

E-ISSN: 2709-9369

P-ISSN: 2709-9350

[www.multisubjectjournal.com](http://www.multisubjectjournal.com)

IJMT 2022; 4(2): 148-156

Received: 12-08-2022

Accepted: 15-09-2022

**Nancyline Bosibori Momanyi**  
Department of Philosophy and  
Religious Studies, Kisii  
University, Kenya

**Daniel Rotich Kandagor**  
Department of Philosophy and  
Religious Studies, Kisii  
University, Kenya

**Anthony Ichuloi**  
Department of Philosophy and  
Religious Studies, Kisii  
University, Kenya

**Corresponding Author:**  
**Nancyline Bosibori Momanyi**  
Department of Philosophy and  
Religious Studies, Kisii  
University, Kenya

## **Role of the church in the support of widows for the care of orphaned children: A study of selected seventh day Adventist stations, south Kenya conference, Kisii, Kenya**

**Nancyline Bosibori Momanyi, Daniel Rotich Kandagor and Anthony Ichuloi**

### **Abstract**

Widowhood is a nerve-racking life situation that not only affects the widowed person but also the orphaned children in their direct care who in most cases have to cope with the loss of one of their parents. The plight of widows who care for orphaned children is not fully addressed by the church since more efforts are directed towards the care of orphaned children. This leaves aside in-care-child widows and their link with the orphans they directly take care of. The study addressed the role of the church in the support of widows for the care of orphaned children in the selected seventh day Adventist church stations (Riana, Suneka, Nyanchwa, Itumbe, Riondong'a, Masaba and Masimba), South Kenya conference. The study adopted a qualitative approach using a descriptive research design. The target population was 554 composing of widows and key informants drawn from the selected stations, and the sample size is 184 respondents. Simple random sampling was used in the selection of widows and census for committee members and pastors data collection tools was questionnaire, interviews and focused group discussions (FGDS).

**Keywords:** Pastors data, questionnaire, interviews

### **1. Introduction**

The Christian mission of care of widows in the church is determined by God himself in the Holy Scriptures. But this mission is not without challenges. For instance, one of the earliest problems that arose in the apostolic church was that the widows were being neglected (acts 6:1-7). This forced the early church to choose dedicated men and women to serve the widows. In first timothy 5:3-16 widows are portrayed as of chief concern for the Christian community; at Ephesus, the Christian community had a responsibility for them. This problem that confronted the early church in a complex manner still persists to date. a study by Fazoranti and Aruna (2007) <sup>[25]</sup> explains that the problem of widowhood presents itself with serious economic, social, psychological and ecclesial challenges that adversely affect the wellbeing of widows and that of the children in their care. while the study by Mwangi (2014) <sup>[55]</sup> established that widows lack necessary support systems, in terms of family, friends and professionals that could help them to cope with the loss of their spouses and the new situation of solely bringing up children. the human right Watch (2010) noted that many of the widows are illiterate and untrained, and as such those who do not abide to the demands of the male relatives on inheritance, cleansing, remarriage, or traditional burial rites, are often violently evicted from their marital homes; structured and ritualized roles are dictated upon the widowed, particularly the female widowed, which makes their situation in many respects different from that of single parents. The study by Owen (2010) explains that widows are being excluded in many areas of their development, including socio-religious development. furthermore, children in the care of widows are exposed to various insecurities that jeopardize their development; since the child-care widow is unable to meet the requirements of the family, such children under her care end up in the exploitative child-labour market, prostitution, false parents to feel the gap left by either the dead father or mother, etc. (Zick, *et al.*, 2000) <sup>[83]</sup>

The loss of a husband or wife impacts every aspect of a widow's life together with the partial-orphaned children left in her custody. On one hand, apart from the unimaginable grief and loneliness, many widows face a loss of material base, friends, family, peace of mind, and other securities; their support systems shrink considerably after the death of their husbands, exposing them to other social vices like prostitution and undignified jobs.

But the notable and worrying fact in all these attempts is the person of the widows; the widows themselves seem not to take precedence, particularly those in rural setups. In the case that they are given material emoluments which in most cases is very little, little is the widows in the community is not adequate, widows are not fully attended in the church; they experience loneliness, depression, grief, anxiety, stress, poor self-esteem levels (Carr & Utz, 2002) <sup>[10]</sup>. These gaps merit this study on the role of the church, particularly the SDA on the support of widows for proper care of orphaned children in selected stations (Riana, Suneka, Nyanchwa, Itumbe, Riondong'a, Masaba and Masimba) in South Kenya Conference.

The inter press service news Agency (2020) indicate that there are approximately 258 million widowed persons in the world and 585 million children in their care, with 80% being women and 20% men. This implies that many countries all over the world experience large increases in the number of families headed by widows, particularly those headed by widowed women and it also means that these households are unable to adequately provide for themselves.

The entire situation of child-care widows which justify this study is well summarized by Oniye (2000) <sup>[60]</sup> who underlined that widows feel ignored and suffer within the society; they suffer from lack self-esteem and loneliness since they do not have groups to identify with. These sentiments are recapped by Carr and Utz (2002) <sup>[10]</sup> in their study which showed that the majority of widows never receive help during the immediate period of grief and after. They point out that after the funeral, family members, friends, funeral committees and even the Christian community – all which helped with the initial funeral arrangements of the dead spouse go their own ways; they rarely carry on with caregiving, the widow is left alone in totally new life circumstances for which she has little or no preparation to enable her cope with the new life reality. She is left to live a lonely life, isolated, depressed, with virtually no support systems. Kisumu County by Miruka *et al.* (2015) <sup>[52]</sup> revealed that widow care in the region is not being fully implemented in churches.

