Lynna shares how the mourning was on the first anniversary.

...his first anniversary I marked it in the hospital bed, coz I had been admitted...and after being in the hospital for one week I left the hospital and I almost slipped into depression. And depression is not an easy experience and I talked to my friends and I told them I have signs of depression and I feel like I'm slipping into a depression so I told them to stay with me and people came to see me and they came to support me after I left the hospital so I thank God I didn't completely slip into a depression I was able to get over it and I continued on with life...eh?

Bensie also shares of her desire to die. "I really wanted to die...I took several tablets of piriton, to sleep or to die or whatever yea yea and I wanted to die and actually this was not first year it was second year". As noted in the second part of the text, mourning can take a long time, and its stages are quite unpredictable.

Slipping into depression for the widow is quite easy. Desiring death is a welcome way for the widow. This is seen in the sharing of Zuk, "I didn't care about anything... I didn't care about anything by then you know like when you board a vehicle and a driver is driving carelessly and you don't care about anything. I was just careless and I didn't care about anything. Crash the car if you want." Notable in the text is the repetition of "I didn't care about anything." Really nothing else matters after the death of the husband.

As the dust begins to settle and the journey to reality starts, *pain of death* sinks even deeper into the widow.

Yea because now it's when the reality hits and you are like okay so this person will never come back again. You mean it's so final you know yaani (that is) death is so final you know. There are many things that happen in life and you can always recover you can always do something about it but death is so final it's sealed. You know many are the times I felt like I can go to the grave and get him out, but you can't do it and even if you got him out so what?

In her expression of pain, Kutlie also shares, "It is painful because I was used to everything being done for me." This word pain is repeated again by Lyna,

it was very devastating to receive the news that he was no more and he was dead and it happened through a road accident it was very painful it was very devastating it was unbelievable and identification of the body was the worst experience coz you can't imagine you are seeing your person here he is dead can't talk...

For one of the participants, Bilian, the pain is aggravated by subsequent deaths of her father-in-law and then her children. As she shares of these deaths, tears are freely rolling down her cheeks and one can almost feel the pain with her.

I tried to get this one [son] into form one. He joined and studied a little, in 2012, he accidentally fell in school and he died in 2012. (in tears)...I remained with this last born...Then by bad luck in 2014, she had enrolled, she was to do class eight, she went and died (tears and sobbing).

Pain as a result of death is part of the human being. The pain of the widow is intense. From the texts, watching the husband die is painful, receiving news of his death is also painful. Even more, is having to pass the news of the death of a husband to one's children. Additional pain is having to witness the death(s) of the children after the death of the husband. All these are pains that widows go through.

Based on this pain, widows take time to give details of how the deaths happen. They can remember every detail and go through it as though it happened yesterday. One such example is in the case of Kutlie

He was a driver. Now he was driving a vehicle from P-5<sup>2</sup> to P-6. And at other times P-2. Now on that day he left and went to work. Now he went and when it was the time that he usually came, he did not come. When the time reached around 4 am. I received a call that he was involved in a road accident, and he was dead. When I went to the referral in P-5, I found that it was true he was dead. And it ended in that way.

Even as the pain is going on, the widow has to *break the news* of death to her children. This comes at different intervals depending on the age of the children. It is also a continuous process as the children come into terms with the absent father. With this therefore breaking the news of death of a husband to children is a daunting task for the widow.

Casey was wondering, "...how to get and tell them about it". This is also seen in the case of Ansy who is a foreigner and in her early sixties,

The children were small, they asked me, where is daddy? Why have you left him in hospital? They knew he had been taken to hospital they were still young...'Why are so many people coming to our place?'...she kept asking why people kept coming.

A major concern for the widow is her children. After the death of the husband, it appears that many live for their children. This deep concern and reason for living starts with the breaking of the news on the death of their father, hence the challenge.

Amidst these feelings, *loneliness* is a reality. Widowhood generates loneliness, "You are lonely and when you have a problem, you do not know who to share it with, even if you know a person. You know a person, as a widow even if you know so many people/friends, women, when the husband dies, you will not get even one, they will not be your friends" (Billian). Billian was rather unfortunate after having successive losses of her children after that of her husband. Loneliness and constant fear of losing her last child is strong. She hence feels abandoned.

Again the *insensitivity* of some of the members in society is realised. A melancholic

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2 P stands for place i.e. Place-5.

realization is that even as the widow is going through the mourning, there are those in her close circles that seek to blame her. Denny, a constant victim of physical abuse from her in-laws, shares how despite being absent from her marital home when the husband was taken ill, she is blamed for having killed him, “Let me tell you, it is God, they [in-laws] turned the stories and started saying that they had even seen me hit him with a metal rod (laughter) and I was not even there”. Such insensitivity on the part of the family, friends and even colleagues of the widow need redress.

The section has presented death and loss issues as they relate to widow psychosocial experiences. The start looked at death, and fear emanating from it, from the perspective of the widow. Following that, mourning was presented under the sub-themes of shock, confusion, denial, blame and despair. In addition to that also pain, breaking the news as well as loneliness were given. In the end insensitivity of some of the members of society is presented. The study then moves on to present the other category in widow psychosocial experiences, namely, health.

#### **4.3.5. Widow psychosocial experiences related to health**

Health is a concern in widow discourse. Lack of health means financial depletion. It also means loss of life as happened to some of the participants leading to their widowhood state. Table 4.10 lists the health related issues in widow discourse.

Table 4.10 presents four main areas of health concern as featuring in widow discourse. Long term illnesses occupy the largest amount of the discourse on health with 43 of the total 61 entries on health. Under long term illnesses, alcoholism and cancer are major concerns. The section also addresses short term illnesses, tragic-sudden deaths. Kidney failure and diabetes are only mentioned in passing so the study does not dwell on them.



**Table 4.10. Widow psychosocial experiences related to health**

<b>Themes, sub-themes and sub-sub themes</b>	<b>Number of entries</b>
Diabetes	2
Kidney Failure	4
Long-Term Illness	3
Alcoholism	15
Cancer	11
Pain and suffering	6
Irritability	3
HIV-AIDS	4
Tuberculosis	1
Short-Term Illness	5
Tragic-sudden death	7
<b>Total</b>	<b>61</b>

### *Long term illnesses*

These illnesses take prominence in widow discourse. Within the discourse, the challenge of ignorance among some widows is realised. When the husband falls ill, the couple take long to find out what the real problem is. This leaves the family guessing what the problem might be. During such a phase, the patient continues to worsen as the widow continues to suffer psychologically. Family financial resources also get depleted as the family seeks medical attention in different places. This journey amidst ignorance is elaborated by Milny who though having secondary school education, struggles to know what is ailing the husband. She shares of the struggles they face attempting to know what exactly is happening,

...he was weak then in 2002 he began to go to hospital and you know by that time even money to go hospital was *ilikuwa shida* (it was problems)... So we went to hospital that time to hospital-A then later we had to transfer him for ENT I don't know why he went for ENT then the person for ENT just told us to go to hospital-B. That hospital-B, there is a person who dealt with stomach ulcers because he was complaining a lot about carbonic .... Then later took him to another hospital-C and when we came back from hospital-C and we were told that from that we go to a follow up with a doctor. So by the time we went for a follow up with the doctor, the doctor told us he was HIV positive.

In this case, the journey of knowing the actual sickness moves from ENT to stomach ulcers and finally to HIV. Similar ignorance is explained by Ansy as she expresses a journey with her

ailing husband.

...ever since I met him, he had a problem of liver cirrhosis. But he never told me, he kept quiet, I do not know if he thought I would leave him. I came to discover there are some drugs that he was hiding. And every time you find when I cooked food, you would find him choosing some foods, and he never wanted A...he wanted B...

In both cases, there appears to be secrecy on the part of the ailing husband. This is more evident in the second case. There is also the issue of ignorance and with it having to move from hospital to hospital. It is not clear if the medical practitioners were also in the dark or they chose to conceal the information. This is especially so in the first case.

Still under long illness, the resilience of the woman is seen amidst intense integral suffering. "It reached a place that my husband took a lot of alcohol until now he did not understand himself". Oila and Ansy struggle for long with their alcoholic husbands. Oila's family in particular is in intense financial crisis owing to the husband's drinking habit. She is forced to go begging for food, for shelter and even for fees. In both cases, a drinking husband leads to shame on the part of the wife.

Further on the issue of alcoholism as a long term illness, the family suffers uncertainties of the bread winner losing his job or suffering abrupt transfers, "... he was again transferred and was brought here...They took him again to West P-3 there in P-8 totally interior...ai..I said now they have taken him there to die (Oila)".

As a reaction to the challenges, Oila surrender the husband to God, "...I stayed and told God one thing, I cried a lot and I told God, this person the life he is living is not his... I told God rather than I seeing this person suffering in this way, change him or take him...". Despite this surrender, the wife continues to struggle to ensure the upkeep of the children. In widowhood, she keeps up the fight to ensure the children are provided for. All these continue to demonstrate the resilience of the widow.

In relation to cancer, there is pain and agony for both the patient and the wife. This agony continues on the part of the widow after the demise of the husband. Bencie shares one such painful moments, "...he cried, 'sweet heart, sweet heart, I'm in pain, I'm dying, I'm finished, my leg'...he was turning again screaming that he had broken a bone I had never heard such a scream." As she narrated the incidence, the intensity of the pain was still quite fresh in her despite the seven years that had passed.

Bencie also shares of this journey with the husband. This journey is gradual though surely going down with Cancer. Towards the last moments she shares of the irritability of the husband. "So that month was a month like I was almost uncertain about everything coz he was getting offended by everything I did so it was very tough." The period with a patient who has suffered a long illness poses challenges to the widow. This happens when the husband is still alive and when he is dead. In this suffering, the woman's resilience and commitment to the success of the family is seen. This sharing paves way to psychosocial experiences of widows who journey with husbands on short illnesses.

### ***Short illnesses***

These also lead to the suffering to the widow. The challenge expressed is shock and despair. Pleany shares of her experience in the following words, "...young man [husband] was working here and there, a short while after in 2002, he got ill and he died, I remained like that." The last statement "I remained like that" shows one with little direction and knowledge of what to do.

Another aspect of shock is seen in the texts by Illian, Zuk and Shina.

...he called me as he was coming. When he reached the gate, he called me to go and open for him because the watchman was not there. I went, I opened for him he entered. I closed the gate and went back to the house, and left him in the car...he was talking to somebody through the phone...I was inside here. As he stood there, I heard the sound of a gun and of a fall. They did not talk to him, they just shot him....

...they were to pass by the swimming pool. So they realized there was someone inside the pool. So they called the pool attendant and my sister-in-law sent my boy to go to the room to call the dad, my husband now. So the boy went to the room and didn't find the dad so he came back and that's when they knew the person who was lying there was his father. So they tried their best way because now he was very heavy, they pulled him out, they tried doing first aid but it was now too late.

I have been told that our dad [husband], they were attacked and were shot at and I do not know two of them died and two are alive...He died in that way, we had not bid each other farewell, we had spoken of nothing, he just went in that manner.

From these three incidences, intense pain is noted when the participants share of the deaths of their husbands. Also the confusion that befell each amidst disbelief on receiving the news appears. For the three, a long time was needed after the death of the husband, for them to accept.

This section has looked at widow psychosocial experiences related to health issues. Long term illnesses featuring alcoholism and cancer as well as HIV/AIDS have been seen. Emotional as well as financial drain when journeying with a struggling patient is seen on the part of the woman. These struggles continue with her during widowhood. However during the entire process resilience and surrender to God are seen. Also her continued efforts to provide for the children is evident. On the part of the short illness, shock and disbelief affect the widow. She takes time to gradually start recovery and accept the husband's death as well as its subsequent events. The next section addresses the widow psychosocial experiences related to education.

#### **4.3.6. Widow psychosocial experiences related to education**

In this section, the focus is on issues of education of the entire nuclear family of the widow. This section looks at the issues of education as they influence the widow, the children and the husband. As seen in Figure 4.5, three themes are identified.

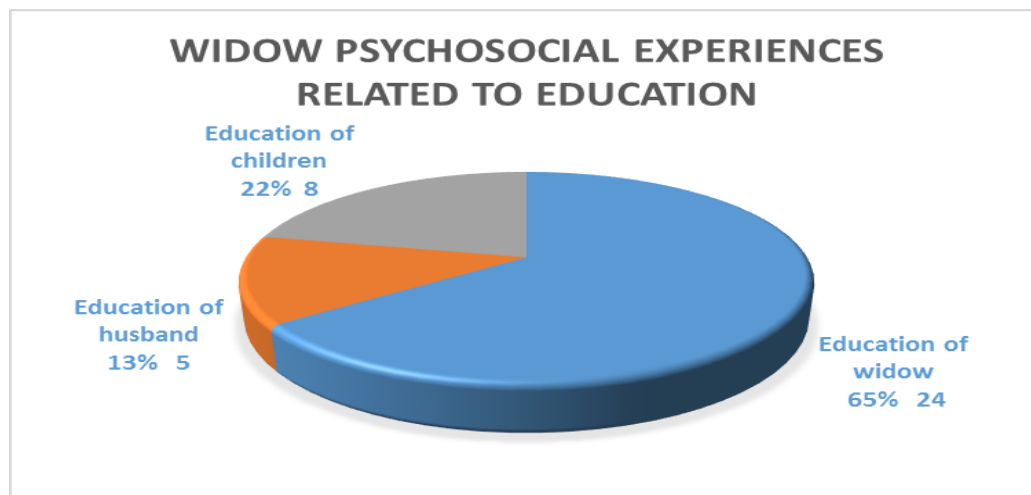


Figure 4.5. Widow psychosocial experiences related to education

### ***Education of the participant***

This theme takes prominence according to the number of entries (24 out of 37). The education is not only when she is a widow but from her childhood. In pursuing her education the parent is significant. “My mum supported me so much in school work and I remember while in class seven, she used to help me do mathematics ... as well as my Basic English. So... she helped me to be the person I am today”.

For Finly, the narration is how the death of her father interfered with her education, “just when I just finished my fourth form my dad died! And when he died to me that was like the end of my furthering my studies...I couldn’t move, coz obviously I had to support coz we were born eight of us...” This participant had to first educate the siblings. It is only after they were through with their education that she started focussing on her education. These efforts show the value of education on the part of the participants.

### ***Education of children***

This theme takes the second level in terms of frequency. Under this theme, widows are

seen making all efforts to ensure their children attain education. Shina expresses how she “depend[s] on soap [selling to] get school fees, I get and I only see that these children are standing on their feet, they are not shaming me and I am not shaming them.” For her, the education of children is to get them to be self-reliant “stand on their feet”. When children pursue education, neither the widow nor the children experience shame. Education is hence seen as a way to propel them into self-reliance. It improves their lives.

Lack of school fees however appears to put an end to the progression of the children, “And the second one reached class eight. For him he never continued with studies”. Lack of school fees leads to dropping out of school. According to Villy, a low cadre participant in her mid-thirties and who lives in a slum set-up, the child fails to progress into professionalism due to lack of education which in turn fails due to lack of school fees. With little or no education, the children have to engage in casual low paying jobs. This early dropping from school also contributes to early marriages. These factors appear to have a link to continued family poverty.

However, those that are financially able, ensure that the child gets university education. As seen in the case of Illian, education allows one to get a job. Pursuance of education is also associated with support from God.

...it’s only the first born who was at the university. The second born was almost doing his university exam...she graduated...God helped her to get a job. The third born was a second year in the university now he has completed...the last child was in form two, he has finished form four. Now he is in first year university (Illian).

Illian who is her early fifties is a professional woman who in addition to being in a high professional position, has rental houses. These supplement her income. With this income and with the support of insurance schemes from her late husband, she is able to educate her children in tertiary colleges.

### *Education of the husband*

This is also important to the family and to the widow. In the two discourse texts cited, the husband's education is mentioned in relation to how and where the couple met. From this it is inferred that education of both, plays a significant role in setting up the family at a particular status in life.

And me I was surprised one time a party took in and those who were doing B. Ed came to University A and a special meeting became concrete time so by the time we left University A I had a son called my son... (Milny).

I went now to the university. Then I met my husband where I was studying then we came together...Yeah I met my husband in the university in the States, I went to university in the States. He was in the states I went to the States, my husband happens to be a Kenyan (Kutlie).

Both Milny and Kutlie are high cadre professionals. Having completed their university education, they have had well-paying jobs from which they are able to take care of their financial challenges. Even with the death of the husbands, they are able to get support from their fellow core-workers. They are also able to continue providing for their children. With their knowledge emanating from their education, they are able to seek the called for support leading to continued efforts to deal with the disruption. They have an identity other than that coming from the husband. This helps them in their widowhood.

This section has looked at widow psychosocial experiences related to education. The education of the participant as a girl and as an adult shows the importance placed on education. This education influences her life as a widow and also her children. This fact is reiterated by the discourse relating to the education of children. Efforts are made to ensure this education. On the texts that mention on the education of the husband, the focus is on how the participant met the husband while studying at the university. This presentation paves way for the next section that is on widow psychosocial experiences related to human rights.

#### 4.3.7. Widow psychosocial experiences related to human rights

Table 4.11 presents the themes that the study comes across under widow psychosocial experiences related to human rights are three: inheritance, other injustices, and also domestic violence.

**Table 4.11. Widow psychosocial experiences related to human rights**

<b>Themes</b>	<b>Number of entries</b>
Domestic Violence	2
Inheritance	13
Other injustices	11
Widow Awareness	9
<b>Total</b>	<b>35</b>

Widow awareness is not a theme under this category. However it is placed here since the participants' awareness is a contributor to how she handles human rights issues.

#### *Inheritance*

This is a challenge to the widows that participated in the study. The issues surrounding inheritance include the desire of the family of the in-laws to take up the wealth that the husband leaves behind. In all the widow participants that were engaged, children of the deceased were mentioned. However, several in-laws make effort to “steal” the property from these children.

Now from there, the problems continued continued, those people of the plot because my husband had a plot was taken away from us. Those people because we struggled very much with them they even brought the fight during the burial, we took each other to the chief.

From the text, Denny the participant is forced to fight for her rights. The chief representing the Government is instrumental as seen in her case, “Then I knew that I cannot keep quiet over this matter. I went and informed the chief. When I did so he told me that I did not have any right to shift the house, why? Because, your husband was born in this homestead.” Denny who lives



in the same compound with her in-laws struggles to be accepted in this family. These struggles started long before the death of the husband and aggravated in widowhood. She is not able financially and was widowed in her late twenties. Having three children that she has to fend for through casual jobs, continues to be a challenge. When the in-laws attempt to send her from the house she occupies, and deny her the plot that is her husband's, she fights fearlessly.

As noted, the troubles of inheritance are closely linked to the in-laws. Casey starts facing challenges soon after the husband's burial. Three of her brothers-in-law call her into a room just after leaving the grave site. This is what they tell her concerning her property.

...for the tea leaves, they will be picked by...I was given three names. Not being asked to, I was being told...I went silent...for your husband's clothes, they will be picked by now the younger brother. You know actually to me, at that particular time, I was now not even thinking about property.

Casey is denied access to the tea leaves, a resource that belonged to her husband till this burial time. The proceeds from the tea leaves is what she and the husband used to educate their children. The timing of the information dissemination, just after the burial, is of concern. Efforts to follow up and disinherit Casey extend to the plot where she lived, "They intended now to take the plot where we live. And that made me move from our own house and rent it and disappear".

A similar issue befalls Finly whose property is taken away. This is despite her post-secondary educational level. She is not in a position to defend herself. "All the cars that we had...they took everything we had two...but they never cared [the names in the log books] and they took everything. So I don't know whether they sold the cars I don't know where they took them but they took everything". This points to the level of greed and corruption. Even with the car being jointly owned, she is still dispossessed. In the mourning situation, the widow is quite vulnerable.

Despite this negative picture painted on in-laws taking away the inheritance of the participants, there are some cases that stand out different. Zuk a high cadre professional, loses

her husband through drowning, when they are on holiday. At that time she was in her late thirties. The family was wealthy and some aunties desired to take advantage of her. However, the siblings to the late husband offer her support.

But there are other aunties in the village who tried to take away from me property and my brother-in-law and sister-in-law told me that don't even think they are going to steal anything from you. So they sat them down and told them if you have anything to tell Zuk, say it to her through us.

In this case, the in-laws do not leave the matter to the widow, but rather take it up and deal with their aunties. This offers Zuk consolation. Throughout her widowhood, this support continued. This challenges the stereotypical position that in-laws are a challenge to the widows.

From these texts, it is clear that participants struggle with issues of inheritance. The main persons spearheading the injustice are the in-laws. However not all in-laws are involved, and not all are vicious.

### ***Injustices executed on widows***

The next theme addresses injustices executed on widows. Bleek, who comes from Eritrea, shares of political related injustices. "So I was prisoned, bitten, really really beaten up...they tie your hand your leg, they put a wooden stick here and they put you upside down and they beat your leg..." This brutality is subjected to her by the police forces in her country. Though not explicitly befalling her since she is a widow, it reflects what befalls women under dictatorial regimes.

Another type of injustice is related to education. The girl child is denied education based on a cultural practice that under-privileges the girl child.

...when I reached class seven, my father was not the people who value girl education.... Our first born [male] at least went to A High School, those days...my sisters...my sisters, okay no one went to High school, and no one got pregnant when in school, such that she could be blamed that it is the pregnancy that led to the lack of school.

This case goes back to the widow's childhood. This is important in that presence or lack of education of the girl-child, is noted as influencing their present state of widowhood. Those that had supportive parents, managed to get educated thus being employable. The contrary is true of those that missed the opportunities. These state influenced their widowhood state.

Together with the issues of inheritance, there is another injustice administered to the widow. The study calls it a *lie-related injustice*. This is seen when former employers promise help during funerals but fail to honour. This is seen as an injustice since other people who may be willing to assist get the impression that assistance has already been given. It also leaves the widow and the children expecting that which they will never get. The case of Shina expresses this injustice.

...he [employer] said he would support the children in education, but by the way the way he went back to Country-B, the number he gave me even if I call he does not receive, he does not answer and he kept quiet in that way. He totally kept quiet, there is nothing that we communicate in, we are like that.

The husband to Shina was gunned down after being called at night to go take keys to his employer, leaving Shina in her early forties and without a source of income. The husband is shot dead when going out to save his employer. Such an act of bravery and loyalty leaves his wife widowed and his children orphaned. With the failed promises, the widow has to seek casual jobs to sustain her family. As Shina shares, there is pain of loss. This is aggravated by the cause of the loss; shot dead attempting to rescue the boss. Indeed he manages to be sacrificed as the boss escapes. Additional pain is pegged on the promises that the boss publicly issues during the funeral. Despite this, he flies out of the country few days after the burial never to honour any of his promises.

## *Domestic violence*

This theme also comes up under violation of human rights. Denny suffers domestic violence under a husband who is influenced largely by his brothers and mother. Even after his death, the violence continued. "...they stopped me. And at the end of it they even physically beat me up...the chief asked them...did you have to wake her up at 6 am to beat her up?" The beating is done by the brothers-in-law and the mother-in-law. The intervention of the area administration helps to prevent the completion of their plan; to send her back to her parental home.

In another case of domestic violence, Ansy opts out of the marriage. Based on her background she was strong enough to stand her ground against the husband's brutality.

He was insecure. I tell you that day I was beaten...he asked me who was that? What were you talking about? Actually he beat me twice, that was the first, the second is when I took my sister-in-law for clinic in the same same Hospital-A, and we were late. It was a big fight, why are you late where were you...it's now too much. First the two fights being effected on the body, aah aah, there no! I made up my mind and said No! That No! So I left him and went, he tried that we re-unite I said No!

Ansy widowed in her mid-forties had had two marriages. She was unable to stay in the first due to violence. This decision is pegged on her strong character and independence that is pegged to her post-secondary education and to her personality. Though Ansy's violence is prior to widowhood, it informs the study on the importance of a strong personality. This personality, enables Ansy to fight subsequent injustices that target her when she is widowed. She is able to fight for her rights retaining her position in the family even after the husband's demise.

Amidst these cases of human rights violations against the widow, the study finds it important to mention about *awareness*. Widows who are aware of their rights fight it out against losing their property and inheritance. The case of saying 'No!' by Ansy is one such case where the woman is aware of her rights and this influences how she handles any intruders during her widowhood.

Denny’s unfortunate state of being a victim of violence is also well countered through her awareness. She seeks support from the local Government authorities. This puts an end to the violence against her. It also helps her retain her house amidst the in-laws. In the long run, she fights for her inheritance. The next category in widow psychosocial experiences is illiteracy.

#### 4.3.8. Widow psychosocial experiences related to illiteracy

In 4.3.7 the awareness of the widow was hinted as a way to help her fight against human rights violations. This is seen in Ansy saying “No!” to domestic violence. In this section, illiteracy is addressed under the themes of education and awareness. Under education, the question is how her knowledge assists her in knowing what is going on around her. Under awareness, the participant’s knowledge of ways to protect the family property is highlighted.

