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Socio-economic Empowerment of Widows for Sustainable Self-reliance in Kajiado West Sub - County, Kenya

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Abstract

The study investigated on the Socio-Economic Empowerment challenges affecting widows' sustainable self-reliance in Kajiado West Sub-County, Kenya. The objectives of the study were to; explore socio-economic empowerment challenges widows face and suggested training skills to empower widows for sustainable self-reliance. The study was anchored on Marc Zimmerman's (1995) Empowerment Theory. Convergent Parallel Mixed Method design comprising of Quantitative and Qualitative approaches guided the study. In quantitative, cross-sectional survey design was used while in qualitative, phenomenology design was applied. The study targeted all widows, local chiefs, social workers and religious leaders in Kajiado West sub-county. Probability sampling method (stratified and simple random) and non-probability sampling method (snowball and purposive) techniques determined the selection of participants. The study total sample size was 116. The questionnaires and interview guide instruments were used to collect data and were subjected to content and face validity. Cronbach Alpha and Member checking determined the reliability of quantitative and qualitative data respectively. The information from questionnaires was coded, keyed into a computer, and the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 21 analyzed the data. Descriptive statistics such as frequencies and percentages summarized the quantitative data. Qualitative data from interviews was analyzed thematically and presented in narratives and direct quotes. Ethical considerations were observed throughout the research process. Key findings showed that majority of widows experienced discrimination, denial access to land/property, and eviction. Similarly, widows were unemployed, had no constant source of income and were financially constrained. The study recommended community sensitization of widows' rights, starting income generating projects and training skills as strategies for empowering widows.

Key Words: Empowerment, Kajiado-West, Socio-economic, Sustainable, Self-reliance, Widows

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Introduction

1.1 Background to the Study

Millions of widows across the world suffer humiliation, poverty and maltreatments which expose them to destitution after being robbed of their rights (Batha, 2017). There are 258 million widows globally and more than 115 million widows live in poverty, 86 million have suffered physical abuse and 1.5million widows' children are likely to die before reaching the age of five (Blair, 2015). Majority of widows worldwide face similar difficulties with ostracism, financial struggles, and hopelessness (GFA Digitals, 2018). Walker (2018) asserted that even though there are numerous laws and resolutions concerning the protection of the widows, still widows are discriminated regardless of the culture or whether they live in developed or developing nations. Discrimination against widows is a human rights issue that needs great attention.

In America, Willison (2017) reported that there are 13.6 million widows and even though some of the widows are emotionally and financially prepared for the death of their partners, many of them battle with grief, heartache, and shock that impact negatively on their health and wellbeing. Kenen (2018) observed that some widows in America struggle with social security fund issues and pension decisions. Even though some do not have major issues, still others do struggle to adjust to their lonely life and seek attention to relieve their pain.

In Asia, the Loomba Foundation report (2015) indicated that there are 57.8 million widows in South Asia and 3.6 million widows in Central Asia. Widows in Asian society face the challenge of observing a strict dress code, forbidden from remarrying and cannot not take part in religious ceremonies because they are believed to be impure (Sharma, 2016). In India, widows are viewed as carriers of bad luck, a financial burden and so, they were isolated and ignored forcing some of them to be in the streets begging for their survival (Documentary Channel, 2017). There are cases where some widows were abused, starved, and beaten by their relatives, and eventually exiled from their homes without any material support (Schultz, 2019). In other countries such as Nepal, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and Pakistan, widows lack social identity, they are downgraded to a status of 'unwanted outsiders' and abandoned without a welfare infrastructure of financial security (UNWomen , 2015). Eventually, these widows end up suffering from social and economic sanctions. When widows are exposed to such ill treatment, they become vulnerable and require empowerment support to survival in life.

In the African continent, widows are not treated well as other parts of the world. According to Loomba Foundation (2015) there are approximately 22.2 million widows in Sub-Sahara Africa. The impact of marital death is much felt by women who face social exclusion from the community, their properties forcefully taken by their relatives, and are left with serious economic hardships (Martin, 2016). For instance, in South East of Nigeria,

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widows are forced to undergo a period of confinement after the death of their husbands (Ajiboye, 2016). In some communities in Tanzania, Zimbabwe, and Malawi, widows are forced to undergo 'cleansing rituals' believed to remove the curse that was brought by the death of the husband. For instance, the widow is forced to have sexual intimacy with a 'cleanser' to be accepted in the community. This is an abominable act that torments the widows and adds injury to their wound as well as exposing them to contraction of infectious diseases. Cruz, Mateus & Dalmini (2018) confirmed that such rituals are dangerous to the health of widows for they exposed widows to the contraction of sexually transmitted diseases such as HIV/AIDS which had claimed so many lives. Widows in such countries need empowerment to be able to choose what to do with their lives without being coerced to indulge in practices that endanger their lives.

In Kenya, the widows' situation is not different. Kenya has an estimate of 8 million widows and is a country ranked position 33rd in the world where widows' rights are abused; widows are exposed to discrimination, systematic attacks, grabbing of property, and expulsion from their homes by the relatives of the dead husband (Luvega, 2016). The Land Portal Foundation Report (2016) indicated that even though there are clear laws in Kenya regarding widows' inheritance rights, the reality shows that the majority of widows do not enjoy their land inheritance rights and the culture seems to have overridden the legal achievements geared towards eliminating the violation of widows' land rights. Such widows require empowerment to demand for their rights.

1.2 Situational Analysis of Widows in Kajiado West Sub-County, Kenya

The situation of widows across Kajiado, is characterized by severe poverty, gross gender discrimination, and seclusion, caused by unequal distribution of land resources and lack of property ownership (Tianda, 2017). The widows are marginalized and stigmatized while others are excommunicated from their families being accused of contributing to the death of their husbands (Chepoech, 2017). Mavhinga (2019) points out that when widows are denied their rights to inheritance, ownership of land, and control of the resources, it hinders their socio-economic and psychological development. Other studies have shown that the widows are unable to educate their children once their properties are confiscated by relatives (Kerii, 2017).