### Literature Review

The study by Bennett and Soulsby (2012) <sup>[6]</sup> explains that that the loss of a spouse affects almost all aspects and spheres of the life of the widowed spouse, and it has serious consequences on her psycho-social wellbeing and also their economic sphere of life. This was reiterated by Eboiyehi and Akinyeni (2016) <sup>[24]</sup> in their study where they specified a myriad of challenges that come with the loss of a spouse, where a widow is confronted with discriminatory cultural practices, isolation, and poor access to basic services like healthcare, material poverty, psychosocial trauma, and abandonment to loneliness. Also the partial-orphaned children under the care of the widowed spouse are not insulated from these challenges, particularly orphaned adolescents and girls who because of their attachment to the surviving widow may feel compelled to shoulder the responsibility to help in the upbringing of their siblings and the surviving parent. This situation raises the need for church support systems that directly benefit widows that are charged with the responsibility to care of children left to them by one of their dead spouses. Church widow support systems are meant to comfort, support and encourage widows so that they find understanding of their condition in

Christian faith.

The widows: a woman's ministry in the early church. Minneapolis: fortress press) explained that the early church did not deny material assistance to needy widows and orphans. The study, however, looked only on the material provision that the widows received, thus giving a gap of a possible regard of widows as a liability. However, Kavenly (2006) <sup>[41]</sup> restated that the early church did not limit its involvement with the widows to material support, nor allow them to be merely passive members in the community, through an order of widows; the church recognized the contribution that the widows could make to the well-being and spiritual development of the church believers. He argued that widows are resourceful members, who through the order of widows involved themselves in the pastoral ministry of the church like house visitations, where they consoled and prayed with the sick members of the Christian community who feel desolate, giving them hope of life based on their own experiences as widows; widows also gave practical teachings to younger women on how to support their families in times of suffering. Through the engagement of widows in the pastoral ministry of the church makes them useful members of society and it gives them hope that not all is lot to death of their spouses.

Therefore, widows should not be seen as liabilities to the Christian community. This recognition of the fact that widows are not merely helpless, powerless and dependent members of the Christian community to be pitied strengthens the pastoral ministry of the church where widows should be developed, encouraged, protected, defended and empowered as a measure of assisting them so that they also help other members of the community, including their fellow widows.

Gerkin (1997) <sup>[30]</sup> asserts that the Christian community is holistically defined by the nature of its missionary activities that it does to the members. Neglecting needy widows in the ministry of the church creates a vacuum in the pastoral planning of the church. With the help and support of the community and the family, the widows can be healed emotionally, physically and spiritually (Neufeld, 2008) <sup>[57]</sup>. This is reiterated by Rebekah Evans (2018), says that, churches are charged with being a practical and spiritual help to the community and to their members.

Encyclopaedia Britannica (2018), holds that the Christian community through support systems like counselling, charity, women groups, etc., executes its care for the poor widows, and orphans. Usha (2011) <sup>[84]</sup> postulates that in Holland almost every Christian community has its own orphanage, which is sustained through the gifts of the members and that there are church communities which help members that experience conjugal bereavement due to the death of one spouse. However, the same study points out that even in the church widows that are under the care of the Christian communities are sometimes subjected into various kinds of torture and mistreatment. This sentiment is raised by Peterman (2012) <sup>[67]</sup> who points out that the widows face discrimination in asset inheritance, leading to poverty for themselves and their children.

Study by Kayode (2011) <sup>[42]</sup> postulates that the use of professional counselling encourages widows to vent and express themselves emotionally and would reaffirm and support the coping mechanism as identified by the study to enhance self-esteem and autonomy to restore quality of life. Counselling enables widows to recount their own story from

their experience. He challenges Christian churches to be fully involved through the strengthening of pastoral care ministry and possibly through the creation of a ministry of widowhood, where professional counselling can be realized. In a specific manner, a study conducted on counselling needs of widows by Amaru (2012) <sup>[2]</sup>, identified the counselling needs of widows to include economic, psychological, socio-cultural and educational. But the study concluded that the church also needs to have reliable economic and human resources to support counsellors and psychologists in their service to the widows; effective counselling for widows needs strong ecclesial support systems. The human right Watch (2010) noted that many widows in Kenya suffer a lot of economic hardships, after the death of the husband, especially when he was the sole bread winner. This results in a situation where the grieving partner begins to live a lonely life in an unfamiliar and solitary state of widowhood, thereby necessitating the need for social support systems.

Further, Mbabazi (2016) <sup>[49]</sup> notes that the loss of a husband causes unimaginable suffering and in some cases, the trauma is worsened by the members of the widows' immediate family who are only interested in the deceased's assets without caring of the difficult situation the widow undergoes. For instance, a study by Dube (2017) <sup>[22]</sup> showed that widows in Zimbabwe suffer social exclusion and marginalization upon the death of their partners. While Vitelli (2015) <sup>[82]</sup> noted that loneliness, engaging into risky behaviours like prostitution that lead to reduced life expectancy. He further noted that psychological impacts such as depression and grief can have physical health consequences such as ulcers and other physical diseases.

Carr and Utz (2002) <sup>[10]</sup> further established that widowhood implies multiple dimensions of adjustment including bereavement, loneliness, depression, grief, anxiety, stress, self-esteem levels, coping and self-help mechanisms. These factors intimately related to social support and the financial condition of the widow. Fleet (2012) <sup>[28]</sup> argues that even though friends and family may surround the in-care-child widow, most widows feel left alone after the death of their spouse and this is why they need support systems that help them to deal with the sad situations life imposes on them. The support systems encourage the in-care-child widows to accept their situation in faith (Mombo, *et al.*, 2011) <sup>[53]</sup>.

The incontestable fact is that this negative reality that widows go through poses the challenge to invest in church support systems, intended to increase widows' social engagements and activities which help them to combat psychological distress associated with the loss of their marriage partners. Church systems provide emotional, physical and spiritual support for the needy widows in the community. Dunn (1994) <sup>[23]</sup> explained that the vulnerability of the widows made it all the more significant that the church should take particular measures to ensure that widows are properly cared for (Dunn, 1994) <sup>[23]</sup>. In the acts of the apostles (9:39) Paul encourages the believing women with widows in their households to follow the good work of Dorcas, one who provided for the widows in Joppa and he urged the members at Ephesus to continue practicing God's holistic approach toward widows by honouring and assisting them. This is recapped by Collins (2002) <sup>[18]</sup> who urges the Christian community to honour and support widows. In cases where the young widows may have children with deceased husband, the church has the obligation to assist the

young widow to responsibly take care of the children under her custody; the Christian community should empower the young widows to become women capable of keeping their families (Asuamah, 2012) <sup>[3]</sup>.