Figure 4.6 shows the frequency of each of the themes in widow discourse

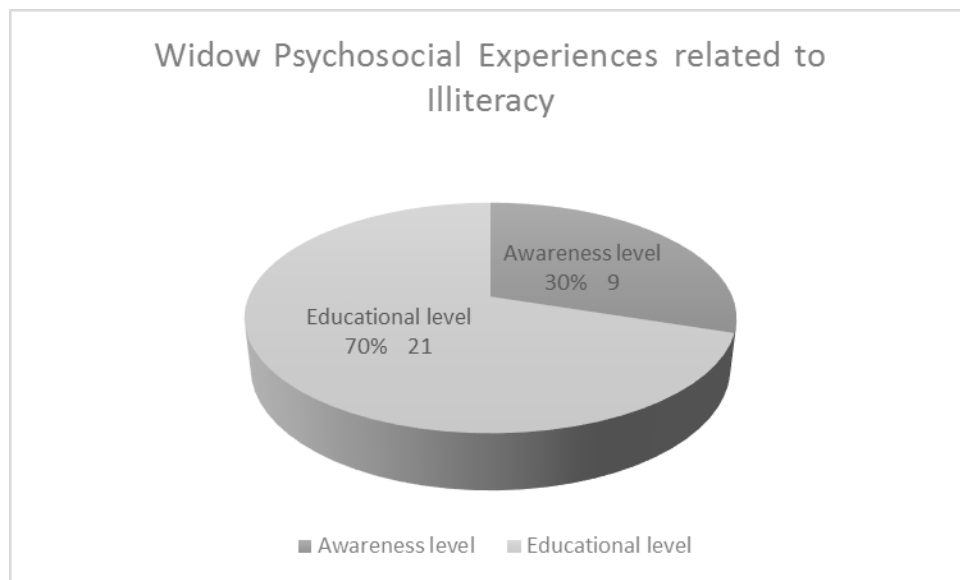


Figure 4.6. Widow psychosocial experiences related to illiteracy

#### *Awareness*

This is important in relation to family property. When the widow is aware, she is able to

protect the family wealth even from the husband. Milny a graduate who is widowed in her early fifties, challenges the husband who is ailing with HIV/AIDS. In the end she manages to ensure that he does not dispose the family property. She gets a lawyer to write a letter to revoke a loan that the husband was about to take. That loan would have led to their family property being sold off, "...and the lawyer had to write to the bank...Yes... So the lawyer wrote to the bank..."

Awareness also contributes to the welfare of the children. Lyna's awareness leads to her knowledge that grief is affecting her children. Lyna, like Milny is a graduate working in a high professional position. She journeys with her children as they start the journey of recovery after the loss of their father. "I think after three years is now when I was able to talk with my children and now started walking with them, trying to find out how are they processing the grief, we kept talking talking talking." In the end the children are able to get over the grief and go on with their lives. Awareness is contributed to by the widow's education.

### ***Widow's educational level***

With this realization, participants are seen enhancing their education, "I went back to school and after four years now when I was completing my campus..." This is the case of Bencie describing how she went back to school after marriage and child-delivery. This determination is also seen in her as a widow. She continues to propel herself to high levels of management after being widowed. In the discourse those participants whose level of education is high, awareness is also high.

However, those participants whose educational level is low, early marriages become a norm together with the subsequent non-professionalism. This appears to contribute to steeper financial constraints. These factors are seen in the next text, "We stayed with my grandmother until I reached class seven. It was that I was to follow mum where she was, and in following her I was

able to join form one but I was not able to continue with form two since I became pregnant and I had to leave school” (Oila). Oila’s challenges remain pegged to her levels of awareness. From the above extracts awareness and the participant’s education are related and hence the study grouped them under widow psychosocial experiences related to illiteracy. The following category is the psychological experiences of widows.

#### 4.3.9. Psychological experiences of widows

Table 4.12 shows the themes that come under the psychological experiences of widows. These add information to section 4.3.4 on widow psychosocial experiences related to death and loss issues.

**Table 4.12. Psychological experiences of widows**

<b>Themes</b>	<b>Number of entries</b>
Anger	1
Denial	1
Role of Therapy	8
Widow Acceptance Level	6
Widow Awareness Level	10
<b>Total</b>	<b>26</b>

Under death and loss issues, mourning was a strong theme under which denial featured as well as blame that was linked to anger. In this section, denial also features as well as anger. The elaborations given earlier in 4.3.4 on the two themes suffice.

#### *Widow’s psychological awareness*

On the same note, widow awareness level of what is happening to her, features. Awareness was discussed earlier under human rights and under illiteracy issues. The awareness that is in this category is of the participant’s psychological state. It is presented leading to acceptance of her situation. Bencie shares how, “I[*she*] began healing slowly and now I changed

my wardrobe and I would do the things I like, to a large extent and it is the confidence that I'm gathering even now it is not yet there but I pray and tell myself that I will get better...". This awareness is also supported by Finly who knows well how she got assistance, "... coz me its people who talked to me so that I can move on so...". This awareness leads to acceptance.

### ***Acceptance***

By acceptance the study looks at the ability of the widow to acknowledge that which is happening to her. With this she is able to seek the right interventions. Patsy gives her view on the importance of accepting oneself.

And when you are a widow, if you do not accept yourself, you know that I am a widow and I do not have another person other than God and my children and if you are not... other things you be putting them in mind very much you can even be mad. Or you find that you are thinking you are unable even to speak, or you are sick.

This discourse text that comes from Patsy is a confession that comes after almost being swindled her vehicle by a man who was taking advantage of her. She accepts her condition and seeks the right counsel. Acceptance is also part of Bensie who after a period of self-neglect and confusion says, "I could look at myself as a woman at the mirror and feel good me I feel very nice when I look at myself in the mirror not for anything not for anybody".

### ***Counselling psychology***

In this state of dealing with psychological situations, counselling psychology is pointed out as important. Counselling is looked at as a process of assisting those that are facing different difficult situations. Widows are one such group and there are those that benefit immensely as seen in the case of Oila, "...she sent me to a place I was offered counselling and I was able to recover". Elsyn also benefits from counselling, "...I had to first deal with counselling coz you



know the many things you would wanted to say coz this person was not sick". The husband goes to bed and does not wake up. She is left confused and as part of her recovery process, decides to go back to college to pursue Counselling. Elsyn is widowed after 16 years of marriage.

However, counselling was not able to assist all the cases of widow accompaniment as seen in the case of Lynna:

Yes he is I went the first session and somehow somewhere I felt my spirit the whole process so I didn't go through the counselling process coz I was not so familiar with the counselling world. So as much as some few friends suggested I go for counselling, I didn't embrace it because I was not so much familiar with the counselling world so I avoided it. But the books helped me a great deal, I journalised I journalised like four and a half journals.

Being in a well set organisation, they recommend counselling to her. However, it does not work for her. In addition to some not desiring counselling, there are those for whom counselling is all right. However it should come at a time when they feel ready for it.

Imagine it wasn't immediately. When I decided to do Higher Diploma and Psychology, it's when I still thought I have those issues, unfinished issues. That's now when I went coz all this time I thought I have dealt with this but as we learn Psychology, it's always at the back of your mind. The unfinished issues (Elsyn).

Therefore who and when to receive counselling is worth consideration when relating to widows.

The study has addressed the theme psychological widow experiences. It has shed light on areas of concern namely widow awareness of her psychological state and widow acceptance. It has also presented the role of Counselling Psychology. With this the study moves to the last category of objective one; widow psychosocial experiences. This category is titled widow psychosocial experiences related to sexual bodies.

#### **4.3.10. Sexed bodies in relation to widow psychosocial experiences**

Under this category three themes are present. There is a mention on dealing with

emotions, the sex culture and widow inheritance. It is noted that this theme is the least of all the themes with only 9 out of the 706 entries. This may be a pointer to its low significance among the participants compared to the other categories.



Figure 4.7. Widow psychosocial experiences related to sexed bodies

### *Dealing with emotions*

The emotions considered in this category are sexual emotions. The sex culture addresses culture-based issues relating to sex. With this the study dwells on each of the three themes.

Milny shares how she is cautious of sexual relations that may lead to deeper challenges.

I have answered the call of nature and you cut the ties, I'm not doing it to have fun but if I see it's getting me to the extent that I can be able to partner then I can have a relationship for a short period with an understanding person because...if you get me in a very compromising situation don't think it's going too far...

In an attempt to deal with sexual issues, participants surrender to God to assist them as they go through their different emotional challenges. They are reluctant to say for sure that they are upright and that they cannot fall into the temptation of engaging in sexual activities:

If one can, although we human beings, temptations are present but we ask God. Because if I see a young man and I look at what they are to give me, I ask God, the little which I get may I be content in my life, even what I pray for, May God grant me the little.

However, they are cautious of entering into permanent relationships. This was earlier seen under section 4.3.1 widow psychosocial experiences related to socio cultural issues under the theme of re-marriage.

Another issue that is also shared under sexed bodies is that of rape. This is in reference to the girl child (a daughter to Ally), “this disabled child of mine came and was raped by young people, she has been raped by other young people. I felt a lot of pain, I didn't have money....” This action reveals the animosity of the perpetrators while also exposing the pains that widows go through. The participant’s mention of having no money is in reference to the legal action. She could not go ahead with the case since the legal assistance she tried to seek demanded a bribe. This inferred corruption is hurting, much so to widows of low category level who took part in this study.

### ***Sex culture***

In relation to sex-culture a bizarre demand is done as expressed by Denny, “Because this young man had stayed with the wife without having a child, my husband was being asked to go, have sex with this woman to assist her get a child”. This cultural practice is demeaning to society.

### ***Widow inheritance***

Finally under this category, the theme of wife inheritance/widow remarriage surfaces. The first is quite covert. Casey is approached by persons who knew the husband and purported to be his friends while he was alive. The man comes to visit her while drunk and demands sex.

The other part...is the male friends, now my husband's friends....They come in so strongly, they think it is now them inheriting (laughter)...and I remember one, I actually told one you are very stupid, very very stupid. Why didn't you tell me when he was alive that you are there and when he dies you will be waiting? I told him never, never call my number again.

The second discourse text is of Finly that is formally approached to be inherited. She gives her opinion in relation to this practice:

But you find others like or culture our African culture, this thing of wife inheritance [widow remarriage] it's something that they should not force it on a woman, it should not. Because it does not only affect this woman but it affects the children, it really affects the children in a very negative way.

This section has presented themes that show widow psychosocial experiences. This is in response to objective one. The section has come up with ten categories and under each category, several themes. All these have been presented supported by texts from the participants. With this the study moves to the second objective that seeks to find out how these widow psychosocial experiences influence the widow's self-identity.

#### **4.4. Influence of Widow Psychosocial Experiences on Widow Self-Identity**

This section responds to research question two: how do widow psychosocial experiences influence the widow's self-identity? The quest here starts by identifying the components and categories of widow self-identity. To realise this, the chapter looks at existential widow self-identity and later the role-based widow identities. Later, the association between the two study variables: widow psychosocial experiences and widow self-identity is addressed.

##### **4.4.1. Existential widow self-identity**

In this section, the study addresses existential widow self-identity. This is where the widow participant's feminine identity is seen (girlhood, adolescent girl, young lady, wife, and later widow). Though this identity is often taken to be natural, the way the widow participant uses language (Discourse Analysis) is of importance to this study. Figure 4.8 shows the themes, sub-themes and sub-sub-themes that come under this category.

In Figure 4.8 existential widow self-identity is presented. Three sub-themes are seen namely girlhood, adolescence, young adulthood where we have the woman starting to relate

with the fiancé.

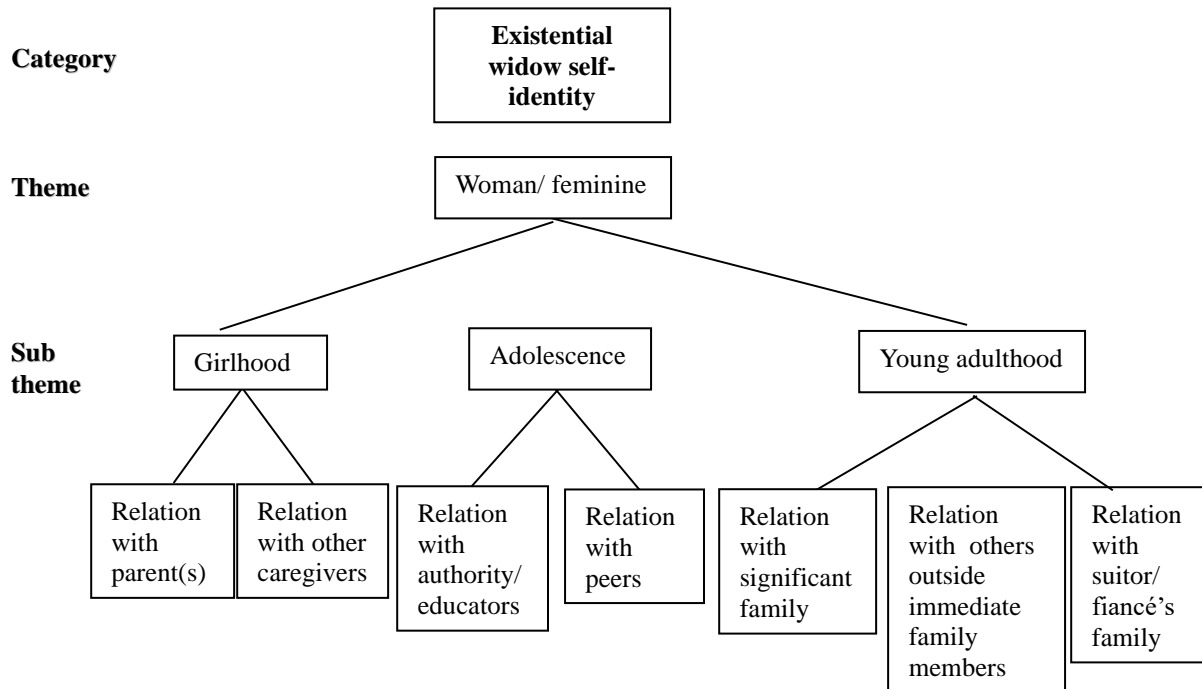


Figure 4.8. Existential widow self-identity

Throughout, the lady is standing out as a woman in the way she relates to anyone she comes across. These relationships allow her to get the title of a woman. Finally she gets married. This existential identity is the precursor to marriage and to the subsequent widowhood. In the widow discourse, in addition to the three sub-themes and their subsequent sub-sub-themes, alternative gender identities are inferred.

The presentation in this section concentrates on the three sub-themes, girl-child, adolescent, and young adulthood. Then it addresses the expressions of widowhood as an alternative gender identity. These sub-themes are further discussed.

### ***Girlhood and adolescence***

This shows the first stage in which the participant starts realising herself as a woman. At first the difference between the girl and her roles, contrasted to that of the boy is not clear, “So

me I grew up like boys. When they climb up a tree me I also used to climb up (Kutlie)". However, as time goes on and she joins school, gradually in connection with the teachers, she starts seeing herself as a girl. It is nevertheless at *adolescence* that the girl starts having an attire that places her at a different position. Casey shares the start of this differentiation (psychic maturity) (Vancea, 2013), "My dad also is the one who showed me how to put on earrings". She starts adorning herself as a girl and since then she sees herself as a woman.

### ***Young woman***

As a young woman, Bencie is helped to take responsibility. With her suitor, she is helped to grow, "...whenever he got anything he directed it to me including cash and the career I am in right now he is actually the one who guided me..." This handing over of responsibility, makes Bencie solidify her identity as a woman, this time relating with the man who is the husband. In this engagement she grows to be a career woman.

Other participants share how their relationships contribute towards disempowering their woman existential identity. "I would be beaten for nothing. Totally for no reason. Since I cannot give you any reason. First of all, I would never go out roaming..." This domestic violence was earlier discussed under human rights violations. In this section it is seen as a process of disempowering, that some women go through. This may apparently disrupt identity.

Also another subtle concern that the study looks at as a disempowerment process to the woman's identity is provision of all. Kutlie suffers after the death of the husband since:

It is painful because I was used to everything being done for me. Everything even these clothes of mine since he married me I did not know how to go to the market or do anything. He was a person who would buy for me even panties. Everything even bra was brought to me and it was put for me there.

The act of having to purchase and do all for the woman, may be looked at as

strengthening her existential identity. However, it leads towards a dependency that at widowhood, is seen as clear disempowerment.

### ***Widowhood***

Finally, the section looks at widowhood presented as part of alternative gender identity (Elson, 2004). In relation to alternative identities, Casey shares, “So there are times I ask myself, if only you are sincerely considered a widow when you turn 60, then who am I?” This question is pertinent to the widow participants. Later on she repeats the concern, “Where are they [widows]? Yah, I think because they, I I feel as a social being, the the society that I belong to which is part of the government, should help me understand where I belong”. This is a continued concern that the study continues to address.

This section on existential widow identity has looked at the widow through girlhood and adolescence. It has also looked at how her movement into young adulthood leads to the culmination in marriage. In the end it has presented her life as a widow showing acts that empower or disempower her existential identity. The next section addresses role-based widow self-identities.

#### **4.4.2. Widow self-identities related to roles**

This section addresses "role- based identity"; what a person does (Kopytoff, 2005). In this study, this section looks at the different roles that the participant plays. Three categories of roles are seen. These are socio-cultural roles, occupational roles, and spiritual roles. Socio-cultural roles are determined by society. One does not choose to be a daughter, while not having friends would be seen as abnormal. Also once one matures the society expects the woman to be married and be a mother. In this way these roles are social guided. The participant appears to go

through them as a natural process.

On the part of occupational roles, the participant has some choice. The type of work one does as well as whether or not to be a student especially as an adult, is a choice. Similarly one chooses to belong to a particular religion. However, whether one is a social and spiritual being by choice is debatable. This is because one's situation may drive one into a particular direction. Table 4.4 shows the categories, and the roles played under each category giving the number of entries for each.

**Table 4.13. Distribution of widow role-based identities**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Role played</b>	<b>Number of entries</b>
Socio-Cultural	Daughter	32
	Friend	10
	Wife	15
	Mother	7
	Social being/person	14
Occupational	Student	11
	Worker: Employee/business lady	10
Spiritual	Church member	5
	Spiritual being/person	10
<b>Total</b>		<b>114</b>

***Socio-cultural role identities***

These identities occupy the largest number of entries in Table 4.13. The entries total 78 out of 114. This shows the significance that these roles play in widow discourse. On being a daughter, Finly enjoys the relationship she had with the father. “I can say my childhood was good, the way I was brought up and I can say I had a dad who was empowering us”. This shows the value of a parent to a daughter. This point is juxtaposed with the feelings of a lost parent as shared by Kutlie,

...my teenage was not easy... because just when I just finished my fourth form my dad died! And when he died to me that was like the end of my furthering my studies because with relatives we had that is my uncles all they had was for me to get a job to support...



The death or even just the absence of a parent leads to a lack of basic needs. In the case of Kutlie, her education had to stop despite the presence of the relatives.

*Marriage life and the role of being a wife and a mother* also fall under socio-cultural role identities. Being a wife is seen as synonymous to being a mother. So these two are hence presented in the same text. “I got my first born, and marriage life let me say it was neither easy nor bad. It was moderate” (Pyulet). The same synonymy is seen in Hatly, “When I was married I was married in the year 1988. I was blessed with my first child called first born son.” The participants share on marriage and immediately transit to the issues of children. This may be a pointer towards the value of children among the participants.

However, there are some participants whose professionalism is interfered with by the transition into marriage. Lyna says, “...I got married to my late husband. So my contract ended and I had just got married so I left now employment and now started my life with my husband and now this time round now without a job...”. She explains the challenges of having to financially depend on someone else; she was not used to it since she had earlier been earning. From this sharing, socio-cultural role identities take preference over occupational ones.

At widowhood, socio-cultural roles are interfered with. Casey shares how they had *family friends* when the husband was alive. Nevertheless, after she loses the husband, “I realised people moved away...and it is like I end up being so so much alone.” Loneliness hits her since the friends move away. Earlier on under widow psychosocial experiences of death and loss, the immense loneliness that the participants go through was presented. Also under widow psychosocial experiences related to socio-cultural issues, relationship with family and friends was looked at. These support the “moving away” that Casey talks about. With this movement, the participant’s identities in relation to socio-cultural roles changes. She loses some friends who were part of their life when the husband was alive. Since she is a *social being*, she moves on to

get new friends that accept her in her present condition.

In this new relationships with friends, the participant has to be careful. Casey shared how the friends attempted to take advantage of her. “..my husband's friends...they come in so strongly, they think it is now them inheriting (laughter)...”. The male friends come in attempting to have sexual relationships with the participant. Also, Milny shared how one can be bitter based on her unmet expectations in these new relationships. “You begin to get bitter when you think that people should help you and there is nothing good in the help that they will help you and they need to understand that...”. This shows the effects of these new changing socio-cultural roles.

There are those participants however, who choose to interact more with their children. These children are encouraged to start taking up more responsibilities. This is because the husband is no more there. The participants seek deeper relationship with the children,

And I told her [daughter] you know you are the next of kin, in these shares, if I am not there you like it or not you will go for these meetings. And I asked do you feel, her do you think you can go for this meeting on Friday? And she told me now you are there, Go! (Laughter).

Similar interactions are presented by Metrin who shares of her new relationship with her daughter. This time they assist each other financially.

Now at this time, this girl of mine had been employed this work of sweeping the road and that work has stood. Now the hope is *githeri* (a mixture of boiled maize and beans) there. And that other one has no work but she is married. Now she is just like me the way when I was with my husband I was being given. At some other time if she sees a little she throws at me. If she is not given a lot, she does her own things.

Both the mother and the daughter are however not so financially stable. None was able to pursue education properly and hence move to professionalism. Therefore they depend on casual jobs. Their socio-cultural relationship has shifted from mother-daughter only and added on friendship.

This section has looked at the socio-cultural role identities that the participants are part of. It has presented them as daughters, wives, mothers, friends and in general social beings. How different socio-cultural roles are taken up at widowhood, has been given. Having done that, the study moves into occupational role identities.

### ***Occupational widow identity roles***

Under occupational role identities, two themes are presented: student and worker. As a student, the participants share on their entire schooling, including the efforts they have as widows to advance themselves. On the part of their occupations, they share about their professionalism, self-employment and business, as well as their daily chores that include those that are house-wives. These occupations are closely linked to their search for financial sustenance.

*As a student* Fynn shares her life:

...I started work at the age of sixteen and so I dropped out of school. My parents couldn't afford my education. In my own self I said I want to be responsible and educate my brothers. So I left school got a job...I got into many different jobs so from jobs I studied on my own. In the evening I used to go to class and do some typing and what I am today is what I did when I was working....

This participant ensures that despite the parents' inability to educate her, she gets education. She not only gets her education but facilitates her siblings to also get schooling. She shares of her challenges as a student and worker at the same time. This sharing shows her occupational roles as a student and a worker at the same time.

Participants also share their roles as *workers*, "...I started selling cats in [the...] market. I sold, I sold..." (Ally). She is willing to engage in any job as long as it helps her in financial stability. In their work, they are not only able to take care for their children but they save for a rainy day, "...had some Kshs 3,000 that I had got from a rotational women table banking group."

Table banking refers to an activity in women groups where each contributes some money. The money is given to one or shared to a few. The beneficiary is meant to refund this money after some duration with some interest. This activity goes on in rounds and each is able to benefit. In this way, with this money she is able to contribute towards development (Gitobu and colleagues, 2017). Occupation at work leads to saving and improved livelihoods.

This section has addressed the socio-cultural as well as the occupational roles of the participants. Under socio-cultural roles, marriage, link with friends as well as the participant's position as a social being, were presented. Under occupational roles, her student life as well as her financial related occupations have been seen. The next section gives the spiritual role. In this we have the participant as a member of a church and also her other roles related to her presence as a spiritual being.

### ***Spiritual widow identity roles***

The first of this is where the participants are part of a church or a religious organisation. The second section of spiritual identity roles sees how the participants exercise their spirituality. Finly links up with the Ignatian spirituality in order to discern God's will in her marriage. "So what I did was aah with my Ignatian spirituality knowledge which I had to discern and to see the forward with my marriage whether I wanted to be in it or not". This life of prayer, allows her to go deeper in her spirituality.

An additional insight on the spirituality of the participants is seen in the words of Finly, "...if I put Jesus first and I surrender everything to Him then I will see my way through and that's exactly what I did". The surrender is a deep link with one's spirituality. It is a surrender to a Higher Power. The study saw this earlier under psychosocial experiences of widows related to spirituality.

In addition to the participant's spirituality, she also engages in the *Church*, "...secondly the church, and the church usually when I talk I talk about the church that I am serving, even up to today...and there are times even when I am serving I ask myself, and you know I also want to retain that position in the Church, who am I?" (Casey). Her state of widowhood, appears to lead her to question the role she plays in Church. The participant is searching meaning and identity in her work in Church.

In this last part, the participant's spiritual role is seen as a spiritual being that prays and surrenders to God. Also her role in the church is seen. The three categories of roles have hence been looked at. These are the socio-cultural roles, the occupational roles as well as the spiritual roles. The section therefore has looked at widow self-identity. Existential widow self-identity as well as widow self-identity related to roles are core sections. With this understanding of widow self-identity, the study seeks to respond further to objective two: to find out how widow psychosocial experiences influence widow self-identity.

#### **4.4.3 Association between widow psychosocial experiences and widow self-identity**

This section has two parts. The first is the psychosocial widow experiences linked to existential widow self-identity. The second part is on the psychosocial widow experiences linked to widow role-based identities.

##### ***Psychosocial widow experiences linked to existential widow self-identity***

The existential widow identities, were looked at under girlhood, adolescence and young adulthood. Widow discourse from the participants shows a relation between psychosocial experiences and girlhood. This is seen in the way the girl relates to her parents.