For widows to earn livelihoods in Kajiado West, they engage in any economic activity they find to earn a living irrespective of the consequences. These comprise of menial jobs such as cleaning, weeding, and attending to young children, all of which are poorly paid. BMS World Mission, (2018) observed that due to financial constraints, some widows engage anti-social activities like prostitution, selling of illegal drugs and illicit brew to get income. It's important to note that not all widows are financially poor, hence this study focused on widows who have been subjected to exploitation and poverty. The widows' land, property, and other valuables were seized leaving them with no source of income (Chepkoech, 2017). Without land as a major resource, widows cannot accumulate the wealth to overcome poverty in order to sustain their livelihood. Extreme poverty not only negatively affect the widows but their children as well.

Available literature shows that widows' children are exposed to sexual abuse and fall victims of violence (Gorney, 2019). Some children engage in drug abuse and robbery, pausing insecurity in the community (Ghori, 2017). These anti-social activities are dangerous to both the widows' children as well as the community where they live. It's against this

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background that the study was conducted to establish ways of assisting widows to sustain their lives. This is in line with the United Nations aim of empowering widows to be in a position to eradicate poverty hence, achieve Sustainable Development Agenda (United Nations, 2016).

1.3 Statement of the Problem

According to Project Concern International (2020), empowerment is seen as an essential tool for eradicating poverty, improving social integration, and achieving sustainable self-reliance. Other literatures indicate that empowerment has enabled people to develop the ability to create economic stability, good self-esteem, and enlightenment on human rights (Moor, 2016; McGuire, 2017). Through empowerment, widows have been enabled to make their own decisions to develop and overcome the challenges facing them (UN Women, 2017). However, empowerment as a means of transforming lives has not been fully realized among the poor widows. There has been a public outcry on the status of widows who live in severe poverty. The traumatic life situations make widows wander from place-to-place begging for food and financial assistance. The provisions of food are not sustainable due to limited resources. If left unattended, poverty can lead to death due to lack of food and other basic needs of life

Available literature shows that several studies have been conducted in Kenya on widows' plights. For instance, Ogweni (2010) in Kibera-Nairobi on Widows and Widowers Experiences and their Coping Mechanisms; Olum (2015) in Siaya on Land Rights Challenges Among Widows; Ojore (2017) in Kisumu Archdiocese on New Model of Pastoral Care; Resources from Luo Widows, and Muteithia (2019) on Access to Justice Regarding Property Rights for Widows in three Wards in Nairobi County. However, limited studies have been done on the socio-economic empowerment of widows in Kajiado West Sub-County. The problem this study intends to address is the lack of socio-economic empowerment of widows, which has hindered their realization of self-reliance leading to a perpetual dependency on charity for their survival. This study, therefore, proposes ways to empower widows for sustainable self-reliance in Kajiado West Sub-County.

1.4 Theory of Empowerment

The study was anchored in the theory of empowerment developed by Marc Zimmerman (1995). The theory contains both processes and outcomes. As a process, Zimmerman (1995) explained that the theory suggests empowering and supportive activities, structures, and actions to people to advance their skills and acquisition of resources to resolve problems distressing them. For instance, a person may decide to participate in a community organization to learn skills to improve their lives, or organizations may decide to change their practices and embrace democratic leadership.

As an outcome, Zimmerman (1995) further explained that empowerment consists of the measurable levels of empowerment a person or group experiences due to an intervention intended to empower. This occurs when the individuals have increased feelings of perceived control, when there is the use of newly developed skills and when there is a transformation to organization policy in answer to identified concerns or increased accessibilities of group resources. The process and outcome work at different environmental levels; individual, organization, and community levels, and may show in different situations with different people.

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Empowerment theory applies to this study since it suggests strategies for implementing changes that are elevating widows' lives. For instance, a widow may be trained and equipped with the practical skills required to begin and manage a business. Also, a widow may be educated or informed on human rights and be enlightened on the procedures to follow in the search for justice. Cram (2016), took empowerment theory to apply to the people who are in oppression and need to be liberated since the theory explains how the oppressed can regain power and control over their lives. Besides, empowerment recognizes that individuals require power, competencies, and the right to operate freely.

On numerous occasions, widows have no control over their own lives concerning land or property inheritance, and in this case, empowerment provides opportunities, resources, and an enabling environment for widows to function (Moran, Gibbs, & Mernin, 2017). Therefore, the theory provides a social structure and resources needed by widows to demonstrate their abilities and to exert control over their lives. In addition, Stoerckel (2019), perceived the theory of empowerment to have a strength-based approach that centers on the people's positive attributes and builds on their strength rather than the negatives, recognizing their resourcefulness and strength when in adverse conditions.

Hamlin (2020) argues that even though empowerment in an organization may lead to an increase of productivity, morale and improve quality in a group or organization, where there is no right training and guiding principles, empowerment can cause chaos especially if the empowered people decide to follow own set of values and goals. Furthermore, where there is no proper organization and coordination, people are likely to make biased decisions and increase risks in their lives. Nevertheless, the theory of empowerment is best suited for widows' cases because its principles can influence the widows positively to take charge of their lives.

1.5 Conceptual Framework

A conceptual framework is the researcher's synthesis of the literature on how to explain an occurrence, mapping out the actions for study considering the previous information of other researcher's views and observation on the subject matter (Patrick, 2015). In this study, the conceptual framework comprises independent, intervening, and dependent variables. The independent variable causes the dependent variable and the dependent variable is the outcome that the research attempts to predict (Kombo & Tromp, 2016). The intervening variable is "a hypothetical variable used to explain causal links between other variables" (Stephanie, 2018). Figure 1 illustrates the conceptual framework for this study.