Another gap is that most literature focuses on the material needs of the widows (Gupta, 1999) <sup>[85]</sup>; how to meet the needs of the widows like food, clothing and shelter; and that most widowed men or women spend more hours to meet the physical demands of their families, ignoring to address the impact of widowhood condition on the orphaned children who are the immediate persons that live with the widow. The literature largely ignores the effect of changing parental responsibilities and relations with the partial-orphaned children left in the custody of a widowed spouse. the gap left one of the spouse, especially the family bread winner, influence the adolescents to take up the filial responsibility or obligation to provide care to their siblings since their surviving parent may be unable to provide for them (Piercy, 1998) <sup>[86]</sup>. But this has its negative consequences on them; it exposes the orphaned children to different forms of child abuse and exploitation like child labour, physical abuse, sexual exploitation and defilement, early marriages and others end up going to join street families. This is emphasized by Joane (2002) who argued that failure of orphaned children to receive support from the family and community at the time when they are trying to overcome emotional pain and grief of losing one of their parents leads many of them to go to the streets.

Widowhood should be considered a major factor for children drop out of school, child labour and other associated risks department of international development, 2000). Dropping out of school to take up the parental roles of caring for their siblings severely reduces their career prospects. A survey conducted in Siaya, Suba and Busia counties revealed that relatives of orphaned children involve themselves in the trafficking of the minors; they lure them out of their rural homes with promises of better life and education in towns. These orphans are denied parental love and affection. this reveals that widows need support to enable them fully take care of their children; the silence and inaction from the Christian community that surrounds widowhood for proper care of orphaned children is morally reprehensible and unacceptable (Bellamy, 2005:2). If this situation is not addressed with increased urgency, millions of children will receive improper Christian care from their widowed parents and this will give rise to other social problems.

In the attempts to cope and overcome the challenges that come with the loss of their spouses, widows are also challenged by the realities of their own choice-making; they need to look for coping mechanisms that enable them to take care of themselves. A study by Vitelli (2015) <sup>[82]</sup> suggested that for the widow to overcome grief and loneliness, the bereaved will need to get their own support, social support, professional counselling, and especially the use of cognitive behaviour therapy to counter negative thinking. While Fasoranti and Aruma (2007) <sup>[25]</sup> indicated that widows feel the loss of personal contact and human association and they tend to withdraw and become unresponsive. This is why support groups are important to help them cope with the new reality after the death of their spouses; for not every solution to their hard condition should be deemed to come from outside. such mechanisms include: seeking divine intervention, social support, keeping

busy, acceptance, consider and accept help from those who have been supporting her in the past (family, friends or members of her faith based community). Mwangi (2014) [55] explains that social support provided by friends, families, churches, NGOs and the communities help widows in coping better with grief and the related challenges.

Self-help support systems enable them to cope with their own reality of widowhood, offering them solidarity, comfort and consolation. There are biblical foundations to this, particularly from the story of Zerephath, empowered herself through god’s word spoken to her by Elijah, and therefore, her poverty was eliminated and her son too, was brought back to life. Some widows, especially the wealthy, did as they pleased, either to remarry a man of their choice or enter into levirate marriage, yet others opted to return to their family homes to be taken care of by their blood family. For example, Abigail chose to follow David after the death of her husband, Nabal, and later became David’s wife (1 Samuel 25:42). after seven days of mourning Bathsheba, the widow of Uriah, also became the wife of David, though the thing he did displeased the lord (2 Samuel 11:27). Young widows who opt to remarry should be encouraged by the Christian community to do so. this is even supported by the holy scriptures where the apostle Paul recommends that young widows to remarry (1 timothy 5:14) Christian husbands; children of widows need a god-fearing stepfather to provide proper training in order to become responsible children of God. But it should be noted that remarriage should not be considered from a myopic perspective of material support to the widow, rather it should be looked from a wider perspective of a holistic consideration of the widow’s life.

Social support groups are other important self-help systems for the widows. the study by Kaori (2007) [40] explain that widows benefit from social support groups since they enable to socially active and resilient after the death of their spouses; they need to be socially engaged through group networks and activities. The social support groups assist the widows to be resilient after the death of a spouse and gradually move from grieving to healing. Kane (2017) [39] argues that such social groups enable widows to grow by accepting their current situation, enable them participate. Losing a partner in young adulthood is unfortunate since it leaves many young widows and widowers with the challenge of loneliness, feeling of being neglected and isolated from their peers, and abandoned by their family and friends (Hooyman & Kramer, 2006; Lowe & McClement, 2010) [47]. Such challenges for in-care-child widows if not properly managed would lead to self-seeking behaviours like indulging in immoral practices like cohabitation, commercial sex, and so forth, thus making themselves poor

role models for the children under their custody. They lose the moral authority to inculcate emotional values, result in emotional imbalance since she has to meet her personal emotional needs like contracting another marriage or relationship. The absence of one parent weakens parental control over the behaviour of the children.

Widowed parents experience the lack of material services that support the desolate family (Sandler *et al.*, 2003; Rolls & Payne, 2007) [87-88]. Zick and Holden (2000) [83] contend that the economic well-being of widows is a factor that requires to be addressed such that their empowerment puts them on the same bar with their married counterparts, which also enables them to adequately respond to the needs of the children under their care. a study done by Ogweno (2010) [59] in Kibera slums in Nairobi county, described the experiences among the widowed persons and noted that the economic status and the social support from family and the community influence the way the widowed will cope with their widowhood condition. Ogweno (ibid) further indicated that the financial burden rate the highest, challenge followed by psychological and mental effects, such as low self-esteem due to the stigma placed on widowhood. The economic status in-care-child widows in most cases are compromised, disposing them to other insecurities like allowing their children to engage in illicit behaviours like child-labour, prostitution, and so on.