...my childhood was good, the way I was brought up and I can say I had a dad who was empowering us coz to me I felt like he knew one day he won't be there. But he wanted

us to be strong and firm so that we can always take care of ourselves (Finly).

In this sharing, Finly's relationship with the father, leads her to feeling empowered. The indication that "I felt like he knew one day he won't be there" indicates the value of responsibility that the father inculcates in her. This leads to her studying hard and taking up caring roles early in her life. In this same text, Finly hints to her relationship with the brothers, "...he wanted us to be strong and firm so that we can always take care of ourselves". She demonstrates this in her later discourse. They were taking good care of each other with the other siblings. The psychosocial experiences she goes through continue to demonstrate a girl in her and later a caring wife and mother. They single her out as feminine. In this way there is a link between the psychosocial experiences and existential widow self-identity.

This amicable relationship leading to clear existential widow self-identity is seen in the text by Bencie. "My mum was very patient to just show me how to wash the dishes and practically she could show me but both of them played a big role and helped a lot in shaping who I am today". Like in Finly's case, Bencie expresses how the relationship with her parents leads her towards being feminine. She is able to express and live this femininity in her other identities that follow later in life. Juxtaposed to these two examples of an amicable relationship between the parent and child, is a malfunctioning relationship.

This second point is reiterated by Oila whose relationship with the father is not so amicable.

My biological father was not happy about that [pregnancy at 16 years]. It was like he did not want me... I was married at a very tender age of fifteen years. A very young girl, now you are married, that was a marriage that you did not expect, you had not expected to get a child at that age, and you meet that even the parent is also rejecting you; a parent that is the father...I left and I went to stay with my husband.

Oila fails to complete her primary education. In her marriage, the husband becomes an

alcoholic. She struggles to go for casual jobs to sustain her family. Later in widowhood, she falls prey to other “friends” who derail her course. She almost ends up an alcoholic too, but for intense prayers and counselling, she gets back on her feet.

For Finly and Oila, the subsequent roles they acquire at young adulthood, demonstrate a solid foundation that helps them in being well differentiated (Vancea, 2012). However, for Oila there appears to be some fusion (Romero-Moreno et al., 2014). In it the participants act in avoidance of experiences such as feelings, sensations, urges, memories or thoughts (Hayes et al., 2011). With the lack of adequate parental support, the participant struggles immensely in her roles as an adult. The study sees a link between psychosocial experiences and existential self-identity.

Relationship with teachers and educators is also significant. When the relationship is amicable, the girl is able to solidify the existential self-identity started by the relationship between her and her parents.

We had a close relationship, because mainly I was in the choir and the one who was our English teacher. Now many times she was calling me into the staff room, she tells me to only stay in the staff room and I start to sing for her. Now when singing, now you know that the office of the deputy was just next to the staff room and also there was the office of the head teacher it was just there. Now they used to hear my voice. Until that is to say they were so impressed until they came and gave me the position of the entertainment officer (Patsy).

This recognition gets her leading the entertainment docket. At a later time they go to entertain the president. This activities play a role in the way she handles things in her adulthood. She is confident as a woman. She is able to fight for her rights even after losing her husband to a short illness.

A similar case is shown in the text by Elsyn showing her late teens and early young adulthood.

I went to college and chose a career out of family. You know I went to my dad’s office and saw this secretary of his, you know those days were for the freedom fighters you

know she had a typewriter, manual typewriter you know speaking like a you know courageous and I was told that there were secrets of becoming a secretary so I said that is what I wanted to do when I grow up so applied. So I did my secretary of course for two years.

The post-secondary secretarial course gives her a confidence that contributes to her stability during widowhood. She expresses how she relates well with the teachers who help her solidify her existential self-identity. She emerges a woman who also like Patsy, fights for her rights as a widow.

These two instances support what the study saw earlier; the relationship between a parent and a child helps cement the participant's existential self-identity and the subsequent roles she undertakes later as an adult. A contrary relationship with the parents and with the teachers, leads to a fusion; the participant seems less likely to be able to take up clear roles in adulthood. There is therefore a link between the psychosocial experiences that the participants go through in girlhood, adolescence and young adulthood, and their existential self-identity.

### *Psychosocial widow experiences linked to widow role-identities*

The different roles that the participants take are presented under three themes: socio-cultural, occupational, and spiritual roles. In the following text from Lyna, socio-cultural as well as occupational roles are shown. She expresses her relationship with her husband (as a wife), and then brings in her job (employment). This extract shows her clarity on her roles.

...the [first] years of our marriage [were] was very difficult financially but I think we also worked to cement our relationship as a couple coz after two years he had a financial break through and me I got a job...after four years of unemployment I got a job and now his business had picked up so life now became, okay we resumed normal and now we had a good life together.

As Lyna shares later of the tragic death of the husband through a road accident, she demonstrates strength in the roles she undertakes. She is aware of her psychological state of



mourning, and that of her children. She is able to carry on with the businesses of the husband. She is also able to carry on with the education of the children with less financial strife. Based on this, there appears to be a link between the psychosocial experiences that participants go through, and their role-based identities.

Kutlie is a professional and able financially. After the death of the husband, she expresses how her relationship with her in-laws is:

...for me I don't have any problem with my relatives. I told my parents, I will take care of you, and yes I did. I buried my father-in-law [...] and my mother-in-law [...]. And when we buried daddy I told her the way you were with your husband I will be that way with you. So I took care of my in-laws.

She plays the role of a wife to her husband, a mother to her children, and that of a parent to the ageing parents and parents-in-law. Her professional roles lead her to a financial stability that in turn leads to an ability to carry out the above roles. In this way there appears to be a link between the participant's psychosocial experiences and the role-identities that she undertakes.

The situation of Kutlie is contrary to that of Villy. The latter has little education and hardly any professionalism. She was dependent on the husband for sustenance. She did not appear to have a solid existential identity and hence also has a fluid role-based identity. When she is widowed, she shares of her challenges.

He [son] is studying at [a] secondary school and even for him I have a lot of problems because I don't have money I even have last year's balance. This year and I was told when he is entering January he will not enter until I finish that balance. Now after being sent away, I started renting a house. And now I don't have work, and getting money again for the house became a problem. And now sometimes I am locked out of the house like there was a year the house was locked and and my child had broken both hands. And I was locked the house, it became a lot of problem.

Villy is struggling to pay for the fees of her children. In another text, she expresses her struggles in feeding her family. In this text she also says, "...after being sent away". This is in reference to the house she occupied at the in-laws place. She was sent away with her children

after the demise of the husband. This indicates that unlike Kutlie, she is unable to fight for her rights. Her relationship with her in-laws is strenuous. Finally she is unable to take care of her children's education and propel them to financial sustainability.

The two opposite cases show a link between the participant's psychosocial experiences and her self-identity. There are those whose existential self-identity appears unclear founded on a strenuous relationship between them, their parents and educators. These appear to find deeper challenges related to education and to professionalism in adulthood. This also appears to influence their ability to take care of their financial sustainability. The contrary appears to hold water. Those whose relationship with their parents is solid, appear to have a solid existential self-identity. This has a positive link to their acquisition of education and professionalism. In turn this has an effect on their financial sustainability. In this way there is an association between psychosocial experiences and widow self-identity.

Further association is found in chapter five, under discussion. The above presentations show a relationship between existential self-identity and psychosocial experiences. They also show an association between the role identities (socio-cultural and occupational) and widow psychosocial experiences. In the first instance, the association appears to be influenced by the relationship between the parents, the educators and the participants. In the second instance, the relationship appears to also be influenced by the earlier existential self-identity. However for 40 of the 42 participants, spiritual identity appears prominent. This does not appear to depend on their existential or other role-based identities.

In conclusion, widow self-identity, is nurtured from childhood. This nurturing continues into adulthood and is carried into her marriage. Later, on being widowed, she has existential self-identity depending on her earlier relationship with her parents and educators. She also has role-based identities linked to the education she got and to her professionalism. This is linked to

her financial ability. In these identities, her relationship with in-laws is affected. Her spiritual identity however, does not appear to be dependent on her existential self-identity and on her other role-based identity themes. These factors therefore influence how the participants deal with their psychosocial experiences in their attempt to find their positions in society. This relation is presented in section 4.5.

#### **4.5. Ways in which Widows deal with their Psychosocial Experiences**

This section addresses objective three: to identify how the widows deal with their psychosocial experiences in their attempt to find their position in society. In this section, the study has a sub-section that seeks to show different ways in which participants react to issues surrounding them. This sub-section concentrates on coping mechanisms that the participants use as they deal with their widowhood. The sub-section is followed by a second one that gives suggestions which widows give to other widows, on ways to improve their lives.

##### **4.5.1. Widow coping mechanisms**

**Table 4.14. How participants have coped**

<b>How participants have coped</b>	<b>Number of entries</b>
Have positive self-talk	2
Be alone	1
Seek counselling: Seek professional help	2
Re-organise the self	1
Spend time in other activities e.g. work, studies	2
Pour out	1
Decide to move on	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>10</b>

During the interview, various issues were targeted. The first was the preliminary data that helped the study know the widow participant better. This part also helped create rapport between the interviewer and the widow participant. This was later followed by the sharing on widow

childhood. This paved way to teenage and young adulthood psychosocial experiences. The phase before marriage, during marriage and death of husband followed. After that the widow was asked of the experiences she has gone through as a widow. Finally, the study sought to get how the widows have managed (coped with the challenges. Finally, the widow participant was asked to give suggestions that would go towards improving the lives of widows. In this section, the study addresses the coping mechanisms that the participants gave.

Table 4.15 presents ten entries giving insight into ways in which the participants coped. Out of the ten, seven methods used by the participants come out. These are discussed under their respective headings.

### ***Positive self-talk***

Participants shared on the importance of positive self-talk. When one is widowed, there are challenges that subject one to constantly focus on the negative. Nevertheless, as Angy shares, “I began concentrating on positive words and I began telling myself that I am able and that is now what has built me up to now”. The focus on positive issues rather than on the negative, positively contributes towards the widow’s reconstruction process.

### ***Being alone***

It is possible to think that widows want to have someone around them all the time. In line with this belief others feel that leaving the widow alone is all negative. However, from the widow discourse it appears that they too need time to re-collect themselves.

So there were a lot of scenes and everything but anyway all I wanted that week was to be alone and I actually got my alone time because now the birthday for my son is over and the burial is over now my daughter is shocked but she has to go back to school (Bensie).

Being alone, for Bensie was to allow her re-find her position after the death and burial of

the late husband. This points to the overwhelming feeling that Bencie had after the long illness of the husband and the subsequent death and burial. This is a pointer to the need to listen to widows. This is to allow them to find where they are and what they need after the death of the husband. Through this, she is able to re-start her life. The study refers to this re-finding and re-starting as re-construction of who they are; of their identity.

### ***Counselling: Seeking professional help***

From interactions, counselling comes in as a way through which the participants cope. Nevertheless, counselling for widows calls for caution on the part of the counsellor. This is due to the intricate state of the participants as shown in this extract.

...you need counselling and we have counsellors here so all this time I had been talking to somebody coz I had attached my husband to a counsellor and I was talking to him and this time now a counsellor tells me that I was too close to a counsellor I was too close so I tell him *daktari* (doctor) me I have a counsellor he said okay so anyway that first year was difficult coz it was a year that I was going to comprehend what was going on... I was too closed even the counsellor would say that I was too closed [to the counsellor] so even getting that mileage in terms of healing process was just so difficult

Bencie expresses the concern of the counsellor, “I was too closed”. This suggests that the set itinerary that the counsellor expected was not being adhered to. The participant did not progress as expected. This is a pointer to the intricate issue that widowhood is. A pre-set procedure, tied to specific time-lines might not work. However, a participant-led counselling journey may be considered.

This intricate nature of counselling widows is further supported by the words of Finly.

It can be counselling but how do you counsel, what methods do you have to use to counsel a widow. Because a widow is not like a drug addict it's not. This is a woman who everybody is looking down upon, this is a woman who makes others insecure when she is around, this is a woman who is just to be seen and not be heard, this is a woman who can't come to me and say this is what I'm going through you see, this is a woman who when even she is broke she cannot go to a shop and get something on credit because the shop owner will say *utalipa na nini?* (What will you pay with?)

It is based on this that the study develops a model for widow identity construction. This is aimed at responding to this complex need. This is also a caution to the professional counsellors having widowed clients. The next coping strategy is self-re-organization.

### ***Reorganizing the self***

Self-awareness of what has transpired, so that one can start a journey of self-reorganization, is important. Fynn in her middle fifties and with her children out of their home, finds herself with so much free time after the demise of the husband. She decides to start doing voluntary work. "...that's how I picked myself up. I buried myself ...in doing volunteer work. A month after [he] passed on I decided I want to go back to the hospital and do the volunteer work there so I was in the Cancer unit".

This for Fynn serves two purposes. The first is that it occupies her time. The second is that in serving Cancer patients, she mourns her late husband who died of Cancer. She feels that she is giving back to society. She desires to help the Cancer patients as well as those whose relatives are dying of the disease.

A similar case is found in the case of Lyna who chooses to spend more time with widows.

...as I lost my husband, I had so much passion and compassion to reach out to the widows and mostly it's about encouragement and having that shoulder to lean on, providing a support system to widows, because I know that having someone can a person can open up to what you are going through as a widow it's quite helpful.

In this way she re-organises her activities and has time for widows. This helps occupy the time that she spent with the husband.

In another case, Bencie finds herself forgetting even the "very obvious". Aware of this unusual situation in her life, she decides to re-organise herself. At this time, she desires (and is

able) to re-organise herself without the help of the counsellor. “So I designed devices on how to cope with things...arranging my things so that I don’t forget where I kept what.” Re-organization is important since one’s life has changed. It is therefore mandatory that one changes their earlier order of doing things.

### ***Spending time on other activities***

The decisions that Fynn and Bencie make may positively be looked at as engaging their time. That notwithstanding, others may choose to look at it as escaping from the issues relating to mourning. Fynn decides to face the loss of her husband who died of Cancer by spending time with Cancer patients and relatives. Bencie decides to fill her time with so much of her work responsibilities, so that she has little free time. This may be interpreted as running away from the painful emotions of loss. This sheds light on the complexity of widowhood. While the two participants deal with their loss through self-reorganization and avoidance respectively, others pour out.

### ***Pouring out***

Finly hails having someone to listen to her. She even cautions the negativity of stopping a widow from speaking. She couples this negativity with being judgmental and with giving solutions.

The support I had was...somebody to listen to me. That was the main main support. Coz you find like there are times you want like to speak but somebody cuts you off or instead of somebody just listening to you and then judging or maybe advising you, you find that somebody already is giving you solutions on what to do. To me that one never worked. I really need somebody to hear me out...Because it’s always important to have someone to listen to you... Whether you call them at what time at night weather it’s during the day they will always be there for you...very important.

From this extract, the widow does not want to be judged, rather her desire is one to

listen to her. In the end, decision to move on comes out as an important way of coping with her situation.

### ***Decision to move on***

In all the three cases, discussed under self-reorganization and under escapism, the participants have found ways of moving on. They do so by starting to positively make use of the time that is vacant after the demise of the husband. It is however an acceptance that death has occurred, the husband is not coming back, yet life has to continue.

From the widow discourse texts given, widows cope in different ways. While some bury themselves in work, others prefer some time alone. There are others who choose to go out and be listened to. From this the study establishes that there is need for whoever is journeying with widows, to be flexible.

The coping mechanisms discussed are followed by suggestions which address how widows should improve their lives. These include additional suggestions to organisations and other persons relating with widows.

#### **4.5.2. Suggestions on how widows can improve their lives**

In this section on suggestions on how widows can improve their lives, four sets of suggestions are seen. The first is suggestions to widows. This is followed by suggestions to Government and to organizations that come across widows. This includes the Church. Finally suggestions are given to individuals. It is purported that these individuals include counsellors and other caregivers. These suggestions are shown in Table 4.15.



**Table 4.15. Suggestions to widows on how to improve their lives**

<b>Suggestions to widows</b>	<b>Number of entries</b>
Allow time to heal	1
Be focussed	1
Be hardworking/do not choose the job	2
Be patient	3
Be principled	1
Be responsible	1
Be upright	1
Be watchful/cautious of the world/of other people	1
Have/build self-acceptance, self-belief, self-esteem	4
Have positive relationship with your children/focus on/confide in them	3
Have a positive relationship with in-laws	2
Have values (mainly spiritual values)	1
Interact with others	1
Put things in order (documents i.e. death certificate)	1
Rely on Divine Power	3
Be prayerful	3
Confide in/trust in God	3
Forgive	1
Share with other widows	1
Take care of self	1
Work towards self-sufficiency/self-reliance	3
Avoid	1
Loneliness	1
Losing your identity	1
Over-complaining and bitterness	1
Sexual perversion/being sexually misused	3
Over-expecting from and over-trusting others	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>41</b>

***Allow time to heal***

This suggestion comes from Lyna, “...I always say that it's time time, time heals...with time you find that the burden eases the pain eases the hurt eases so you find that with time...with time, they will be able to get over this hard experiences.” The study notes that repetition of the word “time” six times in such a short extract shows the importance of it as a healer to the widow. This suggestion is followed by seven “be’s” These focus on a change of state. The participant is encouraged to change her state by adopting varied new positions.

***Be focussed, hardworking, patient, principled responsible and watchful***

In line with the first set of four advice points, the following texts express each value:

...always to focus and to discern rushing in making decisions not to rush just to... you know there are those who *kata kauli mara moja* (decide at once) then later on... (Finly).

...have hard work in anything even...casual work so that they get whatever they will get to bring up the children. And not to look at [rely on] any person because if one they look at any person there is no one even the one that loves them most even their sisters even if it is the mother, they can't. so they love God and... (Juley, a low cadre widow who is sent away from her home by her in-laws).

Life is just being patient be, cause it is just accepting...he has gone he has gone, but if a person stays in the hands of God, there is nothing that has problem (Like Juley, Hatly only managed class eight and is left in a rental house having to depend on casual jobs for her income).

...be patient and to stay in a way that is right and again to be patient and to know God a lot because even prayers there is somewhere where they stand a lot (Juley).

First of all is to have principles, that one is very very key. Principles in the sense, like I can, say when it comes to relationships... (Casey).

In the first text, Finly suggests *focus and discernment*, failure to which on regrets hasty decisions. In the second text, Juley suggests hard-work. The result is self-sustainability for the nuclear family. The contrary leads to attempts to rely on other people which leads to disillusionment. Juley also culminates her suggestion by calling upon reliance on God. Further on, she joins Hatly suggesting patience. Hatly links this to acceptance of death and with Juley brings in reliance on God as a support to the widow. Casey gives the fourth indicating the importance of a widow being principled. She explains what she means by the word “principles”, “...when it comes to relationships”. She is cautioning against widows being lured into relationships that would hastily end up in another marriage. This was earlier discussed under the socio-cultural widow experiences. On the last three suggestions: be responsible, upright and watchful, texts from widow discourse are also shared.

...stay responsible and faithful and I would tell them that God is in control and God will

be there for her and nothing will be difficult. Yeah, it is not the end of the world, yeah it is painful yes but we have to move on (Zuk).

...be watchful in the world today...you find that the world now sweeps you you leave your children in problems (Oila).

Zuk's suggestion on responsibility is coupled with being faithful and a reliance on God. This adds weight to the earlier suggestions culminating in reliance on a Higher Power. Oila cautions, "be watchful" in this she cautions the widow to avoid behaviour that would get her into promiscuity leading to death. This may be pointing towards HIV/AIDS or any other practice that would endanger the life of the widow. It is due to this that she says, "...you leave your children in problems". The "leaving" refers to death. The six Bes have indicated what the widow should acquire as a change of her state. This is followed by four haves.

### ***Have self-acceptance/belief/esteem, and positive relationships***

These suggest qualities that the widows need to acquire. These haves start with three reflexives: have *self-acceptance*, *self-belief* and *self-esteem*. These are followed by the suggestion to *have a positive relationship with own children* by focussing on and confiding in them. The third is an appeal to the widow to have a positive relationship with the in-laws. This is a task following the tense relationship between the participants and their in-laws as was seen under socio-cultural widow psychosocial experiences. Finally the suggestion is for the widow to have values, mainly spiritual ones. The following texts express each of the above haves:

It is necessary for one to accept herself that I am a widow and there is no person that will come from out there and bring for me. The second thing, cultivate a positive relationship with your children. That even if something has befallen me God is the first one to know and my children (Oila).

Oila points to having a positive relationship with one's children through confiding in them. In the same text she suggests self-acceptance of one being a widow. This for her means

not expecting the husband to fend for the family. By extension, it is appealing to the widow to be self-reliant. Then Angy comes in to reiterate the importance of self-acceptance and links it to self-belief and to self-value. She links these selves to reliance on God. She however cautions that challenges are inevitable. Despite this, knowing that there are others that share similar predicaments, and having positive attitude, one shall manage.

...accept herself and also be ready for challenges because challenges are there so she should just accept and also believe in herself, and know she is not the only one who is left alone there are many others who have been left alone so I think she should have that positive attitude towards herself and it is a very significant value towards herself and also in everything she does, God should be first because He is our provider.

Milny is particular about the *relationship that a widow should have with her in-laws*.

...do not break your relationship with your in-laws no matter what and with children they need a family to belong to and that family is you...maintain [your] relationship with [your] in-laws...do not show it [misunderstanding] to the children that you have got nothing to do with them. I think it's important that you forgive them because you never belong to your family and in your family you will still be looked at as an outsider. Children are contained in their father's place so that they have an identity.

She reiterates several things. First she cautions the widow not to break her relationship with the in-laws. She goes on to point that even if there is misunderstanding between the in-laws and the widow, children should be kept out of it lest they disconnect with the in-laws and hence lose their sense of belonging. She finally advises the widows to be forgiving. As mentioned earlier, this situation may not be easy. However, it is worth making effort.

In the last of the haves, Casey shares on the importance of *having values*.

...have principles...and values...spiritual values are very very necessary, and even with that comes the moral, because I say, as a woman I may be in need of a man...But do I have to go exposing my body or allowing myself to every other man who comes to be part of my life, No! I have to hold on to my values, my value, because eeh! I value my dignity, very very...I don't open my doors to every Dick and Harry who comes....that is very very key. And it earns you...a place in the society...You have a voice that reminds you. Even when you want to trip, you have a voice telling you, I am with you. I hold on to prayer, prayer is very very key.

Casey's sharing on the point of having values, links to having principles. She mentions

of the sexual desire. She however cautions that this should not be an excuse to be immoral. Holding onto one's dignity takes precedence. This is supported by the conscience (voice) that is closely linked to God, "I am with you". With this she concludes by giving the importance of prayer. The continued use of the repeated "very" shows the value with which she treasures values, dignity and prayer.

### ***Interact with others***

The four haves are followed by a call to *interact with others*. Metrin suggests that it is important to, "come out and meet with people, talk with people and [your] motive shall be good other than sitting in the house". She is concerned about widows who lock themselves behind closed doors and continue mourning. She is advising them to get out and mingle with people.

Ginnie expresses this idea of getting out and mingling with other people in an even stronger way. "...don't sit that you have been left now you won't do anything. No it is you rise up and you mix with the other people and maybe now you will be a little bit better. Because you find that another one has a husband and maybe has a lot of problems" For Ginnie, widowed in her mid-thirties, the concentration is on her children's education. For her, getting out and sharing will reveal to the widow that she is not in the worst of conditions. This realisation will encourage her to move on.

### ***Put things (documents) in order***

The aspect of putting things in order, in reference to documents, is the next suggestion. Lyna shares how a friend showed her "how to apply for death certificate. How to follow up the insurance for my benefit". Lyna has tertiary level education. Yet in her condition, she still needed someone to guide her. This shows the importance of benevolent persons around the

widow. It also shows how vulnerable widows can be to human rights abuse.

### ***Rely on Higher Power***

Seven of the forty-one suggestions (17%) given in this section, focussed on the widow's *reliance on the Higher Power*. This is either through prayer, direct trust in God or through forgiving. The aspect of forgiving the in-laws has been shared under Milny's suggestion to the widow not to disengage with in-laws. The other two aspects are seen in the following texts.

Follow what He [God] desires because, even I thought I would reach a place where I would be unable to make my home stand [provide for my home], but I invited God, He will stand by you in that homestead, in the way he has made me steady (Shina).

But if you stay there and put your trust in God, whatever that is left for you, even when it is little, you will stay there with your children so that they have a place to rare themselves, and they get the strength to finally fend for themselves. I have seen God's hand and can testify that all is possible for the one who gives strength, and he is God (Switny is left with no income and with no savings after the husband's long illness drains the family resources).

...hope in God only...he is the Lord of widows...say God I have come the way I am, he will stand with you. And he will help you...Because God says he is he is the God of the widows, he is the God of the orphaned children. So I believe that, he performs and the word of God is true (Ginnie).

Reliance on the Higher Power is well articulated in prayers. Bencie shares how she was helped to start dealing with the loss of the husband by a pastor who invited her for joint prayer. The pastor and the wife first initiate her through a hearty welcome to their home. After that they have a plan on how and when to pray. This helps Bencie start recovering. "...I cried... and so from that day every day at 3 o'clock a.m. he would wake me up to pray... and so we started that journey..."

This aspect of prayer is granted additional practical ways. Shina talks of active prayer through doing God's work, serving him, talking to him about everything and in every situation. "...rely on God...depend on God and stand in his ways. Serve Him, do his work, tell God

everything and every situation”.