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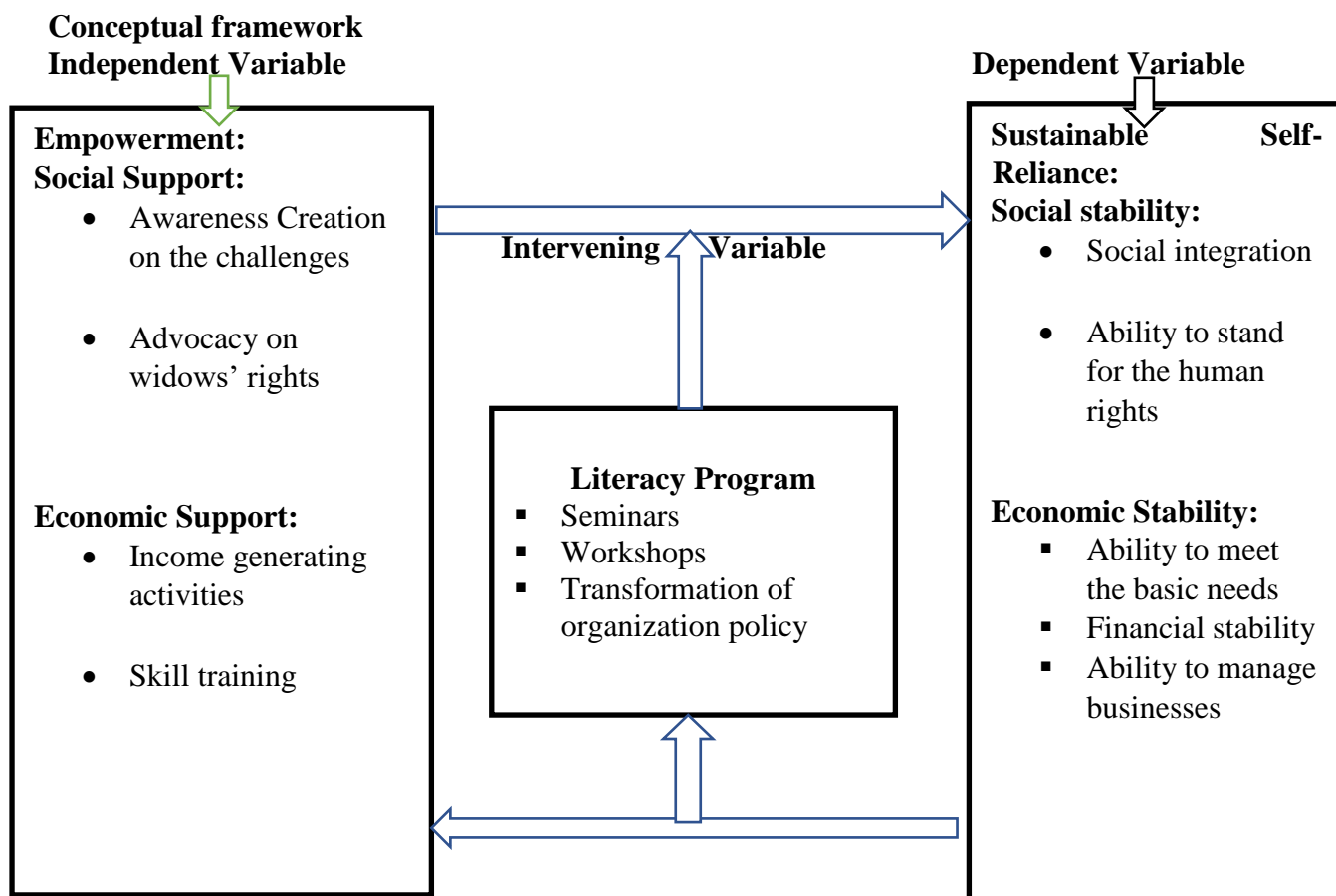


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Source: Researcher, 2020

The conceptual framework marked in figure 1 shows the empowerment of widows as the Independent Variable. Empowerment includes Social and economic support. Social support encompasses creating awareness on the socio-economic challenges affecting widows' sustainable self-reliance such as poverty, stigma, rejection, and discrimination to mitigate them. Social support also includes advocacy of widows' rights. Promotion of widows' rights can be done through partnerships with the local governments, Churches, and Non-governmental institutions to educate widows on human rights and the constitution. It is presumed that the society gets enlightenment on the widows' rights and intervenes in granting these rights. The widows too might be empowered to reclaim their rights, create their autonomy, and feel safe in society.

Economic support involves income-generating activities and skill training. Income-generating activities can be the selling of vegetables, fruits, among others. The activities are meant to grant widows' financial stability to meet their basic needs. It is presumed that widows are likely to reduce poverty and overcome the traumatic experiences caused by lack of source of income. Skill training may include garment making, business management, or project management. These skills may enable widows to be well equipped to start their businesses or improve on the already existing ones. The skills also are likely to enable widows to get employment to earn their living and as a result, live a better life.

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Sustainable self-reliance is the dependent variable which is an outcome of the independent variable. It includes social stability and economic stability. Social stability includes widows' social integration and the ability to stand for their rights. Economic stability comprises the widows' ability to meet basic needs such as food, shelter, and clothing. The widows also can access finances, employment, manage businesses, and can make independent decisions. The intervening variable includes a literacy program that links the independent variable (Empowerment) and the dependent variable (Sustainable self-reliance). The literacy program includes seminars and workshops through which information is inseminated leading empowerment to cause the sustainability of widows. The program also includes implementation of policies that safeguard empowerment of widows.

Review of Related Literature

2.1 Socio-Economic Empowerment Challenges Affecting Widows' Sustainable Self-Reliance

The United Nations Report (2019) indicated that widows experience physical, mental, and psychological violence. Widows also are exploited, denied their rights, and lack social protection. The report further indicated that there is an increased rate of poor widows caused by armed conflict, mass murder, political unrest, and brutal fanaticism. Even though the plight of widows is evident in most societies, the widows remain invisible with correspondingly weak support for the challenges they face (UN Women, 2019). The study was to create awareness of the challenges facing widows for mitigation. The United Nations (2019) insisted that given the realities which widows face, policy efforts are needed from the government towards supporting income, security and the economic participation of widows to improve their situation. Widows worldwide encounter various challenges.

In America, Stockton (2015) showed that women make up 11 million of the 13 million bereaved spouses and most of them face financial constraints, feel lonely, isolated, and misunderstood in the community. Donohoe (2019) observed that financial difficulties may lead a person to develop anxiety and depression, hence affecting the quality of life. Equally, loneliness if not well addressed can result in serious physical and mental health problems including suicide, alcoholism, and drug abuse (Gonzaga University, 2019). That implies that both the financial and psychological distress of widows needs to be addressed to alleviate widows' problems.