**Methodology**

**Study area:** The study was conducted in selected station (Riana, Suneka, Nyanchwa, Itumbe, Riondong’a, Masaba and Masimba)

**Research Design:** The study was qualitative and used a descriptive design to explain and describe indicators of independent variable on the role of the church on care of widows, church support systems showing how target population

Population of the study: the study targets 554 respondents from the 7 selected stations (Riana, Suneka, Nyanchwa, Itumbe, Riondong’a, Masaba and Masimba) of SDA churches of south Kenya Conference.

**Sample and Sampling techniques.** The study used simple random to reach the target population of widows from the selected stations and census for committee members and pastors and a sample of 184 was used. A questionnaire and interview schedule were used to collect data.

**Results and Discussions**

The study sought to understand the church’s support systems to widow in care of orphans and the results are in table 1 below

**Table 1:** church’s support systems to widows in care of orphans

Aggressive acts reported at mean age of 18 or 21	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
There are church programs that provide support to widows and orphans	31 (26.7%)	39 (33.6%)	2 (1.7%)	25 (21.5%)	19(16.3%)
Widows and orphans benefits from church programs	29 (25.0%)	42 (36.2%)	3 (2.5%)	27 (23.2%)	15(12.9%)
The programs are managed by qualified personnel.	11 (9.4%)	11 (9.4%)	4 (3.4%)	60 (51.7%)	30(25.8%)
The extended family to support the widows and their children	3 (2.5%)	5 (4.3%)	3 (2.5%)	60 (51.7%)	45(38.7%)
The community is involved in the care of in-care child widows	5 (4.3%)	10 (8.6%)	3 (2.5%)	69 (59.4%)	29(21.5%)
Widows are involved in the local community activities	41 (35.3%)	49 (42.2%)	5 (4.3%)	13 (11.2%)	8(6.8%)

Source: research, 2022

From table 1 above, it illustrates that, most of the respondents which represents 31(26.7%) and 39(33.6%) agree and strongly agreed that church programs given in their church provide support to widows and orphans. this is contrary to other respondents who disagreed 25 (21.5%) and strongly disagreed 19 (16.3%) that, not all church programs rendered in their church substantially provide widows supports and orphan.

Most of the respondents agreed 42 (36.2%) and strongly agreed 29 (25.0%) that, crucial programs that are provided in their church benefit widows and orphans. this is opposed by a group of the respondents who said that, church programs which are meant for widows and orphan are not fully executed to benefit them as indicated by the responses of disagree 27 (23.2%) and strongly disagree 15 (12.9%).

After a deep analysis, it was found that, most of the church programs which are put in place to support widows and orphans are not managed by qualified personnel as shown by the statements uttered by the respondents, who disagreed 60 (51.7%) and strongly disagreed 30 (25.8%) that church programs for the widows and orphans are managed by qualified personnel. in contradiction to some of the respondents who agreed 11 (9.4%) and strongly agreed 11 (9.4%) that, important church programs which are meant for widows and orphans really help them and are well managed by qualified personnel.

For the support of widows and orphans by extended family, some respondents completely disagreed 60 (51.7%) and strongly disagreed 45 (38.7%) that, for the church to leave widows and orphans as a responsibility of extended families this will actually bring more harm than good for them. at the same time, some group of the respondents agreed 5 (4.3%) and strongly agreed 3 (2.5%) that, extended families where widows and orphans originates, have crucial responsibility

to guide and give them necessary support they need since they are the one who understands them better than even the church.

Community involvement in support of widows and orphans should be essentially be taken into consideration since community involvement is a matter related to widows and orphans is merely in question. members of church committee interviewed, strongly disagreed 29 (21.5%) and disagreed 69 (59.4%) that community engagement in care of widows and orphans is well taken into consideration, but some respondents agreed 10 (8.6%) and strongly agreed 5 (4.3%) that their church has a modality in community involvement in support of widows and orphans.

Local community activities are very important especially in involvement of widows and orphans since they support them economically and financially. some widows interviewed agreed 49 (42.2%) and strongly agreed 41 (35.3%) that, they are involved in community activities that empower them financially. some respondents opposed by disagree 13 (11.2%) and strongly disagree 8(6.8%) that they are not involved in community activities since they don't have 'connections' in the society.

This study finding are in agreement with Keyode (2011) [42] who establishes that, use of professional counseling encourages widows to express themselves emotionally and are able to handle their problems.

In summary, it was found that, the SDA church has done very little concerning church service systems to promote widows for the care of orphans in the society. Following that, this study suggest that, serious mechanism and interventions should be taken into consideration to enable the church develop church strong church support system for the good of widows and orphans.

**Table 2:** self-help-seeking initiatives

statements on self-help seeking initiatives	Strongly agree	agree	disagree	strongly disagree
Widows form social groups to help them cope with their hard situations	2(1.7%)	23(19.8%)	60(51.7%)	29(25%)
Widows social groups benefits them	29(25.0%)	42(36.2%)	27(23.2%)	15(12.9%)
Prayer groups help widows to seek divine interventions	75(64.6%)	30(25.8%)	5(4.3%)	2(1.7%)
The church should be involve in gender equity and affirmative action for empowerment of widows	35(30.1%)	56(48.2%)	15(12.9%)	6(5.1%)
Widows to frequently seek for counselling	5(4.3%)	10(8.6%)	69(59.4%)	29(25.0%)

Source: research, 2022

The table illustrates the reality of widow self-seeking initiatives and the results were as follows: on the theme of formation of social to assist them (widows) to cope with their hard situation of widowhood, a given percentage of 60(51.7%) and 29(25%) disagreed and strongly disagreed respectively that, sometimes they form widow social groups but they don't use them in order to cope with their hard situations. also, at the same time, a certain group of widows agreed 23 (19.8%) and strongly agreed 2 (1.7%) that formation of widows social economic groups has an advantage in their lives since they assist them to meet and discuss their issues related to their hard moments.