Reliance on prayer supports the spiritual widow psychosocial experiences. It shows the value that widows place on the Higher Power. Through surrender and constant prayer, they relate with God. In return, they derive sustenance and strength to manage their issues. In this way reliance on a Higher Power is significant for widows.

### ***Share with other widows/widow support groups***

Angy suggests the importance of sharing with other widows or even having a widow support group. She sees this as an important way to allow the widow to share with like-minded persons. “...have a group of widows who can come together and share about women together and could be very helpful and it could also help to move ahead”. This suggestion supports the importance of widows to mingle with people outside. This allows her to open up. This is followed by the suggestion to take care of oneself.

### ***Take care of self***

The suggestion to the widow urging her to take care of herself, is well stated by Ansy. “...love yourself because if you do not love yourself you will have severe problems. If you love yourself you shall value yourself. So you take care of yourself, you will not allow depression to attack you”. Self-care is important to the widow. This is because the husband who is assumed to have taken care of her is dead. This means that if she waits for another to come to take care of her, she runs the risk of getting misused. She may also end up in disillusionment.

### ***Work towards self-sufficiency***

Towards the end of the suggestions, before the avoidances, working towards *self-*

*sufficiency and reliance* is presented. Switny suggests to the widow, "...to be self-reliant (stable) and not to be a person of here and there [being jumpy] because if she is a person who relies on others, her things will go wrong". Switny links this reliance to God. Importance of self-reliance on the part of the widow was earlier discussed under widow psychosocial experiences related to economic issues. This therefore adds weight to its importance. As a culmination to suggestions on what widows should be and have, other additional ones have been given. In the end the participants also suggest avoidances to the widows.

### ***Avoidances for the widow***

The participant cautions the widow to avoid loneliness, losing identity, over-complaining, being sexually misused, and being over trusting especially to members of the opposite sex. On the issue of *avoiding loneliness*, Fynn suggests proactive steps, "...encourage them to... first ask them what they like, it depends on all hobbies you like and also to be in a community or a society where people are not negative you know, because we all need positive things in our lives." As a way of countering loneliness, she suggests engagement in hobbies. In addition, she adds on the importance of spending time with persons who are positive.

On *avoiding loss of identity*, Elsyn, sheds light. "...try not to lose your identity and even try to focus at whatever point you are left, try to focus on the very little things that you can...immediately focus on your children". In this text, she cautions the widow to avoid losing her identity, she advises on the importance of focussing on "small things". This refers to things and activities that may not have appeared significant prior to being widowed. However, these are a significant starting point, they are not out of reach or requiring too much effort. Finally she reiterates the importance of focussing on children. According to the participants, children are a source of hope to the widow.



The next *avoidance is over-complaining and bitterness*. This point is well articulated in the words of Milny.

Make sure that you struggle for yourself, if you talk about help is maybe someone who can listen or talk to you, but you should not get bitter that a person has not done something for you. If you do that and make them feel that every time they see you you are there to complain...many of them will run away from you... [some] widows are bitter, some of them are very bitter that their relatives have let them down...You begin to get bitter when you think that people should help you and there is nothing good in the help...

Milny advises the widow to fend for herself. This is in support of the importance of self-sustenance. She however, does not rule out that widows may require help. When this happens, the widow must be cautious to seek the help from a well-known person, “someone who can listen”. This definition gives precedence to the value of listening rather than to property. It is a caution that the widow should watch out who they seek help from. She continues to inform the widow that it is not her right to get. On that note, “[do] not get bitter that a person has not done something for you”. In addition to that, she warns against complaining “every time”. The consequence of this is that persons will avoid the widow. She ends with an emphasis on self-reliance, cautioning against dependency.

The next *avoidance is being sexually misused*. Finly has a long text within which she summarises what is going on in the widow.

Whenever it [death] happens nobody gives her time even to cry. Everybody is fighting her and pulling her in all directions and she is there she does not know where to go. She is confused, she doesn't know where to mourn and it reaches a time where even her own children neglect them. And that's why you find many widows who indulge even in drinking or prostitution, they are just there.

This explains a loss of direction and an identity disruption. In this confusion, the widow may find herself in substance abuse or even in sexual perversion. Finly does not say it openly, but is appealing for persons close to the widow to assist the widow by letting her, and even

providing a conducive environment for her to mourn as she re-finds her steps.

Finally, there is a caution that the widow should *avoid over-reliance and over-trusting others*. In her state the widow is in need of a listening ear. She needs encouragement. When in good hands, “there is a doctor I have who really encouraged me and he really helped me even medically (Bensie). Or like Lyna, “I’ve had a lot of friends who are not widows and they have walked with me. And I would say they were very kind to me and they were a good supporting system”. However, the case may be opposite hence the caution against over-trusting and over-reliance. This is seen in the case of Finly.

...Coz you find like there are times you want like to speak but somebody cuts you off or instead of somebody just listening to you and then judging or maybe advising you, you find that somebody already is giving you solutions on what to do. To me that one never worked...I really need somebody to hear me out. And when I talked to this woman I had the advices they gave me is what has made me to be who I am today....

In her sharing, Finly presents some people that are helpful and others that are not. Those that listen are helpful, as shown in the example of the last “woman’ who advises her and “this has made [her] to be who [she is]”. In her continued caution, she informs the widow against finding herself in wrong company, where death may ensue.

... [Widow] finds herself in wrong company nobody is telling her what to do or giving her the directions because this is a woman who is trying to cry for help and nobody is seeing that... Because there are those who grieve even for life and it ends up killing them, it breaks a family, it destroys a person.

This position is supported by the words of Oila who adds to the caution on the widow, “your children are your first friends... Either where she [widow] has been married or where she is from or in the community or with the neighbours since there is no one that wants it even if it is any office, there is no-one that wants you”. Though the idea sounds too strong and exaggerated, “no one wants [the widow]”, the caution is important so that the widow is cautious of her relationships.

Concerning relatives and friends, the widow should be discrete and prudent in order to exercise a balance. This suggests the importance of benevolent persons around the widow. This section has looked at suggestions to the widow. These coupled with the ways in which the participants coped, illumine the widow's life. While challenges are inevitable, the different ways in which the participants dealt with the challenges, revealed a positivity even in widowhood. Also these suggestions given, add to the solutions that widows can borrow from, when encountering challenges. The next section delves into suggestions on how to improve the lives of widows. These suggestions are to the government, to organisations, and to persons reaching out to widows.

#### **4.5.3. Suggestions on how others can help improve the lives of widows**

Participants appeal for consideration on matters of CDF and other fees allocations given to needy citizens. They are a vulnerable group that calls for specialised attention. This is an aspect that should be looked at in the area of policy. However, as an immediate appeal, since one of the core concerns of participants is the welfare of their children, educational support is important. It is based on this that Denny, Juley and Switny give the following texts in that order:

...with the bursary they [my children] can pursue education.

...if you are seen talking with someone's husband and at other times you are talking about home issues about children or at other times it is about being given bursaries, you are told that you are taking someone's husband...We would have asked the government to think the way it would set up businesses for us.

...I am now requesting for bursary.

The three cases are in unison seeking bursaries for the education of their children. Juley however adds how the seeking can be misinterpreted by malevolent on-lookers who accuse the widow of, "taking someone's husband". She goes on to appeal to the Government to have added considerations for widows.

The importance of government educational grants is also emphasised by Denny. She expresses extreme joy when her daughter passes her exams and is eligible for Higher Education Loans Board. Through this she is able to pursue her tertiary education. “...God told them, she will pass...this exam ... (Laughs!). After this passing, she was admitted to the university on Government sponsorship”.

The next set of suggestions is to organizations that relate with widows.

**Table 4.16. Suggestions to organisations**

<b>Suggestions to organisations (including the Church &amp; Civil Society)</b>	<b>Number of entries</b>
Be aware and sensitive to widows	3
Develop specialised programmes for widows	2
Develop programmes to accompany children of widows	2
Help widow know who she is (identity)	1
Organise lobby groups for issues of widows	1
Organise widow support groups	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>9</b>

As presented in Table 4.16, organisations are requested to be aware and sensitive to widows. The invitation is to look at them as a vulnerable group. This will see the organisations according them their rightful place that will in turn allow them to re-find themselves. Among the suggestions, information to organisations says.

...listen to these widows, find out what place she is coming from, where she is and where she is going to. Because once you become a widow already you’ve been branded and it’s a kind of a colour you’ve been given where people will see you even in darkness. This woman is one woman who does not know how to defend herself coz there is nobody who will be there to support her you will find that this woman is one person nobody will understand her, she has to be given room to mourn, she has to be given room to discern and she has to be given room to start living again. But you find this woman she deprived of all these... (Finly).

Finly gives a summary of who the widow is. Her appeal to organisations is to be aware and sensitive of who the inner widow is. In this awareness, specialised programmes can start being developed. Also widows appeal for their children. This is because they are so significant to them, especially after the demise of the husband.

Lyna shares how despite her being informed, she is engrossed in her grief to a point of overlooking the grief of her children. A question on how her children are doing awakens her to the reality of grieving children and she is hence able to assist them. "...and how are the children? How are they coping with the loss of their dad you know someone is even asking you how are the children coping with the loss of their dad and it comes to your sense that *haiya!* It's not only me who lost someone..."

Her appeal therefore is that organisations should come up with programmes. These should incorporate both the widow and her children. "...with our children, I think I can suggest that we can also have kind of a group for our children and they can also be able to share together because they have something in common and we can share the challenges..." (Angy). In this, a holistic approach will be in place. Additional appeal to organisations is to help the widow know who she is.

Bensie states that "I think it would be very important to understand that widows... I hate the word widow". She goes on to explain how in the word there is stigma. She does not want to be associated with this stigma, "that thing is annoying..." She goes on to explain, "The people who have impacted so strongly in my life are those people who did not judge or had no prescription for me..." This is in spite towards the title "widow". So exactly is a widow? This question that is linked to identity is reiterated by Casey,

I would wish you understand, what does the Church say about widows? What does even the Government say about widows? Where are they? ...I feel as a social being, the the society that I belong to which is part of the Government, should help me understand where I belong. Secondly the Church, and the Church usually when I talk I talk about the Church that I am serving, even up to today...And there are times even when I am serving I ask myself, and you know I also want to retain that position in the Church, who am I?

The question of identity is well expressed in the text by Casey. On meeting a prominent leader of the Church, she says, "I actually told him the Church is not doing a lot about this [widow issue], to a point he told me, if you can organise yourselves, let me know and then we

can support you”. This appeal is left unanswered, and to know one’s identity is left unattended. However, Bencie and Angy give the importance of widow groups.

The first is lobby groups. Bencie says, “I don’t know who can help this like I have always desired to be in self-groups...We will force ourselves to be important, we will force ourselves to be important...” She explains a situation where they attend a Church group and all introductions are about couples. This angers her to a point that she says, “*kwani* (is it that) she thinks I killed my husband, *kwani* (is it that) she thinks I killed my husband...” This is what leads her to feel that a lobby group seeking the awareness and sensitivity of widows would help in de-stigmatizing the issue.

In the same text there is an appeal to have support groups for widows. This point is well articulated in the words of Angy, “...we [need to] have a group of widows who can come together and share about women together and could be very helpful and it could also help to move ahead.” Angy sums up the importance of a widows group.

The last set of suggestions is to individuals.

<b>Suggestions to individuals</b>	<b>Number of entries</b>	<b>Table 4.17. Suggestion to individuals</b>
Avoid labelling widows	2	T hese
Be aware and sensitive to widows	2	
Be patient with widows	1	
Change your attitude concerning widows	1	
Create time to talk with/be with widows	1	
Develop specialised treatment for widows (to counsellors)	2	
Encourage the widow	1	
Have positive accompaniment of the widow	1	
Help the widow build her self-esteem	1	
Learn about and listen to the widow	5	
Let the widow be/accept her as she is	1	
Reach out to widows	1	
Understand the widow challenges	1	
<b>Total</b>	<b>20</b>	

individuals could be persons interested in issues of widows for various reasons. Social

transformers fall under this category. Due to the magnitude of widowhood, a husband whose wife stands the chance of getting widowed is incorporated. Also a father whose daughter could easily be widowed is also part of this. In summary, all persons are included in this docket. Following this, we all are invited to be concerned about the life of the widow.

From Table 4.17, individuals are cautioned to avoid labelling. This point is articulated in the earlier text by Bencie, “I hate the word widow... [it] is annoying...” This is because the word “widow” carries with it labels such as “husband snatcher”, “over-demanding person”, “always complaining”. These terms have been presented in earlier widow discourse.

Just as organisations are required to be aware and sensitive to widows, so are individuals. Zuk warns those working with widows.

Anybody who is journeying with the widows needs to know that they don't even understand themselves. So if you feel that a widow is reacting funnily, just bear with that. They even don't know what they are doing and they even don't know what they want. Personally I don't know what I want. I'm just there.

This gives a summary of the confused state that widows are in. This is an appeal to patience as well as understanding on the part of the individual, as indicated in the third suggestion. The fourth and the fifth suggestions point towards change of attitude towards and creating time to be with widows. Change of attitude refers to an awareness that contrary to the stigma-based comments, the widow needs, “to be empowered... [needs] tools on how to empower this women. How to help her with this pain”. This text also covers suggestion six that talks of specialised tools to deal with widow cases.

On the aspect of time, Bilian suggests, “Be talking to widows every now and then. You know, you know we can talk with you now a counsellor, then in the afternoon, I get another problem, so every now and then, you have to talk to them.” As inferred earlier on how widows can be taken advantage of, it is important to have clear boundaries in order to have positive accompaniment, as given in suggestion nine.

Another suggestion is on building the self-esteem of the widow. Milny shares about self-esteem and brings in the aspect of giving hope to widows.

...help them build their self-esteem, coz many of them...have relied on their husbands and maybe hope that their husbands were giving them so maybe try and build their self-esteem and show them that they should not try or say they will rely on other people.

She states the danger of having relied on one's husband fully. This is a situation that also seeks to warn those that are in marriage. A total reliance on a husband appears to lead to an identity crisis once widowhood ensues.

On the suggestion on learning to listen to the widow, Lynna, points out,

...over time I have realized that there are three things that help when one is going through the grieving process One is talking. By talking by being there to listen to the widows express their grief express their issues in itself it's therapeutic so I have been listening to their issues to them expressing their grieve, their pain, their hurt their experiences and honestly, it's been quite therapeutic to most of the widows.

This point on listening has also been expressed by Finly, "...first of all listen to these widows, find out what place she is coming from, where she is and where she is going to.". This listening is important because "...this woman is one person nobody will understand her, she has to be given room to mourn, she has to be given room to discern and she has to be given room to start living again..." (Finly).

The other issue that Lyna has brought out is how to encourage widows. Her expression on the importance of listening, is a significant tool. It guides the widow deal with her issues, her pain, as well as her worries. The next suggestion is on letting widows be. This means allowing them to plan their itinerary of grieving and of rebuilding themselves.

Lyna' calls it time, "...time, like the way I'm talking to you today, if it was one year, two years or three years after I lost my husband it was quite heavy but now when I talk about it I've been able to recover...". This realization is important. Grieving is not a timed process. It is not one that can be systematically guided within a set timed framework. It entails a lot of forward



and backward movements as well as a lot of ups and downs. In the entire process, the individual journeying with the widow needs to be patient and allow the widow to be herself.

The last two suggestions talk about reaching out to widows and understanding their challenges. In relation to the two suggestions, Lyna, says, "...for caregivers it's a lot there is a lot they need to learn on how to journey with widows and of course being there is very important and being available to walk with a widow it's very important without being judgemental." In the text, she suggests continued learning on matters relating to widows. She also talks of being available for them. In the end she cautions against being judgemental. When availability is there, and the right attitude is present, the individual will understand widow challenges better. This is also an invitation to read more on matters relating to widows. Following this the study addresses objective four; model for widow identity construction.

#### **4.6. Towards a Model for Widow Identity Construction**

In the literature review, widowhood as an integral unique loss, widowhood in relation to social transformation, and efforts dealing with widowhood and identity were addressed. From these three aspects, it was realised that an explicit model for widow identity construction was lacking. With these the study found it essential to address this gap in order to fill the literature gap, but also as a way to address the widow challenges. In addressing objective four therefore, four areas are noted: the uniqueness of widowhood, the relationship between widowhood and social transformation and attempts to address widow psychosocial challenges and widow self-identity. In the end findings that address areas related to the model for widow identity construction are presented.

##### **4.6.1. Peculiarity of widowhood**

Based on the intensity of widow loss, the widow is “stuck”. This means that after being widowhood, the participants express a phase of numbness and mal-functionalism. This phase is a culmination of issues that start before the demise in the case of long illnesses.

By the time that he got sick, all the businesses went down and by the time he died nothing was left behind so I started from scratch and now I'm pregnant...and so I was so confused and there was nothing I could do... I was left empty handed without what I can ask and without what I can do ...and so I was left empty handed... so I feel very bad now about that [the in-laws disinherited her the plot that the husband had left her] one even now I don't talk to them and...so even now we don't even talk we don't interact...I was stuck and didn't know what to do because now that was the man that I depended on but it happened that way...

Angy, is widowed in her late twenties following the husband's long illness. The entire family depended on the income from a business run by the husband. Their house was in a plot owned by the family of the husband. The words, “I was left empty handed without what I can ask and without what I can do”, in the local language reflect helplessness and utter lack of direction. This shows the intensity of widow devastation, hence its unique integral loss.

Similar sentiments on the integral loss are also noted when the death is sudden as noted in the words of Lyna, “It was very devastating to receive the news that he was no more and he was dead and it happened through a road accident it was very painful it was very devastating it was unbelievable and identification of the body was the worst experience.” Lyna, a business lady, is shattered though she is speedily supported by colleagues at work and her family members.

These losses render most widows unable to adequately function as mothers, workers and even business persons, after the death of husband. This is what happens to Patsy who was running a hotel business and had rental houses.

... they wanted all things saying that all belonged to their son...they disturbed me and...they sat there arranging...the way they will carry things, the way they will carry the children... they take all...I only go with my children and my clothes only...so I left, I left and I started struggling.

The inadequacy to function extends to the workplace and to any other organizations where she may be linked. Bencie is widowed at 35 after only fifteen years of marriage. At the time of the demise she was working at an organisation. One day months after the demise, "...I apologized like sorry I forgot my password so I can't type." She was meant to lead a devotion and present something to her fellow staff members but she forgot the password of her computer. She could not remember her bank pins and even forgot that she was meant to collect a guest from the airport. As she later says,

February after four years I started realizing I made it in 2009 you know 2009 I made it, 2010 I made it, 2011 I made it and now this is the beginning of 2012 and I wasn't strong I was very weak but I made it ...I must thank God... has been my provider... I have made it and pain was sinking slowly by slowly... every year was better.

She can hardly explain how she was able to get along. Despite all, she managed, thanks also to the support and understanding from her colleagues at work. These texts reveal the intensity of the loss hence the uniqueness of widowhood.

In addition to the intensity of the loss, widowhood issues are aggravated due to their link to identity. The question of identity emerged from widow discourse in two main ways. The first is existential identity having within it girlhood, adolescence and young adulthood. The second is role-based identities, which addressed what the participants did. While the first category shows the participant's life before widowhood, the values she got, the education and the subsequent occupation and income, the second is more related to the widowhood era. This is because it entails her present occupation, income, area of residence and her social engagements. These directly influence how she deals with her widowhood psychosocial experiences.

As noted in the widow psychosocial experiences, more so in the socio-cultural category, relationship with her family of origin, family of in-laws, friends and workmates are all significant. These relationships influence her identity during widowhood. Therefore, though not often overtly mentioned, it features throughout the widow discourse. The direct mention of

identity by Elsyn, crowns it.

I think the best thing, try not to lose your identity... try to focus at whatever point you are left, try to focus on the very little things that you can... I would advise you not to lose your identity. It has happened, it has happened. Accepting and moving on, it might be hard but by the grace of God, and with His help I think all can be done.

This text shows that with widowhood, identity is affected. Widows have to struggle to re-find themselves in this new state. These search, coupled with the psychosocial experiences that they are going through, poses challenges. A specialised model to address this cryptic situation is therefore called for. Before seeking to address pointers to the model emanating from widow discourse, the study delves into how widowhood and identity are linked to social transformation.

#### **4.6.2. Widowhood and social transformation**

Widows are significant members of the communities they live in. This means that they have an important role to play in social transformation. This is brought by their being heads of their households after the demise of the husband (ANSD, 2013), where they have the responsibility of taking care of themselves and of their children amidst other duties. In this section, findings presenting the widow discourse that deals with the relationship between widowhood and social transformation is addressed in five subsections. All the subsections address themselves to change based on the realization that social transformation is radical change effected on society (Khondker & Schuerkens, 2014; O'Brien, 2012). The first looks at widow discourse relating to change of narrative. This is followed by the radicalism of the change and the knowledge related to the change. Following this, the integral nature of the change and finally the widow as the change agent are given.

##### ***Widow discourse related to change of narrative***

Social transformation entails change. In this study, the initial change that is dealt with is

change of widow narrative. From the widow discourse, there is an appeal to change varied stereotypical narratives linked to the widow discussed earlier in literature in section 2.3.4. Among the stereotypes noted were the widows being social victims. They were also seen as deserving and having no voice, in addition to their being perpetual beggars. Also they were seen as persons who are in constant search for a man following their “inability” to live without a man. Based on this, re-marriage and wife-inheritance were seen as possible remedies. In all these, some were still being held suspect of having led to the death of their husbands leading to dehumanizing cultural practices.

This is the widow narrative that this study seeks to change in line with social transformation. This is because, such a narrative hinders the realization of the widows’ potential thus hindering their participation in social transformation.

Denny shares how she was side-lined by the family of the in-laws. This happened as soon as the husband died. During the entire preparation process, she is left out.

During the burial I was at my place. These people had totally side-lined me...My brother in law came and told me.. he lured me telling me let us do the preparations at my mother's place, because there is a bigger house. And for me I never had the thought to ask between my house and theirs, which is bigger? Mine was bigger...when all was over, the money that remains after the burial...

The remnants of the money that was collected for the burial was taken away by the mother-in-law. She had no voice, the inference being she did not have the capacity to handle any of the matters or make any decisions. Despite this position, earlier, she had contributed towards their first semi-permanent house. Also, she had instituted the process that had ended in them purchasing a piece of land. This narrative of powerlessness is later negated when she fights for the education of her children. When the mother-in-law and the brothers-in-law gang up to physically beat her up desiring to throw her out of her home, she seeks help from the local authority. She all along proves a strong woman prior to and during her widowhood, despite the

steps of the in-laws to make her a social victim.

In relation to the widow being seen as a beggar, Hatly is widowed in her early thirties. “...after those things [death and burial of the husband] I stayed at their home. His parents brought me problems. Now that is the time I left there and came to stay where my parents were”. The problems are related to her dependency on her the family of the in-laws. They also comment that her stay there would make her start demanding for inheritance. Following this, they choose to send her away. She goes out to fend for her children a decision that many widows embrace in order to move towards financial independence.

Worse still is when one is accused of murder, “At some time my mother-in-law started talking in somehow a bad way, my sisters (in law) started like segregating me because they were saying I am the one who has killed him. I could not understand how did I kill him? But we continued and discussed the issues and they came to an end. The relationship that was there between us went down”. This is not only painful but very devastating. Pyulet sharing of these accusations, has to find new support and change her way of thinking. She had trusted these people immensely but now they choose to turn against her. She is however, able to manage. This challenges the narrative that widows are weak. Despite the accusations, they are able to move on.

Juley advising widows says, “[work] hard in anything even if they get casual work so that they get whatever they will get to bring up the children. And not to look at any person because if one they look at any person there is no one...” She invites them to work hard, not choose jobs as long as it generates income. She advises them against depending on anyone even their relatives. This contradicts the narrative that widows sit waiting for a man to come to take care of them, reducing them to man-hunters. Widows struggle to manage their affairs, and as noted in the findings on socio-cultural issues, re-marriage and widow-inheritance are not the

sole remedy to widow issues. Based on this therefore, a model that would go towards dealing with the widow challenges aimed at facilitating their contribution towards social transformation is welcome. The change discussed in social transformation is radical as noted in the findings.

### ***Radical nature of change in widow discourse***

Denny has shared how she had to go to seek help among the local authority chiefs. This unorthodox way of dealing with the family of in-laws was not welcomed by the in-laws. Perhaps they would have expected her to be like Juley, walk away to seek refuge in the home of her biological parents.

Resilience is also noted as a way that other widows react. Though pushed to the wall, they hold on and keep managing. In these efforts their unwavering reliance in God is noted. One such case is that of Ally. The husband dies after being lynched by an angry mob having been accused of stealing. Ally who is left with five children, one of them disabled, struggles for their upkeep, Later, to add to her tribulations, the disabled girl is raped and she unsuccessfully attempts to get justice from police. She however fails to do so since as she says, they ask her for a bribe. Such an intensity of issues would easily leave one desperate. Nevertheless, Ally continues with her casual jobs, and manages to care for her family. She manages to educate them to secondary level. In the end, when asked what advice she would give to other widows, she says, “let them live [by] themselves and they should not go to bad bad things of the world because if you say that you look for a husband and you are doing other things, that is even a curse before God”. She advises them to depend on themselves. She loathes pursuance of immoral ways and pleads for reliance in God. Her steadiness despite the challenges, is admirable.