The Ukaid Report (2018) disclosed that in South Asia, widows are exposed to social ostracism, stigmatization, and discrimination, leading the majority of them to move to towns and cities like Vrindavan town in Delhi to beg for help. Ostracism threatens the sense of belonging and self-esteem in humans resulting in the feeling of alienation, depression, helplessness, and a sense of unworthiness (Amen Clinics, 2019). Consequently, stigma and discrimination lead to trauma and stress, henceforth, bodily depletion, untimely illness, and death (Wofford, Defever & Chopik, 2019; State of Victoria, 2020). The adverse mental and psychological experiences of widows need attention to avoid the destruction of lives.

Similarly, the written works indicate that the Nepalese widows are often accused of being witches, and so, are beaten, tormented, and excluded from the community (Sapkota, 2019). Widows have a strict dress code imposed on them, they are forbidden from remarrying, and are not allowed to participate in Hindu religious ceremonies due to the belief that they are impure after the death of their partners (Sharma, 2016). Wrong accusations injure a person emotionally, causing psychological wounds while denying a person rights

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imprisons one's freedom to grow. The scenario of widows requires intervention to avoid further harm. The position of widows in Africa is not good either.

Studies done in Africa have shown that widows often fall victim to harmful traditional mourning and ritual practices that are humiliating and detrimental to their lives (Manala, 2015). For instance, in Nigeria, Enogholase, (2017) observed that widows are forced to drink water from the wash of the remains of the body to declare innocence in the death of a spouse. Drinking dirty water used to wash a corpse is not only unacceptable practice but also a health hazard. Numerous diseases like gastrointestinal problems, diarrhea, stomach cramping, and death may occur from drinking dirty water (BEwards, 2018).

Enogholase (2017) further highlighted that a widow in Nigeria is prohibited from bathing and eating enough food during the mourning period. A widow who cannot keep body hygiene is likely to develop a bad body odour and skin diseases such as scabies (Weatherspoon, 2018). Similarly, when widows are not fed well or completely denied food during the bereavement period, it may result in malnutrition. These negative practices can be overcome by educating society on the dangerous consequences they have on widows to shun them. Vigorous awareness creation through media, seminars, and workshops alleviates this absurdity.

Other studies have shown that most African societies practice widow cleansing and widow inheritance, a practice that hurt widows (Nofuru, 2015; Guilber & Kouagheu, 2016; O'Neill, 2018). Widow cleansing ritual dictates that a widow must have sex with a designated male cleanser to be delivered from the evil spirit believed to have been brought by the demise of the spouse (Saguti, 2017). The widow is then meant to be inherited by a male relative who is meant to take care of the widow. According to UKaid Report (2018), the custom of widow cleansing and widow inheritance is common in Ghana, Ivory Coast, Nigeria, and Angola. The practice is also in Zambia, Zimbabwe, and Uganda among many other African countries. When widows refuse the practice, they are physically beaten, mentally tortured, and emotionally excluded from the community (O'Neill & Donovan, 2018).

The cleansing act is harmful to the widow's life since it strips her of dignity and self-worth as well as violating her rights (Mishra, 2015). Besides, the practice puts widows in a vulnerable situation to accept the tradition for fear of being rejected, insulted, or isolated. In a contemporary society where diseases such as HIV/AIDS are rampant, the practice of widow cleansing and inheritance is a health hazard. It has been proved that the practice accounts to the rapid spread of HIV infection (Ananke, 2016; Guilbert & Kouaghe, 2016; Moyo, 2017). Widows in Africa also encounter economic hardship.

Van de Walle (2018) observed that in Africa when a husband dies, most widows experience torture, and their properties are mishandled. Household goods, land, furniture, utensils, and other properties are snatched by in-laws. The widows are overburdened with the responsibilities of their families, with very few productive assets hence are subjected to a strenuous and vulnerable situation. Widows suffer indescribable emotional violence caused by the relatives who scramble for the dead man's property. Having no land or property contributes to poverty due to a lack of income. Van de Walle (2018) further stated that in war-ravaged countries, majority of widows are economically depressed and are politically disadvantaged in search of justice. To access social and economic rights, the legal systems ought to be strong in offering help needed by widows. Widows in Kenya also have similar

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negative experiences ranging from oppressive customs, mistreatment, eviction from their homes, and poverty.

Kahongeh (2017) observed that most rural Kenyan widows suffer the loss of their husbands much more along with the devastating blows that comes with it. Some Kenyan communities still practice oppressive customs that disregard widows' property rights driving widows to a state of helplessness, neglect, mistreatment, and sometimes eviction from their matrimonial homes. Furthermore, poverty and ignorance on inheritance law consign many widows to unspeakable misery, and the authorities that should minister justices to them fail to do so due to corruption in the system. Corruption denies justice and legal systems need to be strengthened to deliver justice to widows.

Similarly, Muthangya, Kaaria, and Katiba (2018) conducted a study within a selected "Churches in Nakuru, Kenya, to establish psychological challenges experienced by widows". The study revealed that experiences of depression, fear of taking up family responsibility, and demoralization were common among widows. Also, there were depressive symptoms of a feeling of sadness, frustration, emptiness, and hopelessness. In the face of trauma, distress, and pain as a result of death, widows need empowerment to increase their sense of personal control and a motivation to engage in work that brings positive outcomes to them and conquer stigma.

Mbugua (2019) reported that widows in Kajiado, Kenya undergo a nightmare orchestrated by the same relatives who sang and danced for them during their wedding. The widows are plunged into violence, social discrimination, and economic hardships, hence drastically changing the widows' lifestyles. The widows are also denied access to their spouses' assets, treated as sub-human and young widows are always in danger of accusations of 'stealing' other women's husbands in the community.

Continuous exposure to violence can adversely affect a person's health both physically and psychologically, and the more violence experienced in a community the more isolated people become posing a health risk such as mortality to a person suffering (University of Chicago Medical Centre, 2019). Cases of violence on widows call for an intervention. One powerful intervention is the promotion of advocacy work among the widows. Although literature shows that widows worldwide face challenges of social discrimination, economic poverty, and psychological trauma; there was limited literature in Kajiado West Sub-County on the challenges facing widows and interventions for self-reliance that this study filled.