Formation of widows social groups has an advantage to their life as indicated by a group of respondents who agreed 42 (36.2%) and strongly agreed 29 (25.0%) with this statement that, social groups assist them to come together so that they can share their life experiences and seek some advices from each other. but at the same time, some respondents disagreed 27 (23.2%) and strongly disagreed 15 (12.9%) that, not all situations social groups can help them

to handle their problems since some members may not be sincere to share their life experiences and problems.

This is why support groups are important to help them cope with the new reality after the death of their spouses; for not every solution to their hard condition should be deemed to come from outside. such mechanisms include: seeking divine intervention, social support, keeping busy, acceptance, consider and accept help from those who have been supporting her in the past (family, friends or members of her faith based community). Mwangi (2014) [15] explains that social support provided by friends, families, churches, NGOS and the communities help widows in coping better with grief and the related challenges.

A group of widows interviewed on the issue of prayer groups and their importance said that, consistently attending and participating on these widows's prayer groups in church enable them seek divine interventions as indicated by their responses. the respondents strongly agreed 75 (64.6%) that, their prayer groups help them to seek divine interventions and spiritual nourishment especially in their hard situations.

a section of widows interviewed also disagreed 5 (4.3%) and strongly disagreed 2 (1.7%) that, not all times that these prayer groups enabled them to meet and assist them spiritually.

The church has an obligation to ensure affirmative action for widow’s empowerment is taken into consideration. this statement was fully proposed by a group of widows who were interviewed and agreed. 56 (48.3%) and strongly agreed 6 (5.1%) that, for status que of gender equity to be reached, the church as a whole should facilitate this gender equity rule affirmative action in all respective departments. at the same time, a section of widows who were interviewed disagreed 15 (12.9%) that, not all department in church fraternity are promoting this affirmative action for widow’s empowerment.

Self-actualization and seeking of counseling especially to

widows is a good virtual since they create a platform to address their personal challenges. after a deep interview by a group of widows on the same, they disagreed 69 (59.4%) and strongly disagreed 29(25.0%) that they don’t frequently seek for counseling in their respective church departments meant for guidance and counseling. but at the same time, a group of the respondents agreed 10 (8.6%) that, it is necessary to frequently seek guidance and counselling in their churches since this is a good platform to address their day-to day problems.

In conclusion, the church has an obligation to ensure affirmative action for widow’s empowerment is taken into consideration to enable the widows realize self-actualization and give them counseling services through since they create a platform to address their personal challenges in life

**Table 3:** Challenges that widows face.

Statements on challenges widows face	Strongly agree	agree	disagree	strongly disagree
Economic support is the main challenge widows face	31 (26.7%)	67 (57.7%)	10 (8.6%)	6 (5.1%)
Isolation and abandonment are the major reality of widows	29 (25.0%)	42 (36.2%)	27 (23.2%)	15 (12.9%)
Widows are mistreated by the church community	75 (64.6%)	30 (25.8%)	5 (4.3%)	2 (1.7%)
Church tradition is the main hindrance to the development and integration of widows	35 (30.1%)	56 (42.2%)	15 (12.9%)	6 (5.1%)

Source: research, 2022

The church was dogged by lack of finance to support the widows for the care of orphaned children. This is evidenced by responses obtained from respondents. a certain group of widows interviewed agreed 67(57.7%) and strongly agreed 31(26.7%) that inefficiency in economic empowerment to them is the main challenge they face. lack of support from both the church and government has really affected them financially since they cannot able to meet their financial obligations. the church is supposed to empower them through economic stimulation plans to enable them being self-reliant. a few percentages of some respondents disagreed 10(8.6%) and strongly disagreed 6(5.1%) that economic support from church cannot be the only challenges they are facing since there are other hindrances of life that affect them directly like unemployment. in reference to that, the SDA church especially at south Kenya conference, Kisii county has a mandate to ensure their widows and orphans are well catered for both economically and socially.

The findings was reaffirmed by participants in the FGDs, where one informant explained:

“I am to foot all the needs of my children, including my own needs and I don't have enough money to respond to all my needs. My children are unable to go to school since I don't have financial resources to enable them go to

School. I am unable to offert them basic needs like food, clothing, and education.

I have made several appeals to the church members for help but this effort has not yielded any fruit. If I had my husband, I could not be carrying alone all these responsibilities. (FGD participant 35, 2022).

Widows and orphans are isolated and abandoned as another major challenge they face need more of spiritual and psychological accompaniment. this is evidenced by a group of respondents who agreed 42(36.2%) and strongly agreed 29(25.0%) on the same. widows need mutual and physical appreciation as they continue to struggle with their life. spiritual and psychological segregation is an importance

virtue since they feel to be part of the church family. some respondents disagree 27(23.2%) and strongly disagreed 15(12.9%) that, spiritual and psychological accompaniment is not enough in their life rather other needs of importance should be addressed by the church fraternity.

One of the participants in the FGDs explained:

“From the time my husband died, all my friends, including members of my

Church moved away from me. People do not want to associate with me;

It is like widowhood is a contagious disease. This has really been a big

Challenge to me (FGD participant 7, 2022).

Mistreatment of widows and orphans in the community has become a sensitive issue both the church and the government need to address. Widows and orphans are really mistreated by members of the community and even the extended family. this is evidenced by a group of widows who were interviewed and agreed 30(25.8%) and strongly agreed 75(64.6%) with the same circumstances. the church in question has a mandate to address this issue to enable and create a conducive environment for both widows and orphans. some widows uttered that, some family members in their clan mistreat them since they have nobody to assist them to address their grievances. a section of widows had a different opinion on the issue of mistreatments. they disagreed 5(4.3%) and strongly disagreed 2(1.7%) that, not all widows and orphan are subjected to all forms of mistreatment in their clans and even their extended families, since the church has taken this matter more seriously to assist them to voice their grievances and solve their problems amicably.