These unorthodox yet very determined methods of dealing with widow challenges, is

what the study refers to as radical nature of change. If well nurtured this radicalism, based on determination and resilience, and coupled by seeking the appropriate assistance, should positively contribute to bettering the lives of widows. With this strength, widows are bound to contribute towards social transformation. It is based on this that the study seeks to come up with a strategy to make the widows re-awaken their radical nature of effecting change. With this re-awakening and subsequent directing, their strategies would realize social transformation.

### ***Knowledge needed to effect change***

From widow discourse, it emerges that knowledge is key for change to be realised. Among the aspects that call for knowledge, there is the initially discussed widow stereotyped narrative. The awareness of the narratives and the subsequent correction of these narratives, is important in dealing with issues of widows. In addition to these, the widow psychosocial experiences discussed, also inform the interested persons. Similarly, the coping mechanisms and the suggestions emanating from the widow discourse go a long way in enhancing knowledge on widow matters. In this way, knowledge becomes power through which change could be effected.

As emphasised by the words of Lyna

I appreciate the opportunity to be able to reach out to the others and to help them. And also the other thing that I desire most is for people to recover and be able to move on with their lives because I have realised that there are some people who really take so long to recover or it becomes like a lifetime sentence. Yes they are there they are moving on they are working, but deep in their heart, they are deeply hurting and at times they are not even able to appreciate other good things in life... So I would desire that people recover and be able to move on with their lives coz there are few people who are yes they are working but deep within their hearts, they are really hurting...yes I can't forget my husband died but I'm happy, I'm fulfilled, I'm up and about and life must move on." So those are totally two different people. So those are my desires that minister to widows to see them heal and move on with their lives and to celebrate what the life has to offer.

Lyna shared about the hurt she underwent having to identify her husband's body shortly after he died from a road accident. She shares on how through journaling, she is able to deal



with the intense emotions of the moment. Later through intense observation, she is able to assist her children deal with the issues. In all her widowhood, awareness is so intense. She reads a lot on widows, interacts with them and hence gets continued information. She is well-informed. Through this information, she is able to assist others in addition to assisting herself and her family. Knowledge for her effects the called for change. This is an appeal to widows to pursue knowledge as a way of empowering themselves leading towards their being social transformers. In pursuit of knowledge, question involving their identity would be answered, “What does the Church say about widows? What does even the Government say about widows? Help me understand where I belong...I ask myself...who am I?” (Casey). Among the key tasks of this study therefore, as reiterated in objective four is to come up with a model to guide in this endeavour. In this task, the study realises that transformation has to be integral.

### ***Integral nature of change***

From interactions with widows, ten categories of experiences emerged: socio-cultural, spiritual, economic, death and loss, health, education, human rights, illiteracy, psychological and sexed bodies. This reveals that widow psychosocial issues cut across a wide variety of human issues. In this way, any model to deal with widow issues cannot be piece meal but rather integral. For the change that is to influence widow issues to be effective, it has to be all-inclusive in order to cater for widow diversities, “there are others who speak and others do not. I shall share some and others I shall hide”. These words are given by Billian who has had successive losses husband, father-in-law and two of her children. She shares a lot about the complexity of widowhood, hence the need for a specialised way of dealing with the issue. From this realization, the study seeks a model that addresses this change.

### *The widow as the agent of change*

Transformative integral change that is radical has to have an agent. The narrative has revealed that widows are not passive recipients but rather active agents desiring change. They are aware that they are the first beneficiaries of positive change and the first victims of the status quo that is propagated through the existing stereotypical narratives. Benefits or losses as the case may be then, befall the children that they dearly care for. Based on this therefore, they are willing to change their lifestyles, go out and work hard, interact with any persons who would assist them, and participate in any efforts to improve the lives of widows. It is based on this that the participants were willing to share on their challenges in this study.

With this therefore, widows continue to endeavour towards transformation. They do so by being ready to share their experiences. As long as these sharing shall help my fellow widows, then I am willing to engage". Also they are willing to reach out to other widows. This is shown by the case of Lyna discussed before. She has a group of widows. They meet and they exchange on matters related to widow challenges. Through this she feels fulfilled despite having lost the husband. All the participants in this study, share on their coping strategies and also give suggestions. These are presented in section 4.5 of the study. In the end, Angy and Casey reiterate the importance of widow support groups,

We have a group of widows who can come together and share about women together and could be very helpful and it could also help to move ahead. So I might be going maybe Tuesday or maybe tomorrow and we could have a group that maybe could help us (Angy).

I think I would want the one that will have the group...we might have a club, you see we don't belong... that is what I would want (Casey).

Widows are hence portrayed as agents of change. For them to effect the change, they need to be together, they need to support and encourage each other. It is in togetherness that they can generate a voice to be heard by the relevant organisations and also by the Government. In so

doing policy relating to widow issues can also be effected. It is the desire of this study, that through different fora, widows can be brought together and through the different strategies, change agents be reinforced.

#### **4.6.3. Attempts to address widow psychosocial challenges and their self-identity**

From widow discourse, there are efforts that focus on widow psychosocial challenges and on widow self-identity. These attempts have been discussed at length in section 4.5 under coping mechanisms and suggestions on how to improve the lives of widows. Among the coping mechanisms two sets emerged. The first focussed on intra-mechanisms: having positive self-talk, being alone, re-organising self, spending time in other activities, pouring out, and deciding to move on. These refer to the person of the widow. In relation to inter-mechanisms, the widows sought counselling.

Suggestions on ways to improve lives of widows, also could be divided into these two sets. The intra-suggestions include allowing time to heal, being focussed, patient, principled, responsible, upright and watchful. It also calls for her to have self-acceptance, belief, and esteem. This is in addition to having values and relying on Divine Power. Finally this set has within it the call for the widow to take care of self and to work towards self-sufficiency as she avoids loneliness, losing identity, over-complaining, sexual perversion and over-expectancy. On the set of intra-suggestions, the widow is requested to interact with others including her children and in-laws, as she also learns to forgive others. She is also advised to share with others.

While the coping mechanisms and suggestions are immense and contributory towards improving the lives of widows, they lack a systematised order. It is based on this that a model is sought within this present study.

#### **4.7. Summary of Chapter Four**

The chapter has looked at the demography of the participants. It has addressed their places of origin, their age as well as their education. Also it has presented their professional engagement, their income and the houses that they live in. In addition to the demographic information on the participants, the chapter has shown how through Discourse Analysis areas, aspects of widow experiences and identities are presented. Also through tasks of Discourse Analysis, the study has shown how the participants used language to express themselves effectively.

In the second section, the chapter has dealt with findings relating to objective one: exploring the widow psychosocial experiences. At the third stage the chapter has delved into findings relating to objective two, namely how widow psychosocial experiences influence widow self-identity. In this part, both the existential and role-based identity issues have been addressed. Also the section has presented findings on the association existing between the psychosocial experiences and widow self-identity. Following this, the chapter has findings relating to objective three: identifying how widows deal with these experiences in their attempt to find their position in society. This section has looked at how widows cope with the experiences. It has also looked at the suggestions they have given to other widows, to Government, to organisations and to individuals interested in widows.

In relation to objective four that sought to evolve a model for widow identity construction, the chapter has presented findings that show the peculiarity of widowhood. This was followed by the link between widowhood and social transformation. In this sub-section radical change of widow narrative has been deemed essential. This is to be informed by knowledge on widow discourse, and on the widow being the agent of integral change concerning her issues. In the end the section has presented findings related to widow

psychosocial challenges and widow self-identity.

Having given the findings in relation to the four study objectives, the next section presents a summary of findings. It also gives a discussion on the major findings before giving the conclusions. In the end recommendations are given.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

## 5.1. Introduction

This chapter addresses the summary of findings and gives a discussion on them. Then it presents the conclusions emanating from the findings. This is followed by the recommendations. Each section follows the structure of the study objectives addressing the widow psychosocial experiences, widow self-identity, coping mechanisms used by the widows and suggestions. Finally it evolves the model for widow identity construction.

## 5.2. Summary of Findings

This section presents a summary of the findings generated from the study. It starts by giving a summary of the widow categories derived from the demographics. It then gives findings related to widow psychosocial experiences. After that it presents findings from widow self-identity. In this it gives the summary showing how widow psychosocial experiences relate to widow self-identity. It then presents a summary of findings on how widows relate to their psychosocial experiences as they find their position in society. In this section the summaries dwell on widow coping mechanisms as well as the suggestions they give. These suggestions are aimed at helping the widow live her life better. In the end, findings related to the model for widow identity construction are given.

### 5.2.1. Widow categories derived from demographics

From the demographics, the participant's education, professionalism, income and housing emerged significant. From these parameters, five widow categories were noted.

**Table 5.1.** Summary of participant categories

<b>Category</b>	<b>Household Income</b>	<b>Education al level</b>	<b>Professional ism</b>	<b>Housing</b>	<b>Additional information</b>
<b>High (i)</b>	Steady:	Bachelors	High level	Own	-children's education taken care of

(of Kenyan origin)	above 1000€ per month	or Masters	management / Business	permanent	through insurance schemes -have minimal interference from in-laws
<b>High (ii)</b> (of non-Kenyan origin)	Steady: above 1000€ per month	Bachelors or Masters	Retired from High level management	Own permanent	-children are working -have no interference from in-laws
<b>Middle (i)</b> (tending towards high)	Steady: between 500-1000€ per month	Bachelors or Masters	Middle level management / Business	Own permanent	-children's fees are through cooperative loans -have manageable interference from in-laws
<b>Middle (ii)</b>	Steady: between 200-499€ per month	Post-secondary certificate	Middle level workers / Business	Own permanent or semi-permanent	Living in the same homestead with in-laws -continued covert strife with in-laws -children's fees from bursaries & well wishers
<b>Middle (iii)</b> (tending towards low)	Unsteady: between 100-199€ per month	Secondary education	Low level work at times casual / Business	Own semi-permanent house	-living in the same homestead with in-laws -constant overt strife with in-laws -children's fees from bursaries & well wishers
<b>Low</b>	Very unsteady: between 200-490€ per month	Primary or no education	Casual work / hawking business	Rented semi-permanent in squatter land	-children's education relies solely on F.P.E. ; often no schooling

These category levels, have a relationship with widow psychosocial categories. They also show a link towards the participants' role-based identities. With these two positions, the categories point towards ways in which widows deal with the experiences and how they work towards reconstructing their identity.

### 5.2.2. Psychosocial experiences of widows

The analysis of the widow discourse resulted in ten categories of widow psychosocial

experiences. In order of the frequency of entries pointing towards each category, starting from the highest, they are socio-cultural experiences, spiritual, economic, death and loss, health, education, human rights, illiteracy, psychological, and sexed-body issues.

During the interview the question posed was an invitation to the participant to share her life experiences from childhood, through teenage, young adulthood and era prior to marriage. Then she was invited to share of her early moments in marriage. After that she was asked to share of the subsequent death of the husband and the ensuing widowhood. From the sharing socio-cultural experiences and within it the theme of family ties stood out strongly. This theme had under it three sub-themes namely family of origin, nuclear family and family of in-laws. Other themes that also emerged though with less significance compared to the family ties are friends and workmates, re-marriage, polygamy, ethnicity, witchcraft and rejection.

The second category is the widow psychosocial experiences related to spirituality. This came out following the question, “How have you managed to deal with these challenges?” In response to this question, the relationship with the Higher Power through faith and prayer were significant. Also Church and religion featured prominently. In the sharing however, incidences of high and low spirituality were noted.

Following the question, “What challenges do you face as a widow?” widow psychosocial experiences related to economic issues were realised. Under this category, three themes stood out. The first focussed on basic needs. Under this food, housing, land and other needs were presented. Other themes that came out were financial constraints, occupation involving job and income.

Then the question of death and loss comes about as the fourth category. This was part of the earlier question inviting the widow to share her life experiences. With clarity and specificity of dates and events, the participants shared how they lost their husbands. The overriding theme



in this category is mourning. Under it, the participants shared about the different emotional bouts that befall them. Among these there is shock, confusion, denial and blame. Some sink into immense despair and depression crowded with a desire to die. Throughout their sharing there is intense pain. In widowhood, they share of moments of intense loneliness. Though not so prevalent, breaking news of death to their children features.

At position five the widow psychosocial experiences related to health were presented. This was in answer to the question on the death of the husband. In this category, the participants shared on the long illnesses that led to the death of their husbands. Alcoholism, Cancer, HIV/AIDS as well as Tuberculosis stood out in that order. On the issue of Cancer, the pain and the irritability of the patient as he neared death was noted. Other participants shared on the loss of the husband following a short illness or even through sudden death. This was either through road accident or murder. There was also a mention of diabetes and kidney failure.

The sixth category is widow psychosocial experiences related to education. Under education, three themes emerge. The first is the education of the participant. Her relationship with the parents as they provide for her education, and her relation with teachers are significant. Education influences the participant's future profession and income. It also influences the husband she gets. Even after the death of the husband, education is seen as a way to continue upgrading oneself. Together with the education of the participant is that of the children. The participants feel obliged to ensure that their children pursue education. Through this there is hope of improving their family status. The education of the husband is only mentioned at university level. This is where the participant and the husband meet while studying.

At position seven is the widow psychosocial experiences related to human rights. Core themes appear in this category. The first is inheritance. The participants are forced to fight for their inheritance failure to which they are "thrown out" or "robbed off" what belonged to the

husband before his death. Land is a core issue. In addition to issues on inheritance, political assault against women is seen. Domestic violence instigated by the men is presented at times showing the helplessness of the participant. At the end of this section, widow awareness on her rights is seen as significant in fighting against vice.

Position eight of widow psychosocial categories presents illiteracy issues. Under this category, two themes are realised. The first is the educational level of the participant. This is not as presented earlier under participant demography. This theme is linked closely to how the participant is able to use her education and knowledge to improve her life. This therefore is linked to the second theme, awareness level.

Position nine of the widow psychosocial categories is occupied by psychological issues. These are closely linked to themes under death and loss. Some appear repeated though the concentration is different. Under death and loss the focus is on how she deals with death and loss. In this section however, the focus is on the feelings emanating from her widowhood. The section addresses the feelings the participant has on her present state. It sees how she is aware of her situation and to what level she accepts herself. In the end whatever roles counselling plays, are addressed.

Finally at position ten, the widow psychosocial experiences related to sexed body issues is given. The category was addressed under three themes. The first explores how participants deal with their sexual feelings. It also gives way to sharing on widow inheritance and finally whatever sex related cultures affect the participant.

The last five categories respond to the earlier three core areas of questioning. After the preliminaries and the participant accepting the interview, the first question is on her life. This allows her to share from childhood to adulthood. From the sharing issues on education and illiteracy come out. On the question on what challenges she faced and how she dealt with the

challenges, human rights issues are presented. Also psychological issues as well as sexed body issues appear. Having looked at summaries related to widow psychosocial experiences, the next section addresses itself to findings on widow self-identity.

### **5.2.3. Psychosocial experiences of widows in relation to their self-identity**

This section starts by discussing self-identity of widows before linking it to the psychosocial experiences.

#### ***Widow self-identity***

Widow self-identity is seen in two areas. The first is the existential widow self-identity while the second is the role-based widow self-identity. As for the existential widow self-identity, the participant's girlhood, adolescence and young adulthood are presented. In this section, the relations the participant had with her parents as primary care givers, with her educators, as well as peers are addressed. These relations influence her existential self-identity. Later as the participant meets the suitor and enters into marriage, her identity is either solidified or weakened. In widowhood, alternative gender identity (Elson, 2004), is addressed as a contributor to existential widow self-identity. Through this new identity, the participant asks herself, "Who am I?"

The second category of widow self-identity is the role-based identity. This category is a summation of several identities. Three role-based identities are presented. The first is the Socio-cultural role based identity. This has within it the roles of a daughter, friend, wife and mother, all played by the participant. In addition she also plays the role of a social being. The second role-based identity is the occupational one. Within it, the participant is seen as a student and as a worker. The third role-based identity is spiritual. Under this identity the participant plays the

role of a church member and of a spiritual being. In the three role-based identities, the socio-cultural appears to take prominence. This is according to the frequency of the text entries generated from data.

This section has presented the summary of the widow self-identities. This was in address to the first part of study objective two that sought to show the link between widow psychosocial experiences and widow self-identity. Following this, the study had a section on the association between the two study variables. The summary of the findings is given in the following section.

### ***Widows psychosocial experiences and their self-identity***

The section is divided into two. The first delved into the relationship between widow psychosocial experiences and widow existential self-identity. Relationships with parents and with educators influence their identity formation. Amicable relationships lead to a gradual graduation into the different levels of existential self-identity. The contrary leads to haste in graduating into the subsequent levels. With this the solidity of the identity is realised.

The second part delved into the relationship between widow psychosocial experiences and the role-based widow identities. Character strength was demonstrated carrying out their roles and in going through the experiences. The solidity of their existential self-identity also influences the roles they play, hence their role-based identities. This is because existential self-identities influence their education and professionalism as well as income. These factors relate to the roles they play.

In addressing objective two, the association between widow psychosocial experiences and widow self-identity is seen. Following this, the summary that follows presents the coping mechanisms employed by widow participants. This also includes the suggestions participants give towards improving the lives of widows.

#### **5.2.4. How widows deal with their psychosocial experiences**

This section gives the summary of findings related to study objective three: how widows relate to their psychosocial experiences in an attempt to find their position in society. This objective presupposes that the participants act in particular ways to deal with their widowhood. The summaries are given under two sub-titles.

*Coping:* The participants gave seven coping mechanisms that they employ. These are positive self-talk, being alone, seeking counselling and other professional help. The professional help includes legal and medical assistance. The other coping methods are re-organizing the self in line with time and financial management. The next method is spending time in other activities including studies and work. This work is either paid or voluntary. Following this is pouring out. Under this method, the participants express their need for a listening ear from one who is non-judgemental. Finally, a decision to move on is given as the final coping mechanism.

*Suggestions:* These suggestions are aimed at improving the widow's life. They are in four categories. The first set of suggestions is to the widow. She should allow herself time to heal, be hardworking, patient, principled, responsible, upright and watchful. She should also build her self-acceptance, self-belief, and self-esteem. In addition she should have an amicable relationship with her children and with the in-laws. In this area, depending on her relationship with the in-laws, she is encouraged to do her best since her children belong to that larger family. In this way they get a sense of belonging. She is also encouraged to interact with other people as she puts her documents in order. The documents mentioned include the death certificate, the land title deeds, car log books and others that may lead to loss of her property.

Further on, the widow is advised to rely on Divine Power as she prays, trusts in God and learns to forgive. To the widow, they also suggest that she shares with other widows, works

towards self-sufficiency and reliance. She should avoid loneliness, losing her identity, over-complaining and being bitter when other persons do not appear to support her. Also she should be watchful not to be misused sexually and even financially. To avoid this, she should avoid over-expecting from others and being over-trusting.

The second category of suggestions are to Government, to organizations and to individuals. The direct suggestion to Government is on matters of school fees. They appeal for special considerations when issuing bursaries, allocating Constituency Development Funds, and Higher Education Loans Board fees to students.

On suggestions to organizations, which include Civil Society and the Faith Based Organisations, participants have six suggestions. The first is for organisations to be aware and sensitive to the plight of widows. They also should have specialised programmes for widows and for the children of widows. In addition, they are called to help widows re-construct their identity, and have groups lobbying for the issues affecting widows, including human rights issues. Finally the organisations are requested to institute and help widow support groups.

Finally the study gives suggestions to individuals. These are persons interested in widows, scholars, social transformers and well-wishers. These individuals are also any one that is a parent, or a husband. This means anyone who has a relationship with a woman be it a friend, relative, daughter or wife, who at some point may be faced with widowhood. The study suggests we avoid labelling widows, be aware of their plight and be sensitive. Also it suggests we be patient with widows. In addition, the appeal is to change our attitude towards widows and create time to listen and talk to them. Also there is an invitation to encourage them, help them build self-esteem, learn about and listen to them, and let the widows be who they are, accepting them as they are. The suggestions appeal that we reach out to widows and understand their challenges. For caregivers, especially counsellors, there is a call to have specialised treatment

for widows.

The next section deals with the summary of findings in relation to the model for widow identity construction. From these it emerged that the peculiarity of widow issues called for a specialised intervention. This intervention would facilitate the widows' empowerment process as she reconstructed her disrupted identity. In the end she would be able to effectively take part in her inevitable task of social transformation. In this transformative task, the widow stereotyped narrative would be challenged, radical change effected based on knowledge, with the widow being the core agent. In the presentation of the findings related to the model, it however emerged that though a systematised model was needed, it was lacking.

#### **5.2.5. Evolving a model for widow identity construction**

Widows have dealt with their psychosocial experiences in different ways. These ways can be grouped in two main categories: those who appear to be at an impasse in relation to identity reconstruction, and those who appear to have managed to reconstruct their identity. The first category appears to have surrendered to fate and await whatever direction nature is to take them. Their concentration is on day to day survival, mainly based on seeking daily food, and rent. Asked about their future, they have hardly any projections. They are hardly in touch with their emotions and quickly shift from any discussion on that area. These participants do not appear aware of their identity.

Then there are those who appear to have moved on. These ones are able to share of their past denoting how things were. Then they are also able to give projections for themselves and their children. They have come up with roles in their present situations. Some are focussed on ways to improve their lives and those of their children in the future. Their programme appears well laid down. These are noted as having managed to reconstruct their identity.

Based on the two categories, the study sees a procedure in the ways the widows have dealt with reconstruction of their identity. A process emerges that informs the model that the study evolves.

This section has presented a summary of the findings. These have been in the area of demographical information of the participants with a specific focus on emerging widow categories. Following that findings related to the four study objectives have been given. These have concentrated on widow psychosocial experiences, their self-identity, coping as well as suggestions. In the end, the need of the model for widow identity construction has been addressed. Following is a discussion on the findings encountered during the entire study.

### **5.3. Discussion on the Major Findings**

This discussion sheds light on the study findings which are presented following the study objectives. The need to start with a discussion on the participant categories is deemed essential. This is because it informs the variety of experiences of widows and also the way different widows deal with their experiences. Following this, the first objective on widow psychosocial experiences is discussed. This is followed by a discussion related to objective two. In this, widow self-identity, and how the widow psychosocial experiences link with the widow self-identity is presented. Discussion on how widows relate to their experiences addresses the third objective. This discusses also the coping mechanisms as well as the suggestions given aimed at improving lives of widows. Finally the discussion delves into objective four. In this part, the different ways in which the participants have dealt with their identity reconstruction is important. It informs a systematic process that can guide those journeying with widows. It is these individual widow processes that the study brings together to evolve a model for widow identity construction.



### **5.3.1. Participants' categories**

From the participants, five categories of widows were interviewed. These categories were formulated based on their educational level, their professionalism, their income and housing. Based on these categories, the study sees distinct similarities among participants in the same categories. Also distinct differences are noted among persons in different categories. An example of the similarities of participants in high category one and two is lack of interference from in-laws. Also there is a significant lack of financial strain. It however appears that the lower the category, the higher the negative influence of in-laws and the higher the financial strife. For those in the low category, being sent off from dwellings that are in the place of the in-laws is noted. Also those in this category have their children often unable to acquire secondary education. This is despite the subsidised Secondary Education in Kenya. The early drop out from school results in lack of professionalism and in early marriages for girls. This leads to a vicious cycle of poverty.

Still on similarities, participants from all categories demonstrated intense reliance on Higher Power for strength to carry on. They also demonstrated confidence in their children. This means that they continue to heavily invest time and resources on these children. These are two aspects that run across participants in all categories. Similarly, the time of being widowed and the cause of the husband's death are not associated to any category.

On the area of significant differences between participants in different categories, mourning issues are presented. Those in low categories appear to easily surrender to fate. The higher the participant goes up the categories, the more awareness the participant has on matters of seeking counselling and other professional help. The awareness is on their personal emotional state as well as that of their children. Also, those in higher categories appear to have more to

share during the interviews. Their sharing also reveals awareness of what they and their children are going through. This last part however, is not a quick conclusion that the higher one is up the category ladder, the more they share. The length of sharing may also have been affected by among other things, the research assistant and the venue of the interview.

From this discussion it shows that on the one hand, categories of participants are insignificant to the experiences that the widows go through. On the other however, there is an association between the level of category and some experiences.

This discussion has addressed information on the participant categories. The categories emanating from the participants based on their education, professionalism, income, and housing have been linked to widow identity levels. These categories and subsequent identity levels have a link to the widow psychosocial experiences and to their self-identity. It is based on this that they have been presented prior. The next phase of the discussion is on the first objective; widow psychosocial experiences.

### **5.3.2. Psychosocial experiences of widows**

From the psychosocial experiences, derived from the widow discourse, ten categories are found. The socio-cultural widow psychosocial experiences top the list of entries. This is followed by spiritual, economic and death and loss experiences. Following these health, education, human rights and illiteracy issues are noted. In the end, psychological experiences and sexed bodies issues follow.

#### ***Socio-cultural issues and widows***

Literature referred to widow socio-cultural experiences (Maseno, 2014; Mutong'i, 2007).

The concentration was on the silent suffering that widows go through. In this study, this position is upheld. In addition, however, information on the significance of the family of in-laws, of origin, and nuclear is realised. It is with this that a concentration on family ties ensues.

Family ties the major theme in this category brings to play three families: the family of origin of the participant, her nuclear family and the family of the in-laws. The relationship she had with members of her family of origin affect her childhood, adolescence and young adulthood life. This relationship continues to affect her in her marriage life and even widowhood. While growing up, the relationship determines to a large extent her education, profession, current income and even the start of her marriage. Her widow category, that the study sees relating to widow experiences and to identity, is largely linked to her family of origin.

