

Impact of Socio-Cultural Attributes of Imo Communities on Widowhood Practice in Imo State, Nigeria

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Abstract : Women in Igbo land generally experience culture-related mistreatment in the event of the death of their husbands. The mistreatment ranges from scraping of widows' hair to denial of the right to see their husbands' corpses. The objectives of the study were to determine the forms and prevalence of widowhood practice in the studied communities, the effects of the socio-cultural attributes of the people on the practice, and the perceived effect of the practice on the victims. Data for the study were collected from 64 randomly selected communities out of 640 communities in Imo State, Nigeria. 450 copies of the researcher-made-questionnaire were distributed across the three senatorial zones of the State. A total of 418 or 92.8% were completely filled and returned. The result of the study showed, among other things, that the majority of males and females recognized widowhood practice as dehumanizing, but opined that it cannot be stopped because it is rooted in culture. However, 30.2% of the female population did not agree that the practice is dehumanizing to women since it was their cultural practice. The study also revealed that scraping of widows' hair was the commonest practice while sleeping alone with the husband's corpse was the least practice. Regarding the effect which this practice has on widows, emotional trauma topped the list; and was followed by economic hardship and health deterioration. Also shown by the study was that the level of education and religion did not have a notable effect on widowhood practice. With regard to possible stoppage measures, greater number of the respondents (38%) indicated that a synergy of efforts was needed to curb the social scourge.

Keywords : widowhood practice, socio-cultural attributes, violence, impact

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