Finally the study sought to examine church tradition as a major hindrance to development and integration of widows in the church. A majority of participants agreed 56(42.2%) and strongly agreed 35(30.1%) that some traditions in the church have made them suffer more than expected. These tradition in the church that makes the widows passive

members. The church tradition considers widows to be in a group of people who are weak and are not able to do things for themselves, and therefore should be pitied always. The engagement of widows in the pastoral ministry of the church makes them useful members of the society and it gives them hope that not all is lost to the death of their spouses. Some of the respondents disagreed 15 (12.9%) and strongly disagreed 6 (5.1%) that not all church traditions are meant to hinder widows and orphans from playing bigger roles in the church. A participant in the interview informed:

Widows can play a big role in the church if they are fully incorporated in the life of the church. Their life experience can be a great source of the church. Their life experiences can be a great source of encouragement to the community and especially to other widows. Regarding them a weaker group that only awaits handouts from the church members is a

Serious misconception that should be corrected (interview 11, 2022).

In conclusion, the research findings concur with Jackson, who observes that children growing up with low self-esteem and a little sense of security, poorly educated, with poor skills and minimum chances to pull themselves out of poverty have little chance to become productive self-sufficient citizens and parents. They will instead be likely to increase instability, crime and other problems in the society at large perpetuating the human rights abuse they have suffered. We can expect to see rising crime hopelessness, growing numbers of street children increasing sex workers and worsening exploitation of widows, with a further generation of ill-cared for children born to these impoverished children (Jackson 2002:257) <sup>[5]</sup>.

### Conclusions and Recommendations

This study revealed that, the survey SDA churches have done very little in relation to the practice of widow care. The study found out that there are various challenges faced by the church which have incapacitated the church not to support the widows effectively. These challenges should be addressed adequately if the church desires to fulfill its mandate in widow care. There are numerous passages in the Old Testament and New Testament which supports widow care, such passages includes mal.3:5 which state that those who oppress widows do not fear the almighty god. However, those who care for them are promised God's blessings (Jer.7:5-7). The early church in Jerusalem was actively involved in the practice of widow care whereby the needs of the widows were met equitably (Acts 6:1ff.). Widows who were in the church and were without families to support them were to put on the church list to be supported by the church (1tim.5:3-14). The practice of widow care as a way of expressing love to the deceased family should be adapted into Christianity. However, the negative practices like ritual-cleansing to the set the widow free should not be encouraged. If the church and family members fail to support the widows then they are likely to suffer and this may result into a dysfunctional society. However, the working widows should be encouraged to help supporting the widows so as to relieve the church from more burdens.

The following recommendation are made

1. The SDA church in Kisii County should invest in widows for proper care of children under their care. It should revise its structure and constitutions that give

more room for widows.

2. For a comprehensive and complete widow care, the selected SDA churches should encourage their members to assist widows in various aspects of their needs, prioritizing long term solutions.
3. The selected SDA churches should strengthen the capacity of the Christian communities to care for orphaned children and widows. This can lead to fewer orphans being abandoned or put in orphanages away from their immediate family members.
4. The church should maximize home based care in its effort to help the widows. Home based care can offer emotional and spiritual support to the suffering widows

### References

1. Ahert L, Pinquart M, Lamb ME. Security of children's relationships with non-parental care providers. A meta-analysis; *Child development*. 2006;77:664-679.
2. Amaru SO. Counseling needs of widows in Rivers State Implication for counselling. Retrieved from Doctoral Dissertation, Ignatius Aguru University of Education, Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria); c2012. Retrieved from: [https://iauo.academia.edu/DepartmentsEducational\\_Psychology\\_Guidance\\_and\\_Counselling/Documents](https://iauo.academia.edu/DepartmentsEducational_Psychology_Guidance_and_Counselling/Documents)
3. Asuamah YM. Widowhood Care and Empowerment in 1 Timothy 1:3-16: A Case Study of the Evangelical Methodist Church of Christ as a Paradigm for African Instituted Churches. Retrieved from Unpublished Master Thesis. Saint Paul University Minnesota; c2012. [http://digitalcommons.luthersem.edu/mth\\_theses](http://digitalcommons.luthersem.edu/mth_theses)
4. Bass F, Kanabus A. An investigation into the plight of orphans and vulnerable children; c2004.
5. Beach SR, Schulz R, Lee JL, Jackson JS. Negative and positive health effects of caring for a disabled spouse. Longitudinal findings from the caregiver health effect study *Psychology and Aging*. 2002;15(2):259-71.
6. Bennett KM, Soulsby LK. Wellness in bereavement and widowhood. Retrieved from *Illness, Crisis & Loss*; c2012. <https://www.liverpool.ac.uk/~kmb/myPublishedPapers/BennettSoulsby.pdf>
7. Black K. Business Statistics Contemporary Decision Making, 6<sup>th</sup> Edition; c2010.
8. Blaxter L, Hughes C, Tight M. How to Research, 4<sup>th</sup> Ed. McGraw Hill: Open University Press; c2010.
9. Bourdieu P. Distinction: A social Critique of the Judgment of Taste. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul; c1984.
10. Carr D, Utz RL. Late-life widowhood in the United States. New directions in theory and research. *Ageing International*. 2002;27(1):65-88.
11. Cassidy J, Ehrlich KB, Shaerman LJ. Child-parent attachment and response to threat: A move from the level of representation. In: Mikulincer M, Shaver P.R, editors. *Nature and Development of Social Connections: From brain to group*. Washington, DC:: American Psychological Association; c2013.
12. Chandrakant Jamadar, Melkeri SP, Ashok Holkar. Quality of Life among Widows. *The International Journal of Indian Psychology*. 2015;3(1-10):57-68.
13. Cimpric A. Children Accused of Witchcraft: An anthropological study of contemporary practices in Africa. UNICEF; c2010.