Her nuclear family is also significant. The death of the husband creates a vacuum in this family. This affects both the spouse and the children. In situations where the husband was the sole bread-winner, the family is left struggling in an attempt to find financial stability, a point that is also discussed by Kimani and Maina (2010). Where both the husband and the wife were earning and sharing financial responsibilities, the widow has to undertake all the responsibilities by herself. In cases where there was a business run by the husband, it is either closed or sold out. Whatever the situation, the responsibility dynamics change. Communication changes and even friends and other associates change. The young children get confused of the whereabouts of their father. Adolescent children get scared not knowing how their future will be. Those children in their twenties and above get worried of their mother's future amidst loneliness. They also start worrying of family divisions amidst succession issues.

The family of the in-laws is quite unpredictable. Some may opt to embrace the widow despite their dead kin. Such families ensure that the widow and her children go through the mourning period amicably. They follow up to see that whatever dues are left by the late husband

are well pursued and utilised. They check the children's education and upkeep. However, there are those who choose to grab whatever resources the man left behind. This may range from household goods to large estates. For the low cadre families, some even decide to throw the widow and her children out of the ancestral home. This happens in case the sons of the widow may pursue their late father's inheritance once they are of age.

Whatever the case, family ties are significant. This significance and the direction it takes after the death of the man, is worth further studies. Together with families, friends and workmates have a role to play. The awareness level of these two categories, helps to neutralise family influence, more so when it is negative. They may assist their colleague and friend the widow, pursue legal justice in relation to her husband's estate.

As a culmination to this section of socio-cultural psychosocial experiences re-marriage calls for added discussion. While it may appear that the widow needs a man to "replace" the late husband, the participant's views reveal the opposite. The thought of having another man is intricate to the widow. Among the questions asked are, if the new suitor has a house and the widow too, whose house will they go to live in? What will happen to the property that the man has and that which the widow has? In case both sides have children, boys and girls, is it justified to keep them off from getting sexually attracted to each other? Should this new couple get more children? These questions among other fears, lead to the participants keeping away from another marriage.

### ***Widows and spirituality***

The widow psychosocial experiences related to spirituality emerged at position two as per the entries. From literature, whatever was found that touched on spirituality had its focus on loss and bereavement (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2006). In this study, however, there is an intense

reliance on God. A common utterance is “God is the husband of widows”. Three cases from different participants on issues that appear out of reach, are realised after intense prayers. While this may be looked at as coincidence, for the participants it is God. In their suggestions therefore, there is immense appeal to other widows to rely on God.

### ***Widows and economic issues***

In the category of widow psychosocial experiences related to economic issues, two main issues stand out. The first was housing and the second is land. On the part of the housing, having an own house is significant. This may be aligned to the financial insecurity among the participants. Even for the employed, with threats of retrenchments and being laid off, participants prioritise on having own house. Among the basic needs, it appears at the apex.

Land also features significantly in this present study. This tallies with what was in literature where immense challenges facing the widow in relation to land were noted (Evans, 2015; Ezejiolor, 2011; Oghi, 2015; Quan, 2000). For the participants, land is the foundation for having an own house. It is also a source of livelihood. This means that the participant is able to cultivate or even domesticate animals that generate income. Through land, one is able to dispose a section and ensure that the children pursue their education. Also on death, land is where one’s remains are buried. The culture of burying in cemeteries has not been fully embraced culturally. It is on this foundation that land is seen as a major source of family rift. This is especially so between the widow and the family of the in-laws. Even among siblings, there is still the question, should a widowed sister inherit land from his family of origin?

### ***Health, death and loss in relation to widows***

On the area of health as well as death and loss relating to widows, literature laid

emphasis on HIV/AIDS (Agot et al., 2010; Shisanya, 2007; Uhegbu & Okereke, 2006). However, from data, Alcoholism and Cancer take prominence. Alcoholism features as a major scare to the families of the participants. It is revealed as a slow but sure killer. It also is a cause of immense family poverty and shame. On its part, Cancer is a major cause of physical and psychological pain. It leads to family poverty as they attempt to seek treatment (Valdimarsdottir and colleagues, 2004). On the part of death, there is shock and confusion brought about by sudden death. The peak of the pain is when the participant is asked to go and identify the body of the dead husband; the man with whom she had shared a moment a short while ago. After the certainty of the death, breaking news to children concerning the death of their father is a major scare (Benett, 2010). Yet, despite this deep scare, there are individuals, family, friends or workmates, who attempt to take undue advantage of the widow's state. They see it as a moment to use her sexually or even take away her inheritance. In case the widow tries to fight for her rights, intimidation at times through violence is used.

Another misunderstood occurrence is the lack of tears. The participants shared how they could not cry on receiving news of the death of the husband. Their minds immediately went to their children. They have to be strong for the sake of their children. Even on the day of the funeral, some are still in a trance. They do not believe it is true. They desire to die. They see others crying but they cannot cry. If they do, what will happen to their children? From literature, some cultures may look at this as having no feelings about the late husband. There is even suspicion that the widow must have killed or known what killed the husband.

### ***Human rights and widows***

Human rights issues also affect widows as was also noted in literature (Chowdhry, 2012;

Limann, 2003; Linette, 2013; Widow Rights International, 2013). These, however, concentrated on rights to property. From the participants two significant issues are prominent. The first is on the one hand, the inability of the wife to move away from a violent relationship. Even after the husband dies, the family of the in-laws continues the violence. The participant is however not able to move out of the homestead and she hardly knows how to seek justice. This is related to the participant's low category. Her awareness is limited and more so her financial ability.

Another issue under human rights is the "lie". The study refers to it as so, since it is done in public and is almost a chorus in funerals. When the husband, the bread-winner dies, promises are made to the widow and her children during the funeral speeches. She is promised a job and assistance in getting school fees for her children. She is also promised visits. Nevertheless, as soon as the wreaths are laid, the participants say that even the closest of friends do not come back. While this is not the case for all, over half of the participants in the low category share about it.

### ***Widows and education***

Education is significant in the life of women (Korb, 2010). It contributes towards giving identity to the person and inculcate values. It also contributes strongly towards one's professionalism and power to earn (Barn & colleagues, 2001; Whitehead & Tsikata, 2003). In widowhood, education builds awareness on legal as well as other human rights issues. It also helps the widow discover her psychological state and that of her children (Widow Rights International, 2013). She is hence able to deal better with the challenges facing her. The importance of education to the woman is reiterated in this study. It dictates the participant's category level and by extension her identity. In this her roles and interactions are directed. In this way education influences the widow.

### ***Psychological issues of widows and pointers to their sexed-bodies***

The study also looks at psychological widow experiences as was seen in Ungar and Florian (2004). Under psychological issues, anger and denial feature amidst confusion (Onrust & Cuijpers, 2006). This information from the literature is confirmed by the findings. The role of therapy is highlighted. However, the un-procedural and unpredictable state of the participants make systematic counselling a challenge. Amidst the participants, there are those who appear to have made it in the area of reconstructing their identity. This leads to a need for a model to journey with the widows. As noted in the interactions with the participants, there is a call for patience and acceptance of widow clients on the part of the one journeying with them. As it was said, “let her be!” It appears that the process has to be quite client centred.

On the field of sexed bodies, participants appear too engrossed in other issues, that sex is hardly a concern. Even when mentioned, it is in passing. The earlier discussed concerns about re-marriage and being sexually misused (Malungo, 2001) could be contributory factors. Also, the desire to be model to their children is a concern.

This discussion on widow psychosocial experiences sheds light on socio-cultural issues especially the family ties. It also brings forth the spirituality of the widow. Land and housing feature prominently in widow discourse. Human rights issues as well as education are also present, Also health, death and loss are discussed revealing the scare of alcoholism and Cancer. Finally caution to the therapists on the labyrinth of widow mourning is discussed. This paves way for the link between widow psychosocial experiences and widows self-identity.

### **5.3.3. Relationship between widow psychosocial experiences and widow self-identity**

#### ***Widow self-identity***



Existential widow self-identity reveals a continuum that is related to age as was also noted in Kopytoff (2005). This starts with the participant being aware of herself as a girl. She dresses differently, bears a feminine name and starts undertaking tasks that are associated with members of her gender. She sees herself different from her male counterparts. This is mainly inculcated by the parents as well as other significant caregivers when the participant is still young. The narratives that she is given influence her understanding of herself as a girl.

This understanding and identity moves to adolescence. Her physical body starts differentiating her from her male partners. She learns to associate more with other girls. The teachers as well as peers are significant in this identity formation. The roles that she is given at home and at school also single her out as a female.

Later in young adulthood, the peers continue to play a significant role. Peers from either gender relate to her as a woman. This relationship later leads to courtship and into marriage (Lopata, 2005). In this way the knowledge of existential self-identities is sparked off by parents and caregivers. It then gradually translates into role-based identities (Thoits, 2011). The undertaking of the distinctive roles helps solidify the existential self-identities and vice versa.

The role-based identities are seen under the docket of family and friends (Ibarra, & Barbulescu, 2010). The participant relates to others as a daughter, friend, and later on as a wife and mother. This was also noted in Soulsby and Bennet (2017). In all her relationships, she is a social being. Also the participant has roles that are mainly student-based or work-based. The realm of spirituality is not ignored. This has its identity where the participant is a church member and also relates to the Supreme Being.

The different existential self-identities link up with the role-based ones. They determine who the participant is. They also influence and are in turn influenced by the experiences she undergoes. This is seen in the following discussion section.

### ***Association between widow psychosocial experiences and widow self-identity***

In this discussion part, the association between psychosocial experiences and widow self-identity is presented. Parents and caregivers as well as educators help spark and solidify the existential self-identity of the participant (Sokol, 2009). Through their narratives she becomes aware of the girl she is. The degree to which they positively relate to her girlhood, is the degree to which she develops a positive existential self-identity. In this way, her identity is linked to the experiences she goes through with these significant persons.

The solidity of the participant's existential self-identity and the relationship with the significant others, allows her to pursue her education (Somani, 2017). In this journey, she acquires values and education that translates to a later professionalism. By extension this determines to a large extent her income (Sluss & Ashforth, 2007). This progression influences the friends she relates with as well as the workmates. It also influences to some degree the spouse she gets. These factors affect her category level, affecting her marriage and later widowhood. In this way, her identities, both existential and role-based have a link with the psychosocial experiences that she undergoes.

### **5.3.4. Discussion on how widows relate to their psychosocial experiences**

This discussion section has its focus on the coping mechanisms as well as suggestions given by the participants. These suggestions are to other widows, to government, to organisations as well as individuals relating with widows.

Participants express the importance of the self in coping (Sleap, 2009). They reiterate positive self-talk, re-organising the self, being alone, and deciding to move on as major coping mechanisms. All these are determined by the individual. Further reliance on the individual is

seen in their expression of one's decision to spend time in doing different activities and in deciding to pour out. The person of the widow is thus very significant in coping strategies. It is in this that one's identity journey contributes largely to how one deals with their widowhood.

Despite these coping mechanisms that are solely dependent on the individual, there is an intrusion (Ng et al., 2014). The participants cope through having counselling sessions. This means that help from outside the person is also core. However, caution on the person of the counsellor and on the continued process of counselling is given. More on what the person of the counsellor should be was presented previously under suggestions.

Suggestions to the widow on ways to improve her life are immense. They can however be looked at under four main areas. The first entails be focussed, hardworking, patient, principled, responsible, upright and watchful. These propose a change of state on the part of the widow in order to become. The second set deals with having or building self-acceptance, self-belief, and self-esteem. The third category is advising the widow to avoid loneliness, losing identity, over-complaining, and bitterness, being sexually misused and over-expecting. These avoidances are to assist the widow move towards self-reliance. The fourth category concerns her spirituality. She is advised to trust in God and to be prayerful.

In addition to the four main sets of suggestions, widows are advised to relate well with their children and with the in-laws as they put their documents in order. Sharing with other widows is also seen as a source of encouragement and support. Above all, widows are advised to allow time to heal as they continue to take care of themselves and of their children.

The discussion so far, shows a link between the participant's identity and the experiences she goes through. It also shows that the life of a widow is manageable despite the challenges. This is shown by the coping mechanisms as well as the suggestions given. In all attempts to improve her life, the widow's spirituality is important. The more the experiences unfold, the

more the realization that widowhood is a specialised need. In this sense, a specialised treatment is required. It is based on this that the study suggests a model for widow identity construction.

### 5.3.5. Model for widow identity construction

This section addresses objective four which is the model for widow identity construction (MWIC), guided by Discourse Analysis, and aimed at guiding the widow towards self and social transformation. Refer to Figure 5.1.

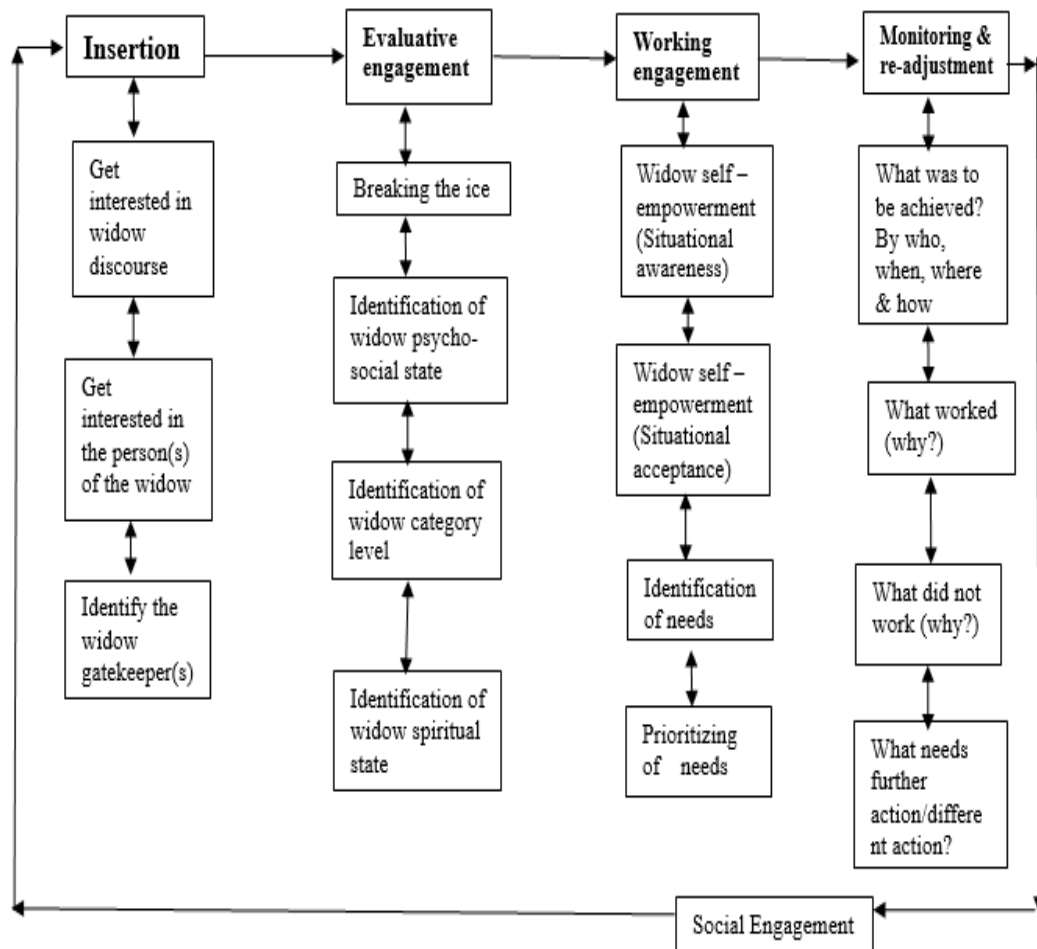


Figure 5.1 Model for widow identity construction

From literature, the model was missing. This model is seen as a concrete way that the

widow is to re-construct her identity. This reconstruction is seen as a process that shall enable the widow positively deal with life events, loss and identity disruption.

In evolving the model, the section presents the model after which it explains the four stages that form the model. Following this, a critique of the model is given under the titles core conditions for the model, justification of the model, strengths of the model and finally its limitations and ways to mitigate these limitations.

***Stages of the model***

For the model to be effective, four stages are deemed essential. The first is insertion where the intervener links with widowhood. The second is the evaluative engagement. At this level the intensity of the issues is looked at. Following that the model proposes working stage that is followed by monitoring and re-adjustment.

*(i) Insertion*

**Table 5.2. Model for widow identity construction (insertion)**

<b>Intervention</b>	<b>Task</b>	<b>Task goal</b>	<b>Anticipated outcome</b>	<b>Evaluative questions on the success of the intervention</b>
Insertion	Get interested in widow discourse	To be informed in authentic widow discourse	That the person is informed on issues affecting widows	What widow discourse texts have you come across/read?
	Get interested in the person(s) of the widow	To be interested in widows around his/her environment	That the person is aware of the widows around and the experiences that they go through	How many widows do you know in your locality? What are some of the experiences that they go through?
	Identify the widow gatekeeper(s)	To be in touch with persons close to the widows	That the person is aware of persons close to the widows (ready to reach out to widows)	Who are the close persons to these widows?

In this stage, the intervention gets interested in widow discourse. Role players familiarize with widow discourse. They also reach out to the widow through gatekeepers. This

allows for the creation of time to relate to the widow where evaluation follows. Informed consent on the part of the widow is sought. This allows for the logistics that include, meeting times and meeting venues to be agreed upon. At the end contracting is done. The successful completion of this initial stage paves way for the intervener and the participant to engage.

*(ii) Evaluative engagement*

The insertion stage is followed by the evaluative engagement as shown in Table 5.3.

**Table 5.3.** Evaluative engagement

<b>Intervention</b>	<b>Task</b>	<b>Task goal</b>	<b>Anticipated outcome</b>	<b>Evaluative questions on the success of the intervention</b>
Evaluative engagement	Breaking the ice	To inform the widow of the process and purpose To get the widow to be at ease with the intervener, with the process and purpose	That the widow is informed of the process and purpose to allow her make an informed choice That the widow is at ease, accepts or rejects to engage with the intervener	Do you have any questions on the process and purpose? Can we journey together? How do you feel about us journeying together?
	Identification of widow psychosocial state	To assess the widow's psychosocial state whether she is ready (or not) to start the process	That the widow is in the right state to start the process	Has the widow gone through the shock/confusion state? Is the widow ready to engage constructively in a long term healing process? If not, what is the widow doing about her state? Is she willing to share on what she is doing?
	Identification of category level (including existential, role-based and spiritual identity)	To explore the widow's category level as well as her identity and spirituality:	That the widow's category level as well as her identity and spirituality will allow the intervener to know the appropriate intervention.	What is your income? What is your level of education? Where do you live? What type of a house do you live in? Is it an own house or rental? Is it in own plot or in the in-laws place? Where is the house located? Who is God to you?

After breaking the ice and engaging in the preliminaries, the widow is encouraged to share on her psychosocial issues. While this is going on, the widow category as well as factors

about her identity are noted. Together with the above, the widow's spiritual situation is understood. Any significant issues on the person of the widow should not be ignored. This understanding will help the widow and the intervener be aware of what needs to be done in the working stage.

As noted from Table 5.3, the intervention is meant to be integral. After breaking the ice, psychosocial, identity and spiritual based aspects are evaluated. As noted previously from the demographics, education, professionalism and income, as well as household and location of housing are significant. Through them the study is able to understand the clients better. This understanding is a prerequisite for undertaking the process. With this, each stage of the process is well understood by the role players. A tabulated process of this stage is presented in Table 5.3. The working engagement stage follows the evaluative engagement stage.

### *(iii) Working engagement*

At the working engagement level, the intervention has information on the widow's psychosocial state and on her identity level. The focus is to further assess the widow's readiness to engage. This is informed by how aware she is of her circumstances. The circumstances include the significant persons around her: close family members, her children, her friends and work or business mates. The widow's situational awareness also encompasses her emotional state. It is therefore mandatory that the intervention assess whether the death is still too fresh as to hinder addressing other issues. At the level of the situational acceptance (Chan & Chan, 2011; Hayes et al., 2011), the intervention seeks to find out if the widow is comfortable with the continued sharing. At this level again an evaluation on whether the widow has accepted that death has come and that she is now a widow is sought. It is important to make a clarification on what being a widow means for her. The changes that come with the new state and how these

changes affect her are worth addressing. Issues in this stage are shown in Table 5.4.

**Table 5.4. Working engagement**

<b>Intervention</b>	<b>Task</b>	<b>Task goal</b>	<b>Anticipated outcome</b>	<b>Evaluative questions on the success of the intervention</b>
Working engagement	Widow self – empowerment (Situational awareness)	To understand to what degree the widow is aware of the situation surrounding her	That the widow is aware of the situations surrounding her	To what level is the widow able to share of her challenges and emotional state?
	Widow self – empowerment (Situational acceptance)	To evaluate the widow’s level of acceptance of her situation	That the widow has started moving towards managing the situation and accepting her situation.	To what level is the widow overcome by emotions? Is the widow expressing intense issues of trauma or grief?
	Identification of needs	To come up with a list of needs facing the widow	That the widow has needs that call for action	To what degree is the widow able to manage with the finances she has?
	Prioritizing of needs	To rank the needs in order of most to least pressing	That the widow is helped to rank her needs	What needs are most pressing (urgent)? Which ones are least pressing (less urgent)?

If the widow is aware of her present situation, the prevalent needs in her present situation can be outlined. At this level, it is better to first look at basic needs that include food, housing, and school fees (especially for the children). After, one can look at status quo maintenance needs. If they had a car, will she be able to maintain the car? In addition to the status quo needs, socio-cultural needs may arise. The husband may have been assisting some persons outside the immediate family circles. The couple may have been members of some social club. Does the widow desire to maintain those circles and if she does is she financially able to?



In the area of prioritizing the needs. The intervention is to help the widow look at her present income and see whether it will sustain her present life style. If it is not sufficient what needs to be done to increase the income? Or what needs to be done to adjust the expenditure downwards?

At this level, the actions to be taken are to be clearly stipulated. This is to include the resources (emotional, financial, physical, or even time-based) that are needed. The consequences of each action are to be evaluated and clearly expressed. It is only when this is done that the action can be chosen. Once this is done the time for acting, who is to act? What exactly is to be done? The location and the method are all to be well stipulated.

*(iv)Monitoring and re-adjustment*

Stage four is about monitoring and re-adjustment. This is deemed essential since it seeks to see the degree to which the earlier set goals were realised. As a monitoring strategy, the intervention is to re-look at what was set to be achieved. In doing so it looks at who was the actor, when the action was to be done, the location and the methods that were to be used. It is then in a position to find out whether the anticipated was done. This phase is essential since it gives the impetus to carry on with the process. It also signals the areas that need to be changed.

Also at this stage, the degree of success is given. The question being posed is whether there was total or partial failure. Whatever the outcome, reasons behind the success as well as the failure are singled out. The items involved in Stage Four are given in Table 5.5.

**Table 5.5.** Monitoring and re-adjustment

<b>Intervention</b>	<b>Task</b>	<b>Task goal</b>	<b>Anticipated</b>	<b>Evaluative</b>
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			<b>outcome</b>	<b>questions on the success of the intervention</b>
Monitoring & re-adjustment	What was to be achieved? By who, when, where & how	To evaluate whether the set goals have been achieved	That what was set was achieved	What did you set to have achieved by this time?
	What worked (why?)	To identify what is working for her	That the strategies that are working for the widow are identified	What have you achieved What helped you achieve?
	What did not work (why?)	To identify what is not working for her	That the strategies that are not working for the widow are identified	What have you not achieved? Any reasons for not achieving?
	What needs further action/different action?	To come up with re-enforcement or re-adjustment strategies of action	That solidifying / or changes need to be done to the earlier set strategies	How can we improve what worked and regulate what did not work?

This information will inform what adjustments need to be done. This may include discarding some strategies while withholding others. In this stage therefore, the widow is meant to respond to the question, to what level do you feel you have managed your widowhood? What needs to be improved so that you can manage your situation better? What goals do you have for your future? What actions need to be put in place for you to realise these goals? The process is meant to spiral the widow upwards as she reconstructs her identity and as she starts to positively engage in social transformation.

The study has looked at the four stages of the model for widow identity construction. It has addressed the insertion, the evaluative engagement stage, the working engagement and finally the monitoring and re-adjustment. Figure 5.1 presents visual elaboration of how the stages interlink.

### *Core conditions for the model*

There are various core conditions that the study felt are at the base of journeying with widows. Awareness: Widows are a special vulnerable group. Interaction with widows of whatever category level, calls for caution. The issues relating to widows are vast, but could be looked at in 10 categories as indicated in the categories given in chapter four, page 72. In addition to that, an awareness that identity is a core factor in widowhood, is important. This will allow the one journeying with widows, be clearer on the pertinent issues affecting the widow at her category level, and the way this category level influences her worldview. Awareness on the persons significant to the widow is also important. This includes members of her family of origin, members of her family of in-laws, and her nuclear family. Friends and work colleagues are also significant.

The second necessary condition when one is journeying with widows is being non-judgemental. This refers to one's ability to avoid prejudices when with a widow. The name calling towards the widow leads to stigma (Johnson and colleagues, 2009) on the part of the widow, making the widow withdraw and remain closed. Since the wound of spousal loss is intense, the widow calls for accompaniment from one that is non-judgemental, that is willing to journey with her at her own pace and circumstance. She seeks one that will accept her unconditionally.