Methodology

3.1 Research Design

The study adopted a Convergent Parallel Mixed Methods Design. The design requires a simultaneous quantitative and qualitative research process at the same phase, considering the approach fairly, examining the two parts separately, and translating the results together (Demir & Pismek, 2018) cited from Rose & Pilkington (2017). Convergent parallel mixed methods design was preferred to the other mixed methods designs for its suitability and strengths in collecting, analysing and integrating quantitative and qualitative research simultaneously in a single study as advanced by (Creswell, 2014). The choice of the design was guided by the assumption that both qualitative and quantitative data provide different types of information, which is an in-depth description of the phenomenon through qualitative

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instruments, and also statistical information through quantitative instruments, that together yield results that are complimentary (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2009) as shown in Figure 2.

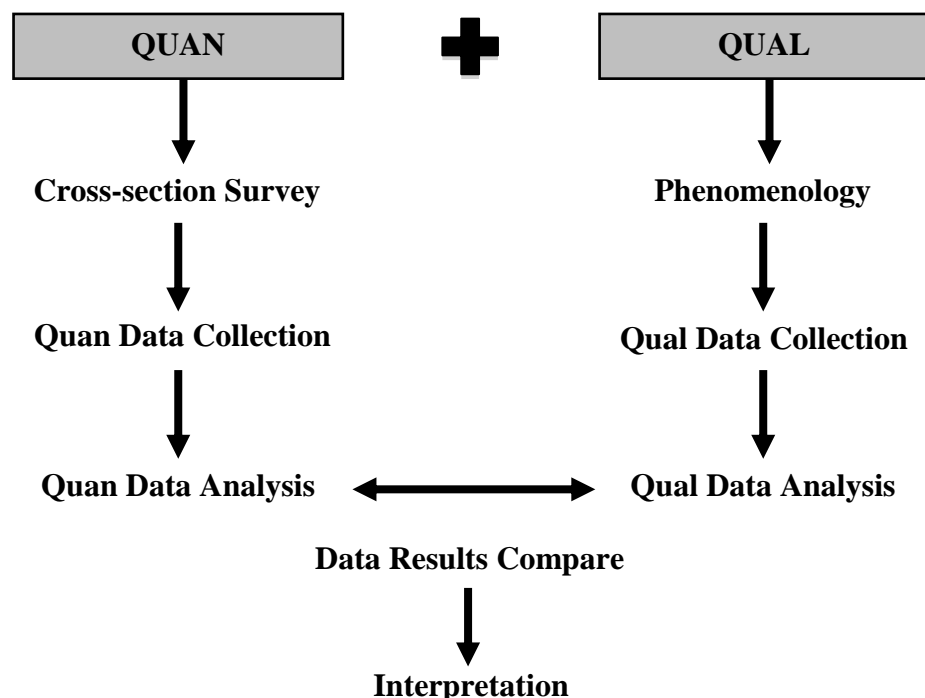


Figure 2. Convergent Parallel Mixed Research Design

Source: Adapted from Creswell (2014, p. 220)

For quantitative approach, a cross-sectional survey design is used to collect data that described, explored and helped the researcher to understand the issue at hand (Olive & Abel, 2019). A cross-section survey collects information from a population of interest at a certain point, giving a picture of the attitudes and behavior of the participants (Selvam, 2017). The design was appropriate for this study because it is an efficient strategy of accessing data from many informants such as local chiefs, social workers, widows and religious leaders at once in a given place. The data generated through Cross sectional survey design are easily adaptable to statistical data analysis methods, and summarised in frequencies, percentages among others.

The qualitative approach used a phenomenological design to explore the meaning of individual perspectives and lived experiences (Creswell, 2014). The widows narrated their socio- economic challenges and empowerment strategies through in-depth interviews. Phenomenological design was preferred because of its appropriateness in generating in-depth description of the perspectives of individual participants on widow's socio-economic challenges as well as empowerment strategies.

Given the complex nature of the social and human problems today, using either quantitative or qualitative approach alone would be inadequate. Using both approaches allow for the interests of majority of the scholars and readers who are either well versed in quantitative or qualitative research to be met (Creswell, 2009). The combined approaches, offered an expanded understanding about socio-economic empowerment of widows for

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sustainable self-reliance in Kajiado West, Kenya. Furthermore, the research approach used the strengths of an additional method to overcome the weaknesses in another method by utilizing both in a single research study.

3.2 Target Population

According to Kenton, (2019), the target population is the whole group of persons or elements with similar characteristics from which conclusions can be made. This study targeted all widows, local chiefs, social workers and religious leaders in Kajiado West Sub-County, Kenya with a sample size of 108 widows. Table 1 illustrates the study sampling matrix:

Table 1: Sampling Matrix

Category of participants	Population Description	Target Population	Sampling Technique	Sample Size in Percentage	Sample Size (n)
Widows Questionnaires (90)	Keekonyokie	100	Simple random	30%	30
	Lloodokilani	102	Simple random	30%	31
	Mosiro	98	Simple random	30%	29
Widows Interviews (18)	Keekonyokie	-	Snow Ball	-	6
	Lloodokilani	-	Snow Ball	-	6
	Mosiro	-	Snow Ball	-	6
Key Informants (8)	Social workers		Purposive	-	3
	Chiefs		Purposive	-	3
	Religious Leaders		Purposive	-	2
Total		300			116

Source: Researcher, 2020

Key: - Indicates that there is no data available

Discussion and Interpretation of Findings

4.1 Findings on Socio-Economic Empowerment Challenges Affecting Widows Sustainability

The first objective was to explore the socio-economic empowerment challenges widows encountered as they struggled for sustainable self-reliance in Kajiado West Sub-County Kenya. Given the statements concerning socio-economic challenges, respondents were asked to put a tick (✓) on the best option on a five-point Likert scale (1 - 5) to show their level of agreement or disagreement with the given statements using the Key: SD=Strongly Disagree (1), D=disagree (2), NS=Not sure (3), A=Agree (4), SA= Strongly Agree (5). Table 2 shows their responses.