14. Claridge T. Functions of Social Capital – bonding, bridging, linking. *Journal of Social Capital Research*. 2018;20:1-7.
15. Clinton J. Resilience and recovery. *International journal of children’s spirituality*; c2008.
16. Coleman JS. Social capital in the creation of human capital. *American journal of sociology*. 1988 Jan 1;94:S95-120.
17. Colletta, Cullen. Violent conflict and the transformation of social capital: Lessons from Cambodia, Rwanda, Guatemala and Somalia. World Bank; c2008.
18. Collins FR. 1 & 2 Timothy and Titus: A Commentary, New Testament Library. Louisville: Westminster John Knox; c2002.
19. Collins PH. What’s in a name? Womanism, black feminism, and beyond. *The Black Scholar*. 2001;26(1): 9-17.
20. Davies JK. Widow, in Brill’s New Pauly Encyclopedia of the Ancient World, ed. Hubert Cancik and Helmuth Schneider, English ed. Christine F. Salazar. Boston: Brill; c2010.
21. Davis J. Social Capital and Social Identity: Trust and Conflict. Amsterdam: Marquette University and University of Amsterdam; c2014.
22. Dube M. The ordeal of property stripping from widows in a Peri-urban community: the case of a selected ward in Binga District, Zimbabwe social work. Retrieved from Stellenbosch; c2017. Online: [http://www.scielo.org.za/scielo.php?script=sci\\_arttext](http://www.scielo.org.za/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext)
23. Dunn DG. First and Second Letters to Timothy and the Letter to Titus, in *The New Interpreter’s Bible*, ed. Leander E. Keck. Nashville: Abingdon; c1994.
24. Eboiyehi FA, Akinyemi AI. We are strangers in our homes: older widows and property inheritance among the Esan of South-South Nigeria. Retrieved from *International Journal on Ageing in Developing Countries*; c2016. <https://www.inia.org.mt/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/1.2-4-Nigeria-90-to-112-Final.pdf>
25. Fasoranti OO, Aruna JO. A cross-cultural comparison of practices relating to widowhood and widow-inheritance among the Igbo and Yoruba in Nigeria. *Journal of World Anthropology: Occasional Papers*. 2007;3(1):53-73. [//www.medwelljournals.com/abstract/?doi=pjssci.2007.525.533](http://www.medwelljournals.com/abstract/?doi=pjssci.2007.525.533)
26. Ferragina E. Social Capital and Equality. In *Tocqueville Review*. 2010;31(1):73-98.
27. Finger RH. Widows and Meals: Communal Meals in the Book of Acts. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans; c2007.
28. Fleet CB. Happy even After: A guide to getting through and beyond the grief of Widowhood. California: Cleis Press; c2012.
29. Fraley RC, Waller NG, Brennan KA. An Item Response-theory, analysis of self-report measures of adult attachment. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*. 2000;78:350-365.
30. Gerkin VC. *An Introduction to Pastoral Care*. Nashville: Abingdon Press; c1997.
31. Gitome JW. The Kenyan Church and its Role in Women Sex Education In Musimbi, K.R & Njoroge, J.N *Groaning in Faith African Women in The Household of God*. Nairobi: Acton Publishers; c1999.
32. Goleman D. *Emotional intelligence: The new science of human relationships*. New York: Random House; c2006.
33. Gonzalez AA. Attachment and comparative psychobiology of mothering. In M. De Haan & M. E. Gunnar (Eds.). *Handbook of developmental social neuroscience*. New York: Guilford; c2009.
34. Group WB. Policy Research Working Paper 8306. Marital Shocks and Women’s Welfare in Africa. Research Support Team; c2018.
35. Haskins R, McLanahan S, Donahue E. The decline of marriage: what to do. *Future Child*. 2005;15:1-7.
36. Heale R, Twycross A. *Validity and Reliability in Quantitative Studies*. Ramsey Lake Road: Laurentian University; c2015.
37. Heppner PW. *Research Design in Counselling*. 3<sup>rd</sup> Edit. Thousand Oaks, California: Thomson Brooks; c2008.
38. Hopkins J. *Sudden Hero, Brash Reformer*. Springer; c2016.
39. Kane S. 5 effortless ways to embrace change. Retrieved from Psychology Central; c2017. <https://psychcentral.com/blog/5-effortless-ways-to-embrace-change>
40. Kaori I. Gender-based violence and property grabbing in Africa: A denial of women’s liberty and security. Retrieved from *Gender & Development*; c2007. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13552070601178823>
41. Kavenly MC. The Order of Widows: What the Early Church Can Teach Us about Older Women and Health Care. Retrieved from *In the Journal of Christian Bioethics*; c2006. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13803600590926369>
42. Kayode B. Problems associated with widowhood as expressed by widows in Ilorin metropolis. Retrieved from Masters Dissertation, Ilorin University, Nigeria; c2011. <http://universitylibrary.unilorin.edu.ng>
43. Kombo DK, Tromp DLA. *Project and Thesis Writing: An Introduction*. Pauline Publications Africa; c2006.
44. Kotze E, Lishje L, Rajuili-Masilo N. Women Mourn and Men carry on’: African Women Storying Mourning Practices – A South African Example. *Death Studies*. 2012;36(8):742-766.
45. Kumar R. *Research Methodology: A step-by-Step Guide for Beginners*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. Thousand Oaks, CA. SAGE; c2014.
46. Leerkes EM. Maternal sensitivity during distressing tasks: a Unique Predictor of attachment Security. *Infant Behaviour and Development*. 2010;34:443-446.
47. Lowe ME, McClement SE. Spousal bereavement. The lived experience of young Canadian widows. 2010-2011;62(2):127-148.
48. Manyedi ME, Koen MP, Greeff M. Experiences of Widowhood and Beliefs about the Mourning Process of the Botswana People. *Health SA Gesondheid*. 2003;8(4):69-87.
49. Mbabazi D. Property wrangles: When in-laws turn against the widow. *The New Times, Rwanda*; c2016. p. 16. <http://www.newtimes.co.rw/section/read/200195>.
50. Mgboo A. Widowhood practice in Ezeagu, Nigeria: The role of the Anglican Church. Master Thesis, South African Theological Seminary, South Africa; c2014. <https://www.sats.edu.za/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/Agabuzu-FinalMiniThesis-Apr-20151.pdf>.
51. Miech RA, Shanahan MJ. Socioeconomic status and depression over the life course. *Journal of Health and*