The third core condition is trust in the widow identity re-construction process. This process, may appear impossible, irrational, and even too lengthy and tedious. However, it is important that the person journeying with the widow trusts that eventually the widow will re-construct her identity. Perhaps the end goal will not be as anticipated before the start of the process, but the widow shall manage.

### ***Justification of the model***

Prior to the interviews with widow participants, it was evident that widows had challenges that needed redress. After consulting literature, the issue of widow identity construction, destruction and reconstruction emerged. It also was evident that widows had psychosocial experiences that needed further exploration. An association between widow psychosocial experiences and widow self-identity was inferred. Nevertheless, no research was seen that had dealt with the association based on a well-founded theoretical framework. Based on this, a literature gap was identified; it needed to be filled. With this the present study was instituted. From literature, it appeared that widows have an identity that is disrupted by the loss of a spouse. Following that a quest for a specific systematic model to guide the widow and the persons journeying with widows, on methods to reconstruct her identity yielded no results. As a result of this, the study set came up with a model that has four stages.

### ***Strengths of the model***

The model engages the widow and the intervener at all its four stages. With this, at no stage is one person deciding; rather the participant and the intervener are engaged. Based on this, the model allows for quitting and or adjustments at each of its stages, mainly for the widow participant who may feel uncomfortable with the process. In addition to the strengths, no time frames are placed at each of the stages. This means that those involved can work at their own pace. They can also move forwards and backwards without being constrained. However, the freedom is not a reason for them not to set goals and time frames together. This fluidity allows for the integral engagement and involvement of the beneficiary. These factors add to the strengths of the model.

### ***Possible model limitations and ways to mitigate the limitations***

The model should not be applicable to widows who are still in their emergency state. By this we mean that their mental as well as emotional state is not stable enough to accommodate the requirements of the process. If this is the case, the intervener is to allow the widow to settle first. If the intervener is a psychological counsellor he/she could use some additional skills to assist the widow settle. However, the main task is to let the widow be; allow her to settle at her pace before engaging her in any procedural stages of the model.

Also if the widow is going through detrimental human rights violations that may include, being dis-inherited, being forced into widow remarriage, the wealth left behind by the husband being taken away by relatives, the intervener is meant to seek the right persons to assist. These may be legal staff, local authorities, church elders or benevolent relatives and friends. A procedural identity reconstruction process can only be done after the emergency challenges are settled.

This section has looked at the model for widow identity construction. It has introduced a procedural and integrative procedure that involves the widow and the intervener. The procedure is meant to be systematic and calls for constant dialogue between the two players. Time is not to be an issue in the realization of each of the stages. However, the parties are to set times for meetings when progression is to be assessed. Each meeting time should be set during the present meeting. In the entire process, an amicable but professional working relationship is to be maintained.

### **5.4. Reliability and Validity of the Study Findings**

This section sets out to re-evaluate the findings. The desire is to find out if the study findings meet the threshold of being reliable and valid. The questions is whether the findings

can be reproduced under similar circumstances, and whether the findings achieved what the study set out to initially realise.

#### **5.4.1. Reliability of the findings**

Reliability refers to the “confidence that a given empirical finding can be reproduced [w]hen the study is repeated under the same circumstances, with the same population, using the same methods” (Selvam, 2017, p. 53). To observe reliability in the present study, the process of data collection and analysis, as well as the arrival at findings were open to scrutiny (Yardley, 2009). Supervisors and peers were engaged in all the stages of the process.

For there to be reliability, the study observed various parameters. The first two are predictability and conviction. All steps that were used from the start of the process to the end, were clear to the researcher, to the supervisors, to scholarly peers and to the participants. Hence the entire process of collecting data and analysing allowed for continued supervision and audit (Yardley, 2009). Abrupt turn of process or inclusion was avoided (Eisenhart, 2006).

Also adherence to evidence was observed. To achieve this, the study adhered to the actual language of the participants and to the actual context that the participants operate in (van Manen, 1990; Willig, 2009). This language was captured through recording their experiences and transcribing verbatim. Both the transcribed data and the initial recordings were available to the supervisors and to peers. At different intervals, the verbal and the transcribed data were randomly checked to ensure adherence to the process.

Therefore, starting at the pilot stage, dependability “consistency and reliability of the research findings and the degree to which research procedures are documented, allowing someone outside the research to follow, audit, and critique the research process” (Moon and colleagues, 2016, p. 2; Streubert 2007), was observed. Dependability of the process and findings

was observed through engagement of triangulation where multiple methods and peers were engaged in the preparatory and in the empirical study processes. This process helped overcome problems of bias and enhance validity (Creswell, 2007).

Also crystallization was ensured. As soon as the pilot data was collected, the study temporarily suspended the examination or the reading of data in order to reflect on the analysis experience. This phase gave the researcher the chance to identify and articulate patterns and themes noticed during the process (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998). This was later recorded as memos and with the rest of the data, subjected to computer assisted qualitative data analysis (CAQDAS).

Finally immersion was done. Through this the study allowed for the researcher's ability to submerge in the collected data. The process entailed reading or examining some portion of the data in detail (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998). These stages allowed the study findings to be reliable.

#### **5.4.2. Validity of the findings**

Research findings are valid when they deliver that which they set out to achieve (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003). This refers to “the confidence that a given finding shows what it purports to show” (Selvam, 2017, p. 53). In the present study, credibility and transferability of the process and of the findings, equivalent to internal and external validity in quantitative research (Creswell, 2007), was observed.

At the initial stage, the study variables: widow psychosocial experiences and widow self-identity were presented followed by a clear background of each. These were arrived at following a systematic literature review that informed the statement of the problem. From the start therefore, the study was clear on what it set out to do; explore the widow psychosocial

experiences and their link to widow self-identity.

This search leading to these variables also informed the study objectives, the first two being, an exploration of widow psychosocial experiences, and the link between widow psychosocial experiences and widow self-identity. The third and fourth objectives were how widows deal with their psychosocial experiences in their attempt to better their lives, and finally, efforts to evolve a model to equip the widow with ways through which she would positively contribute towards sustainable social transformation.

The study methodology ensured that it reached out to participants that were widows from varied backgrounds to ensure representation of the population. Also the instrument of data collection ensured that the data collected was in tandem with the set objectives. The study, therefore, adhered to Seale's (1999) suggestion on a methodological self-critical account of how the research is to be done. The subsequent analysis and presentation of findings, the discussion, the recommendations, and even the ending theological reflection followed the procedure of the objectives. This ensured that the entire process was aimed at realising the objectives. With the objectives closely tied to the topic variables, and with the entire research following the procedure of the objectives, validity of the findings was ensured.

The findings therefore become dependable and adhere to confirmability “...demonstrate that the results are clearly linked to the conclusions in a way that can be followed and, as a process, replicated” (Moon and colleagues, 2016, p. 2). Together with the reliability and the validity of the findings, the researcher’s reflexivity is deemed essential at this juncture.

#### **5.4.3. Researcher’s reflexivity**

Social Constructionism, the epistemology that guided the study all along, allowed the researcher to act on the world of the participants and vice versa (Taylor, 2011). This licence,



however, was not to allow for a subjective bias but rather to deepen the experience leading to more valid and reliable findings. It is due to this that the researcher's reflexivity is brought in with the reliability and the validity of the findings, to show how it added value to the findings.

This section looks at the researcher's reflexivity. This is the "ability to account for the filters and lenses through which the researcher might 'prejudice' the study, and to be aware of how some aspects of the study might influence the researcher as a person" (Sahaya, 2017, p.242). This process of reflexivity is also referred to as self-critical epistemological awareness (Chambers, 2017, p. 181). It entails a critical awareness of personal biases, predilections (preferences), categories for interpreting the world, and frames that influence one's ways of looking at the world. This reflection on thoughts and behaviour is meant to make one continue improving and "becoming a better researcher... [who]... captures the dynamic nature of the process" (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992, p.xiii). The process is looked at in two parameters: the researcher's contribution to the study, and the researcher's acquisition from the study.

In relation to the first parameter, the researcher's contribution to the study, it emerges that the background of the researcher as a counselling psychologist was beneficial. The knowledge of theories and skills used in counselling, played a notable role in the study. Through these, the researcher was able to use social and exploration skills to reach out to the widow participants. When the widow participant was emotionally overwhelmed, the researcher was able to deal with this and even help the widow participant debrief after the session. Interactions with the research assistants was easier and when they needed to share on overwhelming issues, the researcher was able to help.

Finally, when one of the research assistants was widowed in the process of the data collection, the researcher was able to journey with her. Through constant sharing, and presence, the researcher reached out positively to this widow.

The researcher is also a linguist. The choice of Discourse Analysis, a framework commonly used in linguistics, was not alien. The terms used in linguistic analysis as realised through Discourse Analysis were familiar. This helped in positively contributing to the study.

The researcher had been interacting with marginalised women among them widows, for over two years, prior to the commencement of the study. This made it easier for him to interact with the widow participants. It also made the first widow participants feel at ease with him. With the above, the researcher had the right attitudes and skills when engaging with the widow participants.

In relation to what the researcher acquired from the study, there was the realization that widows are a special group. Due to this, they need specialised therapy and skills in order to first be accepted in their circles. Second, to be able to journey with widows, calls for the right attitude and skills.

Widow identity/category level is significant in the way these widows view themselves. The levels influence and are in turn influenced by the widow experiences. These levels are influenced by parenthood, interactions with educationists, as well as with the husband. In this was family of origin, the nuclear family as well as the family of the in-laws, play a significant role on widow self-identity. This has a contribution into the roles the widows play. In this way role-based identities are influenced.

The role of widow groups emerged. This would help in supporting the individual widows and their children. The groups would also provide a platform that would facilitate the widows' voice. This in turn would positively contribute towards fighting human rights injustices against the widow.

The power of the Discourse Analysis theoretical framework in supporting qualitative studies to explore psychosocial issues, emerged. The width and depth of the framework, derived

from its dichotomies, its foci as well as its tools, placed the researcher at an advantage when qualitatively engaging with widow discourse.

In this section, the study has shown ways in which the researcher's skills and attitude contributed to the study. In return the researcher has also profited from the study in the ways elaborated above. In this way the researcher's reflexivity has contributed towards making the findings of the study more reliable and valid. It has also contributed towards improving the researcher's scholarly skills.

## **5.5. Conclusions**

This study set out to explore widow psychosocial experiences. It desired to address how these psychosocial experiences relate to widow self-identity. With these understanding, it sought to find out how widows dealt with their experiences as they sought ways to improve their lives. In the end, the study desired to evolve a model for widow identity construction.

In the review, literature on widow experiences and on identity failed to address widow categories and identity levels. From the collected data, categories of widows were noted. With these categories, though some experiences are similar, dissimilarities also play a significant role in the experiences the widows go through. This points to a link between widow category levels and widow experiences. It also suggests a link between widow categories and widow identity levels.

In reference to objective one of the study widow psychosocial experiences are present in widow discourse under the following categories: socio-cultural, spiritual, economic, death and loss, health, education, human rights, illiteracy, psychological and sexed bodies (in order of importance). Each category has themes and sub-themes as shown in the figures in chapter four.

Addressing objective two, widow self-identity generates two main identities, existential

and role-based. As it is with psychosocial widow experiences, widow self-identities have themes that are elaborated in chapter four. Experiences in girlhood, through adolescence and young adulthood, contribute towards solidifying the existential self-identity and the subsequent role-based identities. The state of these identities in turn influences, and is influenced by, the psychosocial experiences in widowhood.

For objective three, widows deal with psychosocial experiences in different ways. These ways show the efforts that widows have towards improving their lives. The ways in which they deal is seen in their coping mechanisms. They also give suggestions to other widows on how best to improve their lives. This information helps to inform objective four.

In relation to objective four, the study found varied ways in which widows have dealt with their issues. For those who can be viewed as having reconstructed their identities, similar processes are noted. These processes are then put together by the study to come up with a model that can be used to assist widows. Prior, the Egan's model in counselling, as well as the Kubler Ross stages on Death and Dying, did not adequately deal with the unique challenges of the widow. This study therefore, borrowing from the Egan's model (Riggall, 2016) and the stages of Kubler Ross (Hall, 2011), and from different processes that widows have used, evolves the model given in Figure 5.1. This seeks to guide the caregivers as they journey with the widow. The model is meant to improve the life of the widow with an aim to making her sustainably contribute better to social transformation. With this understanding the study moves on to the recommendations.

## **5.6. Recommendations**

This section on recommendations involves different institutions that are linked with widows. These institutions are the Government and the Civil Society as well as institutions of

Higher Learning. The section also incorporates widows, social transformers, and individuals based on the realisation that all are affected by widow experiences, as expressed in section 6.6 under the social transformative realizations at the end of the study. However, to ensure that the recommendations fortify the validity of the findings, they are presented following the order of the study objectives.

In relation to objective one whose focus is on widow psychosocial experiences, ten categories were found. From these socio-cultural, spiritual and economic experiences lead in that order. These are followed by death and loss, health, education and human rights experiences. Following that, illiteracy, psychological and sexed body experiences come up. From these experiences, the Government is implored to come up with policies that create awareness on the plight of widows. These policies will counter the socio-cultural practices, economic, health, education and human rights practices that negatively contribute towards aggravating widow psychosocial challenges.

Together with the Government, appeals to the civil society target its ability to spearhead and nurture advocacy on the rights of the marginalised. The subsequent efforts will positively contribute towards bringing widows together to fight for their rightful position in social transformation. The Church and other Faith Based Organisations under the umbrella of the Civil Society are also called upon to acknowledge the spirituality of widows. In so doing, they will be able to reach out to the widows within their circles and hence magnify their voices.

Objective two focused on the relationship between widow psychosocial experiences and her self-identity. The study's realization is that the two variables inter-act on each other. The psychosocial experiences influence widow identity and vice versa. There is an appeal on widows to be aware of this interaction to allow them understand their issues better. Also Psychologists and other caregivers working with widows are called upon to address the two

variables together in order to have an all-inclusive method of dealing with widow challenges.

As noted under objective three, widows relate to the psychosocial experiences in their efforts to be social transformers. Though seen as passive objects perpetually seeking help, they are actors seeking to improve their lives, despite the hostile environment generated by widowhood. They are indeed fighters whose efforts need to be tapped by social transformers.

Linked to objective four, interactions with efforts attempting to deal with issues of widows, reveal a constant gap that calls for a specialised model for widow identity construction. This study has come up with it as shown in figure 5.1. This model is meant to be used by those seeking to empower widows. Its elaborate steps render it all-inclusive thus enabling it to deal comprehensively with widow challenges. The study recommends that it be utilised as a model for channelling widow efforts towards sustainable social transformation.

Finally, to institutions of higher learning and to scholars, the gap that existed in literature where widow psychosocial experiences were delinked from identity, has been addressed. Through the Discourse Analysis framework, a qualitative study has allowed for a scholarly exploration of the two variables. The findings inform literature. From the participants however, experiences of children of widows still remain underexplored. It is therefore a recommendation of this study that this gap be addressed within the scholarly parameters.

Also this study proposes that the widow categories identified be used as identity category levels. However, further research to show the intensity of the association between the category parameters and identity is required.

## **CHAPTER SIX**

## THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION

### 6.1. Introduction

The study set out to explore the association between widow psychosocial experiences and widow self-identity. This was informed by the scholarly gap that existed, in that the association had not been explored within a well-grounded framework. Also as seen in the insertion, the researcher had had interactions with women groups and widows. From this, he had identified areas of concern where widow challenges and their identity issues were hindering them from effectively and sustainably contributing to social transformation. This was despite the significant population of widows and the responsibilities they have. Among the responsibilities is to guide their children into socially and sustainably transforming themselves and their environments.

Founded on this, the study sought to explore widow psychosocial experiences and link the experiences to widow self-identities. It also sought to explore how widows related to these experiences as they sought their position in society. The suggestions that widows have on ways to better their lives were explored. In the end a model to guide widow identity construction was developed. To actualise the findings and the model, a theological reflection, linking faith and experiences, is then given. This integrates faith and life in understanding experiences. This starts by linking faith and widow psychosocial challenges. Following this the association between faith and widow self-identity is given. Similarly, a presentation on widow reactions towards psychosocial experiences in relation to faith is looked at. This presents the widow coping mechanisms as well as the suggestions they give on ways to improve their lives. Finally, faith based factors contributing towards enriching the model for widow identity construction are given. In this way, the chapter on theological reflection follows the steps indicated by the study

objectives.

## **6.2. Faith and Widow Psychosocial Experiences**

In addressing faith and widow psychosocial experiences, the study pegs itself on the findings in chapter four. From this, the experiences that emerged were socio-cultural followed by spiritual as well as economic. At position four death and loss issues as well as health ones followed. In this section, these two are discussed together due to their interconnectedness when relating to faith. Education and illiteracy issues are also presented together due to their inter-relatedness. In the end the section presents psychological issues followed by sexuality issues as they relate to faith.

### **6.2.1. Faith and socio-cultural widow experiences**

The socio-cultural themes that emerged were family, friends and work colleagues, polygamy, re-marriage and witchcraft. Family ties have an influence on the widow's faith. Within the Church the significant role of the family as the micro-church is presented (Widok, 2013). This is the base of the Small Christian Communities in the Catholic Church (Kramer & Vellguth, 2013). The widow is part of this Small Christian Communities and failure to offer the widows, the support needed, is to encourage a dysfunctional family (Miruka, and colleagues, 2015). It is based on this that true religion is defined as taking care of widows (Okonda, 2017).

Nevertheless according to a survey on the African Inland Church and the Pentecostal churches, little has been done on widow care (Miruka and colleagues, 2015; Mpiyekhe, 2011). This was supported by the findings as the participants felt left out on church matters. Widows are not being well included and incorporated in the efforts to take care of the family. There appears to be a reductionism where the family is taken to be father, mother and children;



widows have no place in the family circles. It is based on this that from the findings widows felt overlooked and ignored. In this way, the socio-cultural family ties that are meant to be shielding the widows appear to be locking them out even within the church forums.

On the aspect of polygamy, re-marriage and witchcraft, different faiths appear to come into a consensus on the importance of re-marriage. For the Hindu faith, widows were allowed to re-marry as from 1856 (Srivastava, 2011). For those in the Islam religion there is a recommendation that they be married (Sharma, 2017). It is almost implied that this is the best option for the widows so that they be protected and provided for by the husband. In Christianity, young widows are advised to re-marry (I Corinthians 7: 8; I Timothy 5: 9- 16). This concentration on re-marriage does not augur well with the findings. Widows felt that the concentration on re-marriage as “the only way out” for the widow, was a reduction of her true identity and ability. It was patriarchal position pegged on the woman being totally dependent on the man. This stereotype position was constantly challenged as the widows took up jobs, pursued studies and engaged in income generating activities that saw them moving towards financial sustainability.

In relation to the elderly widows however, the faith-based focus appeals that they dedicate themselves to God’s service. The example of Prophetess Anna is given, “...did not depart from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day.” She was doing this up to the age of 84. In return, God grants her the privilege of seeing the Saviour (Lk 2: 36-38). While this position of dependent on God is welcome by the widows, findings show that their efforts target an integral reconstruction of their identities. They want to positively contribute towards sustainable social transformation, engaging in different roles. A reduction into only church service appears to be a solution based on pity, rather than on full acceptance of their state. It is the full acceptance of their state that is to allow for their integral reconstruction

of themselves.

Following the precepts laid down by the different faiths, the widow who re-marries is not linked to witchcraft since she becomes part of the new family and is under the new husband. For the elder ones, dedication within the church wades off any suspicions on being evil. In this way she cannot be accused of witchcraft and of immorality. Paul is clear that polygamy and sexual perversion are not accepted. This poses a challenge to re-marriage, if the relationship will lead to polygamy (Kessy and colleagues, 2008). Shedding more light to this position, practices of levirate and even widow remarriage inheritance in relation to faith, are addressed (Ojore, 2013). From findings, a value-based life is suggested. Participants point to the dangers of engaging in immoral behaviour mainly sexual perversion. However, they also counter the stereotype of being seen as sexual perverts by the community.

In this section therefore, socio-cultural widow experiences are looked at in relation to faith. The family, is meant to involve the widow since she is a part of that organ. With re-marriage she re-joins another family. If she decides to remain single, she is advised to be part of the larger family; the family of faith within the Church. The Church on her part is mandated with taking care of the widow. Hence under socio-cultural experiences, sexuality has also been included.

### **6.2.2. Faith and spiritual-based widow experiences**

This section looked at the findings concentrating on how widows relate to the Higher Power. It also looked at widows in prayer and in faith. Finally their link with the Church appeared as they demonstrated high spirituality and high religiosity.

In line with this, and in addition to the role of the Church seen in section 6.2.1, a group “The Order of Widows” is noted (Kaveny 2005; Lysaught, 2005). This order that operates

within the domains of the faith, targets the elderly widows. Their drive comes from the words of Ruth to Naomi (Ruth 1:16-17). Involvement of young widows in this order is to care for the older ones, help the clergy following the model of the poor widow in Mark 12: 41-44. Members of the entire order have to be dedicated to prayer (Pontifical Council for the Laity, 1998). Through this order, the elderly widows are invited to take care of the clergy. Within this task, they get engaged and also find meaning. By extension they find an identity in the roles they play. However, this Order is within the Catholic Church. This means that those outside the confines of this Church may find it difficult to join. The Order also does not appear to factor in young widows. The Order is also seen as a semi religious order. It is therefore meant to operate within the confines and precepts of strict religious practice. How would these confines be received by widows who desire to live a more *laissez-faire* yet moral life? In response to this, there appears to be a gap.

From the findings, widows have immense reliance on God. Their expressions of faith and prayer are notable. Their interactions with God reveal an unquestionable amicable relation where they feel supported by God. It is based on this that the statement “surely God is the father of widows” constantly appears. Despite this, the participants do not express a desire to be placed in a special church based order as indicated by the Order of Widows. Rather they desire to go on taking care of their children. They desire to carry on with their normal activities but in fear of God’s command to be righteous. In this way, they feel better placed to positively contribute to social transformation, as they take care of their children.

### **6.2.3. Faith and widow economic experiences**

Borrowing from the Hindu faith, the story of Sumatee brings out widow challenges related to economic constraints specifically inheritance.

Sumatee Enal (37) and Ravi Maharaj (60) had been married for 17 years but without a child. Ravi was a wealthy specialist physician and businessman who owned properties in San Fernando in the southern part of Trinidad, including a three-storey mall. His assets were estimated to be worth TT\$30 million (approximately US\$5 million). On Wednesday, 11 January 2006, unknown assailants murdered Dr. Maharaj. Almost soon after, his relatives seized the mall, carted away goods and cash and decided to take charge of the funeral arrangements according to Hindu rites. On finding herself helpless against her murdered husband's relatives, Enal went to court, which ruled that she was the legal executrix of the late doctor's estate (Imoisili, 2006, p.1).

This experience of widow challenges related to property is supported by Raghavan (2013) and Shobha (2006). This situation demonstrates that among those informed by Hindu faith, the issues of widows are similar to those in Africa (Korang, 2012; Korang-Okrah & Haight, 2015). This African context is from time to time informed by Christian faith.

The teachings of the Koran however warn on injustices to the widow, "Those of you who die and leave wives [widows] should bequeath for their wives [widows] a year's maintenance and residence. But if they (the widows) leave the residence, there is no blame on you for what they justly do with themselves" (Pickthall, 2015, 2:240). This directive shows the care that the Islamic religion places on the widow. Injustices against them are shunned.

The Christian faith also discusses widow economic issues. The widow is counted among the poorest in the community (Ex 22:21-22; Deut 24:17-21), needing special protection. In relation to the economic related challenges that widows go through, Croft and Walker (2015) state, "widows do not always receive the care that God expects his people to provide" (p. 14). This statement is in reference to Christian-based fruitful mercy ministries, done under the Baptist Church, targeting the marginalised. This state of the widows warrants them special consideration. The term *almanac* (Hebrew for widow), appears 50 times in the Old Testament, while *chera* (Greek for widow) appears 26 times in the New Testament (Croft & Walker, 2015). The scripture message is that they are in extreme poverty and so God grants them defence (Ps 68: 5) as he invites us to have compassion on them and be sensitive to their plea.

The texts from different faiths and experiences of widows in these faiths, support the findings. The position is that despite the different faiths, inheritance is a concern for widows. Also, financial constraints emanating from widows being disinherited call for re-dress. Based on this therefore, scriptures appeal for compassion. However, more than compassion, widows appeal for justice. They have contributed in assisting their husband's generate family wealth. Being disinherited is injustice.

#### **6.2.4. Faith and widow loss issues: health and death**

On matters of health, Shisanya (2007) addresses widowhood and HIV/AIDS in Siaya, Kenya. In this context, widows suffer after the death of the husband, having to live with the HI Virus. This not only subjects them to stigma (Johnson and colleagues, 2009) but to financial constraints as they search for treatment (Armah-Attoh, 2009).

In addition to the sick widow, the depletion of family resources that may have been realised with the hospitalisation of the husband during his illness, cannot be overlooked. In countries where health insurance schemes are not in place, health care can be impoverishing. The cases of long term alcoholism, Cancer, Diabetes and even High Blood Pressure, on the husband strained the family resources, as noted from the findings. This means that by the time the husband is dying, the family led by the widow is struggling financially. This is aggravated by the fact that when the widows were struggling taking the husband to hospital, they could not go to earn. With failing health and the subsequent death of the husband, the widows are left destitute.