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Table 2: Socio-Economic Empowerment Challenges Facing Widows

n=90

Statement	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Not Sure		Agree		Strongly Agree	
	F	%	f	%	F	%	f	%	f	%
I was discriminated against when my husband died	7	7.8	8	8.9	2	2.2	16	17.8	57	63.3
I was denied access to my land/property	15	16.7	18	20.0	4	4.4	19	21.1	34	37.8
I was chased away from my home	9	10.0	27	30.0	3	3.3	18	20.0	33	36.7
I was forced to enter into traditional ritual ‘cleansing’	39	43.3	38	42.2	3	3.3	3	3.3	7	7.8
I have financial difficulties	1	1.1	4	4.4	1	1.1	17	18.9	67	74.4

Source: Field Data, 2020

As shown in Table 2 a majority 57(63.3) % of the respondents strongly agreed, and another 16(17.8%) agreed that they were discriminated against after the demise of their spouses. Only a few 8(8.9%) and 7(7.8%) disagreed and strongly disagreed respectfully. Findings from interviews show that widows in Kajiado West are subjected to various predicaments and oppressive situations after the demise of their spouse. The discriminatory cases experienced by the widows from in-laws as Respondent 4 narrated that:

I was discriminated against by the in-laws who accused me of causing death even though my husband died from too much alcohol consumption. The relatives had earlier accused me of neglecting my husband when he was sick. They termed me a dangerous killer and no relatives visit my family (Personal Communication, September 25, 2020).

This implies that the widow was deprived of the social support she needed for sustainable livelihood. Another respondent 5 reiterated that:

I am isolated and almost lost my identity in the community. I am no longer invited in community celebrations; often suspected of engaging in prostitution, and frequently rebuked by married women as a ‘thief’ of their husbands. Besides, they gossip and laugh at me when stricken by poverty. The community’s negative attitude created fear in me. I cannot freely associate with men in the neighborhood (Personal Communication, September 26, 2020).

Respondent 11 a middle-aged lady narrated her unique discriminatory experiences. She was living in the same compound with relatives and whenever she sought help from them, she was treated with contempt. She later learnt that she was viewed as a ‘parasite’. She was neither allowed to visit the relatives nor her children permitted to play with other children. When her children made simple mistakes, they were beaten badly. Lack of support and security triggered negative feelings in the respondent of wanting to attempt suicide. She

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said, “Three times I wanted to hang myself but the voice within stopped me. I decided to live for my children” (Personal Communication, September 30, 2020).

The reports from social workers confirmed that widows were discriminated against in the community; denied their inheritance rights and were not permitted to become leaders of community. The chiefs concurred with the social workers report and added that widows were evicted from their land, left alone to care for their families and often fell victims of exploitation by men. Similarly, religious leaders observed that widows were rejected and stigmatized in the community, and faced futile accusations of destroying other women’s husbands.

When widows are subjected to such intolerable situations, it affects their mental wellbeing, in that they feel rejected, worthless, isolated, and loss of dignity hence the thought of committing suicide. The study findings are in line with those of other researchers that discrimination of widows can lead to a mental breakdown and poor physical health outcomes (Wofford, Defever, & Chopik, 2019). Empowering widows of this kind can help them to overcome stigma and elevate their self-esteem in life.

With regards to whether widows were denied access to their land/property, 34(37.8%) of the respondents strongly agreed, 19(21.1%) agreed and 4(4.4%) were not sure. From the interviews, several widows confirmed cases of being denied to inherit their husband’s property. For instance, respondent 12 reported:

When my husband succumbed, I not only lost a spouse but also land and property that I depended on for decades for a livelihood. My mango trees, banana plantation, and avocados were cut down and so lost all the fruits. My father in -law claimed that the land belonged to him. In reality, the land was bought by my late husband but had not been registered in his name. I was forcefully evicted from my home and when I resisted, I was physically beaten and injured on my feet and right arm (Personal Communication, September 30, 2020).

As respondent 12 was telling her story, she broke down, sobbed bitterly as she showed the scars of the beatings. Due to financial constraints, she has not yet sought justice from the court. Currently, she lives in a rental house and struggles to provide for her family.

Refusing widows to access their land/property by in-laws can be attributed to a form of greed to grab land and property. The problems of land/properties have remained sensitive discussions in families for a long time and have caused many relatives not to talk to each other. The findings on land issues confirm the observations that in Kenya, although the Constitution condemns the violation of individual land/property rights, and the Matrimonial Property Act provides women with the rights to access their property, the cultural part seems to override the legal aspects (Land Portal Foundation, 2016).

However, not all widows were deprived of their late husband’s property as indicated by 15(16.5%) and 18(20) % who strongly disagreed and disagreed respectfully with the statement. The respondents acknowledged having inherited land from their late spouses which they cultivate to get food and to sustain themselves.

Widows were also asked to state whether they were chased from their homes after their husband’s death. About 33(36.7%) of respondents strongly agreed and 18(20%) agreed that they were chased away from their homes as narrated by respondent 1:

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Since I got married to this home, we have been cultivating the family land. Each of the five brothers was given a portion to cultivate crops. However, something strange happened after the death of my husband. The land was subdivided among the four brothers and I was left out. They then asked me to move out of the family since I was no longer considered one of their own. They didn't care that I had six children with their late brother to be taken care of. They threatened to kill me if I hesitated to move out. I felt insecure and left their home and now live in this poor rental house with no water or electricity. Life is so hard for me and my children (Personal Communication, September 25, 2020).

Respondent 9 experienced a similar incident :

When my husband died, my land was taken away by relatives who later evicted me from my home. My in-laws were after our land and property and they sold everything and took the money. I was mistreated and humiliated before eviction took place. I felt abandoned in poverty and desperation. I did not have anywhere to go and no relative was eager to accommodate me. Due to the unbearable suffering, I got engaged in indecent ways of getting money (Personal Communication, September 29, 2020).

Reports from local chiefs corresponded with widow's grievances that widows suffered poverty caused by lack of land or property, eviction, joblessness and over-responsibility. Similar sentiments were reported by religious leaders. When widows are forcefully driven away from their homes with no source of income, there is a likelihood of living in slums where the conditions of life are limited and hard. The widows become prone to poverty, and their self-esteem is affected leading to despair. However, 27(30%) of the respondents disagreed and 9(10%) strongly disagreed that they were chased away from their homes. Reports from the interview showed that this category of widows were allowed to stay in their homes after the demise of their husbands.