- Social Behaviour. 2000;41(2):162-76.
52. Miruka P, Aloo M, Nathan J, Onginjo M. The role of the Church and the Christian family towards widow care. *Sociology and Anthropology*; c2015. <http://www.hrpub.org/journals/article-info.php?aid=2091>.
  53. Mombo E, Joziase H. If you have no Voice Just Sing! Narratives of Women's Lives and Theological Education at St. Paul's University. Limuru: Zapf Chancery; c2011.
  54. Muthoni WR. Institutional Care and Social Re-Integration of Orphans: Examining Post-Discharge Cases from Nairobi Child-Care Institutions. Retrieved from Unpublished MA Thesis: University of Nairobi; c2007. [erepository.uonbi.ac.ke](http://erepository.uonbi.ac.ke)
  55. Mwangi RN. Psychosocial challenges and adjustment of widows of HIV and AIDS partners: A case study of Mugunda Location, Nyeri County, Kenya. Retrieved from Master's Thesis, Catholic University of Eastern Africa, Nairobi, Kenya; c2014. <http://ir.cuea.edu/jspui/bitstream>
  56. Ndulo M. African Customary Law, Customs, and Women's Rights. Cornell Law Faculty Publications; c2011.
  57. Neufeld TR. Of Widows and Meals in the Book of Acts. *Conrad Grebel Review*. 2008;26;133-35.
  58. Neuman W. Social research Methods: Quantitative and Qualitative Approaches. 4<sup>th</sup> Ed. Boston: Allyn and Bacon; c2000.
  59. Ogwen CA. Widows and widowers experiences and their coping mechanisms in a deprived community: A case study of Kibera slums. Retrieved from Master's Thesis, University of Nairobi, Kenya; c2010. <http://www.researchkenya.or.ke/api>
  60. Oniye AO. A cross ethnic study of stress levels support systems and adjustment strategies among widows in Nigeria. Retrieved from Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Ilorin, Ilorin; c2000. <http://universitylibrary.unilorin.edu.ng/>
  61. Onyancha E. The Church and AIDS in Africa: A Case Study of Nairobi City. Nairobi: Pauline Publications Africa; c1998.
  62. Orodho J. Techniques of Writing Research Proposals and Reports in Educational and Social Sciences. Maseno: Kanezja H.P. Enterprises; c2008.
  63. Orodho JA. Elements of Education and Social Research Methods. Nairobi/Maseno; c2009.
  64. Owen M. Widowhood: invisible women secluded or excluded. Geneva. Retrieved from UN Women; c2010. <https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2001/12/women2000-widowhood-invisible-women-secluded-orexcluded>
  65. Owen M. Widowhood Issues in the context of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325. *International Feminist Journal of Politics*. 2011;13(4): 616-622.
  66. Panfile TM, Leible DJ. Attachment Security and Child's empathy. *The Mediating*; c2012.
  67. Peterman A. Widowhood and asset inheritance in Sub-Saharan Africa: Empirical evidence from 15 countries. Retrieved from *Development Policy Review*; c2012. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-7679.2012.00588.x>
  68. Pitman S. Are Parents better than peers? Exploring the function of attachment hierarchies during emerging adulthood. Retrieved from *In Personal Relationships*. 2010;17:201-216.
  69. Putnam R. *Pluribus Unum: Diversity and community in the Twenty-First Century*. Oslo. Nordic Political Science Association; c2006.
  70. Robinson-Whelen ST-G. Long-term caregiving: what happens when it ends? *Journal of Abnormal Psychology*. 2001;110(4):573-84.
  71. Rosenblatt PC, Nkosi BC. South African Zulu Widows in a Time of Poverty and Social Change. *Death Studies*. 2007;31:67-85.
  72. Samita, S. (1999). *At the margins: Women workers in the Bengal jute industry*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
  73. Sanginga PC, Kamugisha NR, Andriennes MM. The dynamics of social capital and conflict management in multiple resource regimes: a case of the southwestern highlands of Uganda. *Ecology and Society*. 2007;12(1): 6-27.
  74. Seale C, Gobo G, Gubrium FJ, Silverman D. *Qualitative Research Practice*. UK: University of London; c2004.
  75. Statistics KN. County Statistical Abstracts, ICT Survey Reports. Retrieved from Nairobi: KNBS; c2016. <https://www.knbs.or.ke>
  76. Stroebe MS, Schut H. The dual process model of coping with bereavement: Rationale and description. *Death Studies*. 1999;23(1):197-224.
  77. Tasie GIK. African widowhood Rites A bane of Boam for African Women. *Information Journal of Humanities and Social Science*. 2013;3(1):155-162.
  78. The Loomba Foundation. *World Widows Report*. London: Standard; c2016.
  79. Thurston B. *The widows: A woman's ministry in the early Church*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press; c1989.
  80. United Nations. *Widowhood: invisible women, secluded or excluded*. Department of Economic and Social Affairs; c2001.
  81. Varga AC. *A Network Approach to Women's Property and Inheritance Rights in the Context of HIV/AIDS: Lusaka – Zambia*. International Centre for Research on Women; c2006.
  82. Vitelli R. Grief, loneliness, and losing a spouse. Retrieved from learning to live with grief and loneliness after the death of a spouse; c2015. [www.psychologytoday.com/blog/media](http://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/media)
  83. Zick DC, Holden K. An assessment of the wealth holdings of recent widows. *Journal of Gerontology: Social Sciences*. 2000;55B(2):S90-S97.
  84. Usha R, Sangeetha T, Palaniswamy M. Screening of polyethylene degrading microorganisms from garbage soil. *Libyan Agric Res Cent J Int*. 2011;2(4):200-4.
  85. Gupta HV, Sorooshian S, Yapo PO. Status of automatic calibration for hydrologic models: Comparison with multilevel expert calibration. *Journal of hydrologic engineering*. 1999 Apr;4(2):135-43.
  86. Piercy NF. Marketing implementation: the implications of marketing paradigm weakness for the strategy execution process. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*. 1998 Jun;26(3):222-36.
  87. Sandler T. *Terrorism & game theory*. *Simulation & Gaming*. 2003 Sep;34(3):319-37.
  88. Rolls L, Payne SA. Children and young people's experience of UK childhood bereavement services. *Mortality*. 2007 Aug 1;12(3):281-303.