As with ministries targeting the sick, the Church is called to care for widows. In the words of James (1:27), "Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble". Care for widows, is a measure of true religion. In

response to this invitation, faith based organisations are called to respond. In addition to charity and compassion, widows also appeal for policies that would streamline the health institutions. In this way, affordable health care would minimise their challenges. The church and other faith based organisations are called to lobby for social amenities.

#### **6.2.5. Faith and widow education/illiteracy**

The church has been on the forefront on matters of education (Burn and colleagues, 2001). Different faiths have a stake in ensuring that the people they mission to, are educated. On this note, the girl's education is seen as key in forming a just and developed society (Somani, 2017; Suen, 2013). On being widowed, the educated woman is able to manage her affairs. This is noted from the findings. The categories of challenges are influenced by the level of education of the widow. Those that have education that is below secondary level, appear to struggle with issues of financial issues. They also have little awareness of legal matters that are required when pursuing legal documents. With this realization therefore, despite the widow challenges, the educational level of the widow has an influence on the ways they managed their psychosocial experiences. It is based on this that faith-based organisations, are called for as means to facilitate the learning of widows.

Lack of education as experienced through illiteracy and the subsequent limitations in awareness are noted as a handicap to widow progression. The state of Islamic widows in war-torn areas demonstrates extreme suffering and abuse as the widows get forcefully recruited into faith-related militia groups (David, & Jacob, 2015; ICG, 2016; Shauri, 2018; Sindh, 2015). These scholars present cases of East Africa, West Africa, and Pakistan, respectively. In the Scriptures, the vulnerability of the widow is noted in 1Kings 17: 10-16, "...when we have eaten it, we shall die". The widow has no hope and has accepted death as a result of her poverty. In the

present world, this vulnerability is noted among widows, more so those who are illiterate. They are prone to being misused.

Following these, and the call for education from the findings, the important role played by education is noted. There is a link between ability to positively deal with widow challenges, and education. Based on this therefore, faith-based organisations are invited not only to take care of the education of the girl-child but also to support the education of widows. This is an empowering tool that shall facilitate the widows' ability to reconstruct their disrupted identities.

#### **6.2.6. Faith and widow human rights issues**

Extremism in the treatment of widows from societies that share different faiths is noted. While those from the Hindu faith practice share of “*Sati*” (David, 2010; Sahoo, 2016), those from Christian-based Africa talk of “*Ukuzila*” practiced in South Africa (Rosenblatt & Nkosi, 2007). In the *Sati* practice, the widow is burnt to death on her husband's funeral pyre. Though this practice is illegal in the present day India, it is “still regarded by some Hindus as the ultimate form of womanly devotion and sacrifice (Sahoo, 2016 p.64)”. In the “*Ukuzila*” practice, the human is held suspect of having killed the husband and has to go through a set of dehumanizing rituals.

These examples show that despite the different faiths within which the widows live, they are subjected to intense challenges. The apex of these challenges is expressed by Yadav (2016).

Women were blamed for their widowhood. They were not allowed to go to any of the ceremonies or celebrations, especially marriage ceremonies and religious *poojas*. No one wanted to start their day by seeing a widow (p. 6) ...In the dominant religious and cultural narrative, widows were considered inauspicious and carriers of bad luck. It was believed that if widows participated in religious ceremonies, the ceremony would become impure (p. 9)

Human rights violations are thus a concern of all including faith-based organisations.

This leads to the reiteration of Jesus, “the poor widow put in more than all the other contributors to the treasury” (Mk 12: 43). Widows are viewed as victims and trouble to the world (Summary Report of the Situation Analysis of Widows in Religious Places of West Bengal, 2009). Due to this attitude, they are abused and down trodden. Scriptures, however, show that this is not the case; they are willing to give, and whatever they give, is their all, and is therefore greater than what others give from their abundance.

From the findings, participants shared how they felt hurt by comments in churches. They felt offended and not having a place in the church. Despite the various efforts by some church leaders to reach out to these marginalised group, a systematised mode of intervention was lacking. The appeal therefore, is for the faith-based organisations, in response to the scriptures, to deliberate on ways to journey with the widows. Through these efforts, human rights violations will be addressed in the right forums. The faith-based groupings will give the widows a voice and a platform from which they can propel their human rights agenda.

The above is founded on the realisation that the widow is in need of justice. She is deprived off her inheritance. She is denied justice and forced to undergo human rights violations. This is in the guise of culture and patriarchist systems. The widow is in need of basic needs for herself and for her children. This widow is struggling with all that despite being a member of the Church. The church and other faith-based organisations are hence mandated to undertake the emancipation task.

#### **6.2.7. Faith and widow psychological experiences**

Widows are women in need. Losing one’s husband subjects the widows to intense mourning as a result of the intense loss (Chan & Chan, 2011; Chen, 2000). In the Scriptures, this mourning is seen in the case of Uriah’s wife. “When the wife of Uriah heard that Uriah her



husband was dead, she mourned for her husband (2 Sam. 11: 26)". She sought psycho-emotional support. In the same way, widows today are constantly in need of this support. They need a safe place where to mourn their lost one (Chen, 2006; Schaal, and colleagues, 2011).

Psychological challenges are part of the integral wellness that faith-based organisations look for. Bereavement and grief influence a person's life "including emotional well-being, self-concept, physical health, social relationships, involvement in leisure activities, and religious participation" (Michael and colleagues, 2003, p.146). Widowhood the apex of loss and subsequent bereavement cannot be ignored in faith matters. Programmes relating to death and loss are significant in life giving people purpose in life as well as comfort during death. With this therefore faith and widow issues cannot be separated. This clearly seen in the findings, when spirituality takes on position two in terms of frequency of entries in the categories of widow psychosocial experiences.

### **6.3. Association between Faith and Widow Self-Identity**

This section addresses the link between faith and the self-identity of the widow. The self-identity of the widow is noted in two main areas: the existential self-identity and the role-based identities. With this therefore the section is divided into two.

#### **6.3.1. Existential identities and faith**

Growth from girlhood and womanhood is integral. This means that it is not only physical but also spiritual. The different rites of passage that the woman goes through in her faith, cement her femininity, thus giving her an existential identity. This identity is influenced by her relationships with her caregivers and educators when the girl is growing up. Later it has an influence on her education and subsequent marriage partner. During this time the different roles

the participants undertake is also influenced.

Later in widowhood, the participants continuously ask, “who am I?” We see the same question covertly asked by Ruth as she says, “Do not ask me to abandon or forsake you! For wherever you go I will go, wherever you lodge I will lodge, your people shall be my people, and your God my God” (Ruth 1:16). This total surrender points to the widow not having a clear solid identity. This questions is not so much targeting her existential identity as a woman, but more so the roles she is to play in widowhood. This hence paves way to the link between the role-based identities the widow plays and faith.

### **6.3.2. Role-based identities and faith**

Within faith-based organisations, women play varied roles as individuals and as members of groups (Li, and colleagues, 2016). Titus 2:4-5 gives a summary of the roles that they can play.

The older women likewise, that they be reverent in behavior, not slanderers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things-- that they admonish the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, homemakers, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be blasphemed.

The second part presents them as teachers and role models. It also shows a significant role where they make homes. To the present, the role of women in church leadership yields different positions, some supporting while others opposing (Oak, 2011).

With this insight, from the findings, widows presented immense desires to serve in the Church. One of the participants served as a catechist while another was a woman leader giving encouragement talks to other church members. These roles are important since they give them an identity. It allows them to exercise their professionalisms and offer services through their different talents.

The hindrance noted in faith-based organisations is the stereotypes that come with being

widowed. Rather than being viewed as contributors to the well ness of the Faith body, they are viewed as sinners whose presence will bring down the church, “...if widows participated in religious ceremonies, the ceremony would become impure” (Yadav, 2016, p. 9). Faith-based organisations are hence advised to deal with the negative narrative that hinders widows from positively and sustainably contributing to social transformation.

As a way of dealing with this predicament, the Order of Widows discussed earlier in section 6.2.2 sheds light. Also Ojore (2013) gives suggestions that would allow widows be of use in pastoral theology, “widows should be fully engaged in catechesis work in the villages preparing children for various sacraments...visit the sick...take Holy Communion to the sick members of the parish...working in prisons, schools and in hospitals as chaplains, and to lead Sunday services...take part in the formation of future priests” (p. 112). These engagements would respond to the question “who am I”, posed by Casey as she interacts with the church she serves. It would give identity to widows while allowing them to join like-minded care providers to contribute towards social transformation.

#### **6.4. Widow Reactions to Psychosocial Experiences in Relation to Faith**

This section looks at the relation of faith to the ways in which widows deal with their psychosocial experiences. These ways of the widows are divided into two. The first is their coping mechanisms and the second is the suggestions they give to other widows.

##### **6.4.1. Widow faith-related coping mechanisms**

Dedication to God is noted in the case of Anna the Prophetess (Lk 2: 36-38). This is a significant mechanism that also appeared in the widow discourse in chapter four. In support of this, findings show the High Spirituality and Religiosity of widows. They constantly talk and

demonstrate reliance on God. They show intense faith demonstrated through prayers and service to the church. They are willing to extend their hand to assist the needy widow. In these activities, they are caring for the neighbour. These activities help to give them activities that acts as a way of their coping. In relation to how different widows have dealt with their challenges within faith, the next section on suggestions sheds more light.

#### **6.4.2. Faith-related suggestions on ways to improve lives of widows**

In the Old Testament, God reveals himself as the husband to the widow, “I will not remember the reproach of your widowhood anymore; for your Maker is your husband... (Is. 54: 4, 5)”. In return for this assurance God demands righteousness, “in righteousness you shall be established”.

As the husband, God ensures that the widow is provided for. This providence is demonstrated in the case of Elisha and the widow. The widow of a prophet had her two sons seized following her late husband’s debt. Elisha told her, “Go, borrow vessels from everywhere, from all your neighbours- empty vessels; do not gather just a few.” The abundance of oil was realised after which the prophet says, “Go, sell the oil and pay your debt; and you and your sons live on the rest (2 Kings 4:1-7)”. In this way, the widow is relieved off her worries of losing her sons and being perpetually in fear of the creditor. She is also given sufficient for the future. In this way reliance on God is noted as a core way for the widows to improve their lives. When this happens, God sends his intermediaries to assist the widow.

In another case in the Old Testament, Naomi, a widow, is rewarded for her service to God. She is past child-bearing age, but God grants her continuity when Boaz marries Ruth (Ruth 4: 13-23). The granting of this favour is realised when Ruth said [to Naomi], “Entreat me not to leave you or to return from following you; for where you go I will go, and where you lodge I

will lodge; your people shall be my people, and your God my God; where you die I will die, and there I will be buried.” (Ruth 1:16–17). God continues to reward widows that are righteous. Additional verses that support God’s providence include Proverbs (15: 25), The Lord tears down the house of the proud but maintains the widow’s boundaries, and Psalm (68: 5; 146: 9).

From these texts, God listens to the widow and accords them special care. On their part, the widows are encouraged to rely on God. He invites them to be righteous and to trust in him (Okonda, 2017).

God promises sustenance to widows and sets clear what he demands from them. He also states what he demands from us in relation to widows. Isaiah (1:17) and Jeremiah (22:3) tell us to be aware of widow issues. We also should defend them. Zechariah (7:10), adds to the voice of the two prophets mentioned earlier. He states that we should not oppress the widows, the fatherless, the travellers and the poor. In this way none of us could say that we do not know what God desires of us in relation to the widow.

### **6.5. Faith-Based Ways to Improve the Model for Widow Identity Construction**

From the New Testament, suggestions on ways to improve the lives of widows are further reiterated. These enrich the model for widow identity construction. In addition to the Old Testament suggestions on reliance on God, the New Testament is more explicit.

The first part points to what is expected of the widow. Prophetess Anna had been married for seven years. After that she lost her husband. She then decided to dedicate her life to God, “...did not depart from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day.” She was doing this up to the age of 84. In return, God grants her the privilege of seeing the Saviour (Lk 2: 36-38).

The text that however, enlightens the entire New Testament on the widow is that by St

Paul. In 1 Timothy 5:3-8, he instructs Timothy concerning widows. He starts by categorizing the widows. There are those who are needy materially and have no support from relatives. Then there are those whose relatives can support them. Finally, there are those with no self-control. The first need material support and the Church is instructed to aid them have this. Relatives and family are obliged to take care of the second category and also provide for their children. As for the last group, Paul advises them to marry and be taken care of by their husbands.

In all these, Paul places a caveat. Any widow that deserves the attention of the Church, is to have attained the age of 60 years, have been married only once. She has to be well-behaved. In addition, the young ones are advised to re-marry (I Corinthians 7: 8; I Timothy 5: 9- 16). Amidst all these, the early church was concerned about the widow in apostolic times (Acts 6: 1f; James 1: 27). This concern is and directives are for all those interested in ensuring that widows reconstruct their identities and hence contribute towards sustainable social transformation.

In addition to the scriptures, Catholic Social Teaching (Erick & Ryan, 2014) adds to ways through which widows can further contribute. The principles of human dignity and rights and responsibilities, dignity of work and rights of workers all point to the human rights issues that the study has been looking at in relation to widows. They are to be allowed to play their role, for them to be social transformers. In this they will be able to participate in the socio-cultural as well as economic improvement of the world and demonstrate their stewardship.

On the part of those journeying with widows, the common good of all, widows included should be sought. For those that are financially able, there is an invitation to have a preferential treatment for the poor, among them widows. Following that, all are invited to be in solidarity with widows in promoting peace and human dignity. The Government through its policies, the Civil Society including Faith Based Organisations are challenges to take up the task to incorporate widows. The proposed model therefore, the widows and all those journeying with

the widows are granted checks from the theological reflection, as they undertake their task. With this background, the study concludes by giving the social transformative realizations.

## **6.6. Social Transformative Realizations**

In this section social transformation theories are addressed. This is followed by categories of persons affected by widowhood. The aim is to bring to light the contribution of social transformation to our world. Then the study's realization that we are all meant to join in social transformation not leaving behind widows. Finally there is the realization that the entire society is affected by widowhood. Based on this, widowhood is a concern for all.

### *Social transformation theories*

Social transformation is looked at as the fundamental change in society as opposed to social change that follows a gradual, natural itinerary in the change of society (Khonder & Schuerkens, 2014, p. 1). Social transformation therefore is effected by historical events led by people. In its nature, it is radical.

Emile Durkheim, Max Weber, Alexis de Tocqueville, and Karl Marx are noted as major theorists that inform the historical trends of social transformation. Durkheim looks at the social and cultural consequences of growing division of labour and its specialization following industrialization. Weber addresses consequences of modernization and cultural transformations, while Tocqueville looks at social circumstances that give rise to democratic systems. Finally, Marx addresses exploitation of the worker (McMichael, 2008; Mikkelsen, 2004).

Following this background, modernization and dependency theories influence society leading to the need for social transformation. The first focuses on the western world as the blueprint of development (Mwanzia & Strathdee, 2010). This position leads to a dependency

where all development is to be pegged to the state and donor.

Re-looking at this trend in the recent past (from the 1980s) shows a continued regression of the African. This is noted in the continued poverty, increased patriarchy, negative ethnicity, dictatorial regimes, and food insecurity among other vices. This gives rise to the question, what needs to be done to effect positive change in the world? It is in answer to this that social transformation is addressed.

Social transformation asks fundamental questions on how to improve society. This is within the parameters of social security, social cohesion, universal health care, elaborate and adhered-to constitutions, human rights, food security, human settlement, gender considerations, and care of the vulnerable groups. For this to happen, bottom-up development approaches and household economies need to be addressed amidst inclusivity and participatory methods (Chambers, 2017; Narayan et al., 2000; World Bank, 2015).

It is within this background that this study in social transformation, seeks to address the issues of widows. The concentration on widows is based on the fact that they are the epitome of women difficulties, and also that we are all affected by this issue. This brings the study to the second section, seeking to find out who is affected by widowhood.

### ***Persons affected by widowhood***

Widows are prone to getting entangled and hardly see any way out of the ensuing tribulations. Among these there are widows who appear unable to move on at all. These remain within the bounds of lamentation. Those in the low widow category (primary level of education, income bracket of below 10,000Kshs, and living in rental semi-permanent quarters in a low class locality) are most prone to this. Their position is manifested mainly by surrendering to fate, and having very little focus on their children's education.



Still dwelling on the widow, there are those that remain fighting. In this category there are those in middle widow categories levels i, ii and iii. While middle category level i tend towards high category level and middle category level iii tend towards low category, all the three levels demonstrate strong similarities. These are in the area of focusing on their children's education. For them the children are a significant instrument in their emancipation from financial strains, and from negative socio-cultural bondage.

In relation to their differences however, those in middle category level i have an income of above 50,000Kshs and often are in a residential place of their own. By being away, especially from their in-laws, they are able to reduce the negative interference. Those in middle identity level ii have an income of below 50,000Kshs and may or may not be in a premise of their own. These are often living with their in-laws and so are subject to constant interferences. Those in middle category level iii have an income of below 20,000Kshs and often remain dependant on well-wishers and on the in-laws. Being in the premise of the in-laws and in semi-permanent premises often rented, adds to their financial woes. They have to rely on bursaries and handouts to keep financially afloat.

Finally on the widow, there are those that are in the high category level i and ii. The major difference between these two categories is that while the first category are Kenyans the second are not. Nevertheless, they have high financial independence, having clear insurance schemes, and being in their premise in high class quarters. Their educational level is at least tertiary and so they are able to wade away any interference. They are aware of their rights and of the legal procedures. The challenge that they face is mainly psychological (loneliness), as they process the loss.

The second group of persons highly affected by widowhood is the children of widows. Those that are below the age of seven suffer silently as news of their gone father reach them.

They struggle to understand the crowds that flock into their homesteads during the funeral arrangements. They have to contend with a mourning parent.

As soon as the burial is over, those whose mothers start struggles with in-laws, have to watch as violence is unleashed on their only surviving hope. Depending on the level of interference, they have to move from the premises that they were used to. Some have to start learning to do with relief food quantities, and even without education. Their lives change with little effort to explain to them what exactly is happening.

The third group is that of family members. This group is divided into the family of the widow and the family of the in-laws. While it is untrue to stereotype that all in-laws are hostile to the widow, and all of her family of origin supportive, there is a tilt towards hostile in-laws versus supportive family-of-origin members. Perhaps a caution is best observed through signals while interacting with family members. These interactions appear more boundary-based among widows with high category level. Having clear times spent in enhancing their professionalism, they are able to limit the times spent with members of the extended families of the in-laws and of their families of origin. This gives them support outside these families. Also based on their awareness, they are able to keep family interference at a minimal level. This ability and awareness to create boundaries appears to go lower and lower as one moves towards widows with low category level.

The fourth group is referred to as the ignorant. These appear to give a blind eye to the issue of the widow. In their genuine or feigned ignorance, they claim that the widow is perpetually to blame. These persons appear to have mythical stories such as, a widow cannot manage without a man and do well; any widow spending some time with a man is seeking to get this man to marry her or have sex with her; any widow spending time with another woman is either whining over her tribulations or seeking to use her to get a man; widows are unspiritual

sinners whose sexual morality is low. Such a level of ignorance is detrimental to society. Dissemination of information is thus needed.

The fifth category is that of well-wishers and genuine widow supporters. In this category members of the Civil Society (NGOs, FBOs and CBOs) come to play. Men in their different roles as fathers, husbands, brothers, and even colleagues need to be aware that widowhood of their close members shall befall them sooner than later. The widow may be their daughter, their wife, their sister, or their colleague. As for the women, they may soon find themselves as widows, or their daughters widowed, or their sisters or colleagues widowed. A precaution on how I would want to be treated or how I would want my closest daughter, sister and colleague to be treated, is a worthwhile question. For those engaged in Civil Societies and Faith Based Institutions, the widow is undergoing human rights violations, and societal discrimination (in private and in community gatherings). Some of the practices and utterances executed help to stigmatise widowhood (Johnson and colleagues, 2009). It is important that sensitivity to widows is exercised.

The sixth category of persons affected by widowhood is that of social transformers. In this category economists, psychological counsellors, sociologists and anyone interested in individual and societal development is engaged. Each needs to increase their knowledge on matters relating to widows. Through this, one shall be able to avoid being judgemental and be in a better position to journey with the widow. For the psychologist, an identification of the identity/category level of the widow is important. For the economist, the financial challenges facing the widow is a concern. Her inability to generate and be financially self-sufficient is another concern. For the human rights persons and organizations, the injustices of disinheritance, leading to the destruction of the widow and her children, needs to be addressed.

Though mentioned under the fifth category of persons affected by widowhood, the

Church is core in leading the task. The Church, through its scriptures and documents (especially the social teaching), is elaborate on treatment of the less privileged. It advocates for the preferential treatment for the poor (Denney, 2017; Peitrzak, 2017). In so doing the widow is poor, economically but also in other ways that the study has elaborated (socio-culturally, and even psychologically). There is a realization from widow discourse that the widow feels apparently lost even in the Church. Through an awareness campaign, guided by the Gospel values, the widow's rightful position, should be reclaimed.

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix 1:

TANGAZA UNIVERSITY COLLEGE

#### RESEARCH PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Name of Participant: .....

Research Project Title: A DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF WIDOW PSYCHOSOCIAL EXPERIENCES AND THEIR SELF IDENTITY: A STUDY IN SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION.

Current Contacts of the Researcher: P. O. BOX 24032-00502. TEL: 0722 305 451

#### Participant's Consent and Declaration:

1. I accept to take part in the above research having read the participant's information sheet. I further declare that I understand my role and my rights fully in this research, and that all my concerns have been adequately addressed by the researcher.
2. It has been made clear to me that I can withdraw from the research at any time I choose to do so without giving any reasons.
3. I have been assured of utmost confidentiality and that the information I provide shall be safeguarded.
4. It is my right to ask any questions at any time before, during and even after the research.
5. I have been shown the research permit granted by the relevant government of the country in which the research is being conducted.
6. I have also been provided with a copy of this consent form and the participant information sheet.

**Data Protection:** I declare that I have allowed TUC to process personal data which I have provided. I further allow the University to process such data for academic purposes as has been clearly explained to me. *(Students are free to amend this data protection section to conform to data protection policies their country)*

Name of Participant (BOLD).....

Signature of Participant.....

Date Signed.....

***NB. A copy of this consent form must be given to the participant***

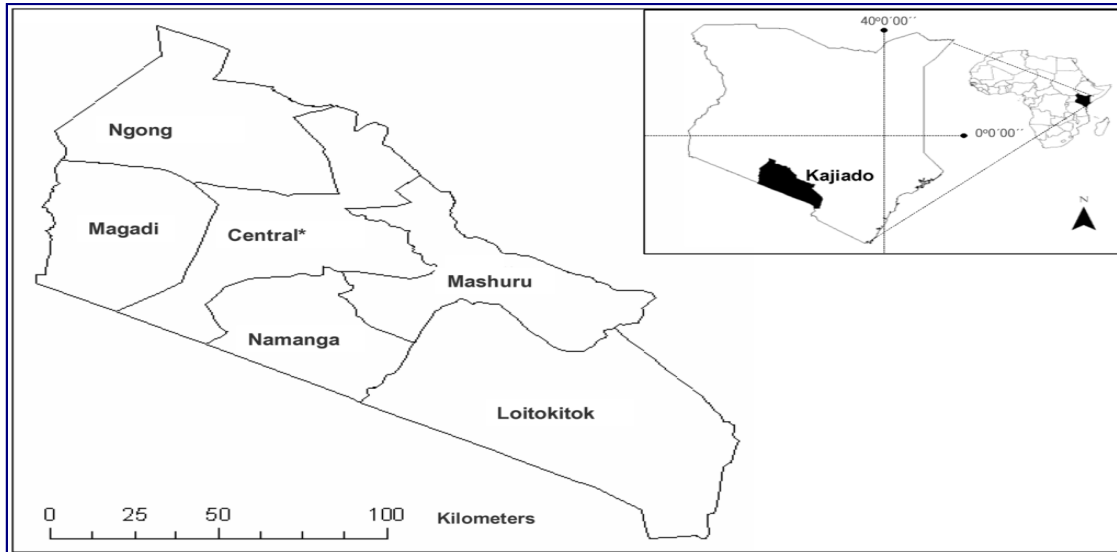
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### Appendix 3: Pseudonyms of the Participants

Participant	Pseudonym	Participant	Pseudonym	Participant	Pseudonym
WD01	Angy	WD15	Villy	WD29	Trimy
WD02	Bennie	WD16	Ginnie	WD30	Fynn
WD03	Casey	WD17	Hatly	WD31	Oddie
WD04	Denny	WD18	Juley	WD32	Pyulet
WD05	Emmy	WD19	Ally	WD33	Ansy
WD06	Finly	WD20	Anny	WD34	Wotsie
WD07	Ivyet	WD21	Switny	WD35	Swipy
WD08	Milny	WD22	Yiby	WD36	Tirny
WD09	Lyna	WD23	Illian	WD37	Zuk
WD10	Oila	WD24	Pleany	WD38	Frinny
WD11	Patsy	WD25	Whitty	WD39	Bilian
WD12	Kutlie	WD26	Kerit	WD40	Nada
WD13	Zwin	WD27	Elsyn	WD41	Petrin
WD14	Metrin	WD28	Bleek	WD42	Shina

**Appendix 4: Map of Ngong Sub county of Kajiado County, Kenya**



NB: To the North, Ngong borders Nairobi specifically Karen-Langata area, and to the North West it borders Kiambu County, specifically Kikuyu.

<https://www.google.com.url.ngongmaps>