In African traditions, widows undergo ritual cleansing. In this study, 39(43.3%) strongly disagreed and 38(42.2%) disagreed that they were forced into ritual sex cleansing. This is because this group of widows were committed Christians who believed in Jesus more than the traditional practices that contribute to the contraction of HIV/AIDS diseases. Respondent 18 explained:

When I lost my husband, I was not involved in the traditional ritual cleansing because we are a Christian family. Our faith does not allow us to practice those traditions. The priest came and celebrated Mass for my husband and that was all. My husband died a dignified man. Why should I go around collecting diseases which he never left me with? It is better to suffer looking for casual jobs to feed my family than looking for men to give me money and eventually leave me with diseases (Personal Communication, October 3, 2020).

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The decline of the widow cleansing ritual as the study shows can be an indicator of the changing values in society. With the upsurge of HIV/AIDS and the rise of democratic values, the rituals receive lots of criticisms lowering their validity. Modern education and Christian religion also shape the thinking of people not to hold the practice. Furthermore, the traditional moral value of widow inheritance particularly the guardianship of the widow and the children has lost its original meaning. This implies that harmful traditional practices that are oppressive to widows can be overcome with time.

However, the study findings indicate that widow's ritual cleansing is still practiced as pointed by a few 3(3.3%) who agreed, and 7(7.8%) who strongly agreed. The respondents admitted that the ritual is humiliating as many widows especially those married from other ethnic communities are threatened to be excluded from their late spouse's family. The situation makes widows feel vulnerable, stigmatized, and fear for the pain of being isolated. The widows need social support to shun the practice and live a dignified life. The findings in Table 2 also reveal that most widows had financial challenges as pointed out by a majority 67(74.4%) who strongly agreed and 17(18.9%) who agreed with the statement. Households, where the late husband was the only breadwinner, were hit most as explained by respondent 15:

I have financial difficulties after my husband died. We were entirely depended on him for help. I do not have a job or a business to get income. I am just a housewife tending to children at home. Often, we sleep hungry since we do not have money to buy food. I asked for help from my in-laws who deliberately refused to help me. I am isolated in the family and no one is talking to me, I feel an outcast in the family (Personal Communication, September 30, 2020).

The financial difficulties were exacerbated by several factors. First, it was worsened by the economic crises as a result of the Corona Virus pandemic. Measures imposed by the government to curb the spread of COVID 19 including lockdowns and curfews meant that widows were not able to move around to look for casual jobs to get income. Second, confiscation of the widows' land and property by inlaws deprived them of their livelihood. Without land for cultivation, it becomes difficult for widows to provide for the family. Third, the elderly and sickly widows could not work to sustain the orphans of their late sons and daughters.

4.2 Suggestions on the Training Skills to Empower Widows

The second objective explored various ways of equipping widows with practical training skills for either salaried or self-employment. First, the respondents were to state whether they had any kind of skills. Figure 3 presents the participants' responses.

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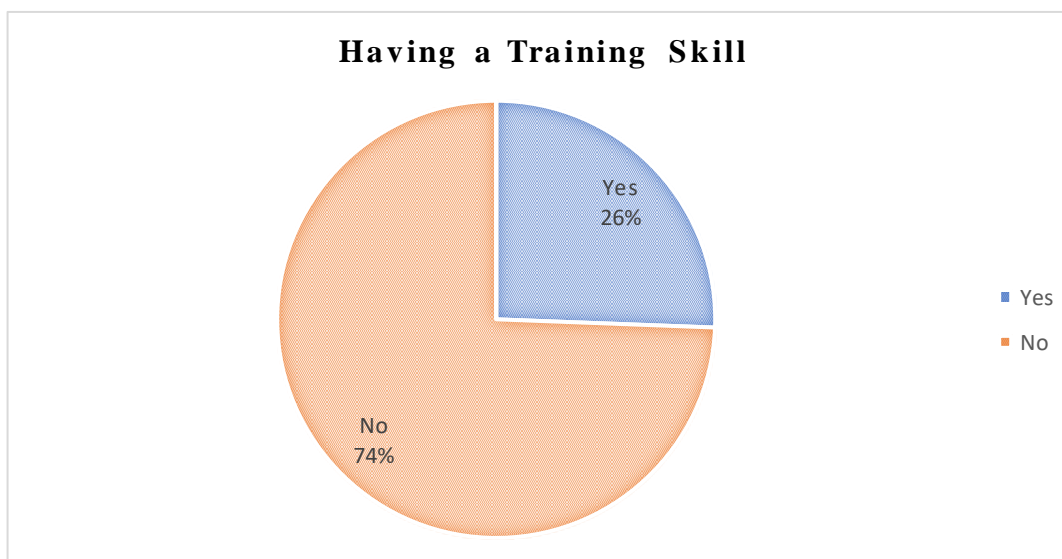


Figure 3: Participants Responses on Having a formal Training Skill

Source: Field Data, 2020

The results in Figure 3 show that the majority of the respondents (74%) did not have formal training skills. This implies that they could not get employment in any formal sector. A significant (26%) did have various practical training skills in sewing, bead making, soap making, hairdressing, and dairy farming. These skills are in high demand in the current society and are of great source of income that has helped widows to become self reliant and sustains their livelihood. Secondly, the respondents were requested to suggest areas they needed formal training to acquire practical skills that are highly marketable and relevant in the local context and markets. The proposed suggestions are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Suggestions on the Training Skills to Empower Widows

Suggestions	Frequency	Percent
Business Skills	15	16.7
Farming skills	7	7.8
Vocational Skills	23	25.6
Farming and Vocational Skills	16	17.8
Farming, Vocational, and Business Skills	8	8.9
Farming and Business	21	23.3
Total	90	100.0

Source: Field Data, 2020

Table 2 indicates that 23(25.6%) of the respondents suggested training in vocational skills. These are practical skills that are required to perform a given job. Examples of these skills include tailoring and dressmaking, bead making, mat weaving, hairdressing, and cookery. These skills are also marketable and relevant to the local market; they enable one to be self-employed in the informal sector.

Farming skills were proposed by 7(7.8%) of the respondents which included poultry keeping, goat keeping, dairy rearing, gardening, and piggyery. Equipping widows with better farming practices enables them to improve farm production without incurring unnecessary extra costs. For instance, following proper crop production practices such as timely land

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preparation and planting, proper spacing, weeding, timely control of pests and diseases. Also, correct use of manure, crop rotation as well as timely harvesting and storage techniques to prevent spoilage. Furthermore, as farmers, widows need training skills in good animal production practices such as good selection and breeding, timely control of parasites, using proper stocking rate, proper nutritious feeding as well as proper housing among others. These skills are aimed at improving farm yields for sale to generate adequate income for self-reliance, and sustainability.

In addition to farming skills, widows need entrepreneurial or business skills proposed by 21(23.3%) of the respondents to market their farm produce. The business skills training helps people to understand the operation of the business enterprise and may include communication and leadership skills. Communication skills include the use of appropriate language to the customers and knowing how to negotiate, assists one to attract and retain customers who provide a ready market for the farm produce. The interviewees had in mind businesses such as selling groceries, shops, selling cereals and clothes. Other respondents recommended farming and vocational 16(17.8%), business skills 15(16.7%), farming, vocational, and business skills 8(8.9%).

Apart from training skills, the widows also need information on agricultural services available. These include extension and training, banking as well as credit facilities. Extension services involve giving education to farmers on production techniques. The agricultural extension officers give this training free of charge to farmers through seminars and visits on the field days. Widows also need to know about banking services. The income generated should be kept in the bank; furnishing information on different accounts is important as the deposited money is safer in the bank than keeping it at home. The widows should therefore open a bank account whether savings or current account, at times payments and receipts can be made through the bank. This is advantageous because the bank can give advice to farmers on how to use credit facilities for maximum returns.

The bank may also give credit facilities to the farmer in form of loan or an overdraft. For credit service to be effective particularly for small scale farmers, extension service should be provided to show them how to use credit so that it is paid back as per the agreed terms. Inexperienced farmers such as these widows, it is preferable to give credit facilities in kind, that is, if they want to buy a dairy cow, the best species is bought and given to them. In case some want to cultivate crops, they are given the best seedlings and fertilizer or manure. Furnishing the farmers with knowledge of risks and uncertainties in the business venture enables them to make adjustments.

For instance, in agricultural production, farmers encounter many challenges which are not under their control. These include weather changes like droughts and storms that destroy crops or kill animals. Similarly the outbreak of diseases affect the expected outcome and the fluctuation of prices may make the farmer to incur losses. All these cause uncertainty and risks about future outcome. Those venturing into farming can be assisted to take measures to reduce uncertainties like diversifying their businesses whereby if one fails, the farmer does not incur a total loss. This is in line with the suggestion proposed by 8(8.9%) respondents who want to be trained in farming, business and vocational skills.

Farming is a business like other firms. The widows who suggested training in farming need information about farm accounts. These include financial documents including invoices, receipts and delivery notes. Financial books are important for recording all transactions relating to a particular assets owned in the farm; the storage inventories gives a

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true picture of the business. It shows the farm inputs such as seeds, fertilizer, feeds, pesticides available in the store. The storage inventory assists the farmer to carefully control issuing out the stock and knows when to place an order for more materials.

Those widows who suggested training skills in farming need information on marketing their farm produce. Marketing of the agricultural produce is key in any business. Farmers need knowledge on market information before selling their farm produce to avoid getting low prices. The knowledge on demand and supply of the farm produce is necessary in order to determine where and when to sell to the consumers. These include perishability, seasonality, storage and transport among others affect the market prices.

5. Conclusions

From the findings, it is evident that widows in Kajiado West Sub-County face social and economic challenges that hinder their self-sustainability. Cultural laws that are patriarchal in nature do not favor women and widows, in particular, to inherit land/property for a livelihood. Hence the land and property were confiscated from widows by in-laws. Although the Kenya Law of succession is clear, most widows could not inherit land because they had no legal Marriage certificate documents required by the law. In terms of income generating activities, only a few widows had access to land on which they cultivated food crops, reared goats and cows whose products were used for both home consumption and the surplus sold in the nearby local markets to generate income. Majority of widows lived in destitution. Equipping widows with vocational training skills, farming skills, and business skills would enable them to get practical skills needed in the labor market to get jobs or become self-employed to generate income to sustain their livelihood.

6. Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the study recommends the following: That the government to implement laws and regulations that protect widows and orphans. Those who violate the widows and orphans can be jailed or fined. There is need of awareness creation on the rights of widows through forums such as barazas (community meetings), social media, televisions, and radios. The widows also to be educated on their rights through government sponsorship programs. The local chiefs and clan elders to be sensitized on the rights of widows as outlined in The Kenyan Constitution, and any violation should be dealt with according to law. There is need to embrace African traditional values such as care, love, respect, and appreciation to be reinforced in the society, and in families to help widows find a sense of belonging. The Churches can create movements for widows to champion their rights, and create support groups for widows' moral support and group therapy.

With regard to denial access to Widows' Land/Property, the Property rights should be granted to widows as stipulated in the laws. The chiefs and clan elders should ensure that the widows re-possess the land of their late spouses confiscated by the in-laws. Since they know the legal wife and their children, they should stop unlawful forced evictions, give protection to the widow and the children, and condemn the land grabbing saga. In order to stop widows' eviction from marital homes, the court systems to ensure that widows are given a quick hearing justice as soon as they raise their concerns without prolonging their cases which in the long run denies them justice. The poor widows who cannot afford to pay lawyers to defend their cases to be assisted from the government kitty. Since the government is charged

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with the responsibility of the safety for every citizen, to take serious steps to bring to justice those who oppress the widows.

To mitigate Forced Widow Cleansing rituals, each community to ensure that the cultural laws that oppress widows are discarded. That the local government and village elders (Nyumba Kumi) and the churches to hold public rallies together to educate people the dangers of keeping obsolete taboos or rituals. In regard to financial difficulties more widows be included in the government kitty for widows. Both Non-governmental organizations and Churches to assist widows engage in income-generating activities to become self-reliance. The government should provide widows with easier access to cheap loans or grant donations to enable them begin a business. The County governments should support widows' projects in their sub-counties to do dairy farming, poultry, and vegetable growing to generate income. The Churches should have special funds to provide for the widows' needs as well as developing micro-credit facilities for widows. The government and Non-governmental Organizations should support widows' children in education. The widows should organize themselves into formalized groups to access in-services on best practices in farming on demonstration farms.

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