

THE ROLE OF THE TELEVISION IN THE ERADICATION OF HARMFUL WIDOWHOOD PRACTICES IN THE BENIN METROPOLIS

By

EMMANUEL IMUETINYAN OBARISIAGBON

*Dept. of Sociology & Anthropology
University of Benin, Benin City.*

emmanuel.obarisiagbon@uniben.edu

08037234478

AND

AMENZE IFEYINWA OBARISIAGBON

*Dept. of Mass Communication
University of Benin, Benin City.*

SUMMARY

This study was initiated to examine the role of the television in the eradication of harmful widowhood practices in Benin metropolis. Participants consisted of 400 adults within the Benin metropolis. 384 respondents were chosen using a combination of the stratified and simple random sampling technique while 16 respondents were purposively sampled. A self constructed instrument with a test-re-test reliability coefficient of 0.79 was administered on the respondents while twenty (20) in depth interviews were also conducted. A descriptive analysis of the quantitative data collected was undertaken using frequency distribution, pie and bar charts, while the manual content analysis was used for qualitative data collected from field work. Findings from this study showed that even though the television plays an informative role in social phenomenon like harmful widowhood practices, it has however not contributed adequately towards the eradication of harmful widowhood practices. The study further reveals that women respond positively to television programmes on widowhood practices and that these practices will reduce if more programmes are aired on them. Based on these findings, recommendations were made that platforms be created through the television for women to share their experiences on harmful widowhood practices while more programmes that discourage the practices should be produced on television.

INTRODUCTION

There are many neglected issues in African literary discourse especially in Nigeria, but none is as neglected as the problems associated with widowhood practice. "And it is appointed unto men once to die..." (Hebrews 9:27): A popular verse in the Holy Bible which clearly states that every human must one day die. Hence death is a universal and constant occurrence. Death is usually regarded as a great loss, not just

to the family but to the society at large. Bearing this in mind, the bereaved mourn expecting sympathy, encouragement, care and support from friends and well-wishers and most especially from other members of the family. This idea/concept is unfortunately, not always applied when the bereaved is a widow as the cultural problem tagged "widowhood practices, is carried out instead. It involves a lot of anti-social treatment of such a woman aptly called the widow. Widowhood rites are still practised in cultures like the Igbo, Bini, Esan, Nupe, Efik/Ibibio, Yoruba and even the Muslim religion to an extent. Although widowhood practice is a common phenomenon, it varies from place to place. Some of these harmful widowhood practices that are practiced in Benin-city are; Confinement of the widow, eating of food cooked with separate utensils as well as wearing of dark clothing, sitting down solely on a mat or wrapper spread on the bare floor, drinking of bath water, and so on. Several efforts have been made towards the eradication of these practices in Nigeria but these efforts have not yielded much fruits. Hence, this study seeks to suggest a new dimension to fighting against it through the use of the television. The various mass media have become major instruments for promoting change and imparting new knowledge and behavior to people. The television in particular due to its audio-visual advantage, enables people not only to hear messages but also to see images that portray such messages. These features can be utilized to support the eradication of harmful widowhood practices. This study also seeks to create awareness in members of the public to join the fight against harmful widowhood practices alongside the broadcast media.

Statement of Problem

There appears to be massive support for NGO's and human rights organizations who are constantly seeking to fight all forms of discrimination and prejudice against women especially harmful traditional practices, yet practices such as widowhood rites and rituals are still going on. Widows are subjected to patriarchal customary and religious laws and face problems of inheritance rights (Oyenuchie, 1999). It is customary in both urban and rural areas that at the death of any of the spouses, the living spouse mourns for a period in accordance with the particular customs of the locality to which they belong. Harmful widowhood practices have been identified as the most pervasive form of human rights abuse of women in Nigeria, because the various widowhood rites have been known to inflict physical and psychological harm on the victims. The underlying motivations for widowhood practices are linked to the cultural belief and local cosmology that the widow is a prime suspect of her spouse's death and that the widow would therefore need to prove her innocence to the family through such rituals. Though educational attainment, children's approval, financial independence and to an extent religious beliefs may affect or influence the participation of women in such rites. Still a number of widows condone these practices and seem complacent because an attempt at not going through with it will cost them their lives.

In all of these, one wonders the role the television has or is playing in the eradication of these harmful widowhood practices giving its strategic role in the society. The television is a known powerful instrument in social engineering and it is believed that

if properly stimulated, it can help in no small ways in the fight against the eradication of harmful widowhood practices.

Objectives of Study

1. To find out the roles of television in eradicating harmful widowhood practices.
2. To examine the contributions and efforts made so far by the television in the campaign against harmful widowhood practices.
3. To determine the degree of responsiveness of members of society to the television's campaign against harmful widowhood practices.
4. To suggest possible strategies and ideas, the television medium can adopt in curbing harmful widowhood practices in Nigeria.

Research Questions

1. What are the roles of the television in the eradication of widowhood practices?
2. Does television contribute adequately towards the campaign against harmful widowhood practices?
3. What is the degree of responsiveness of the people to the television's campaign against harmful widowhood practices?
4. How can the performance of the television be improved in relation to the eradication of harmful widowhood practices?

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

A widow is a woman whose husband has died and has not remarried. She's a married woman who has lost her husband to the cold hands of death. Aderinto, (2000) simply identified widows as "wives of the graves". Widowhood is therefore the state of being a widow or widower. Across different cultures in Nigeria, there exist harmful widowhood practices which have been a cause of concern to many.

Causes of Widowhood Practices

Basically, the main cause of widowhood practices has to do with Cultural belief. In some societies in Nigeria, the widow is seen as the one who killed her husband and thus she is treated like a criminal and is made to undergo various rituals/traditional rites in order to prove her innocence and to ascertain the true cause of the man's death. Religious factors may also come into play for example the Moslem widow is meant to observe the "Takaba" (widowhood mourning in Islam), of four consecutive months and a ten day "Iddat".

Treatment of Widows

Ideally, in many communities of the indigenous African societies, special attention and care are expected to be given to widows. Under reasonable circumstance, a widow is entitled to either of two types of protection. The first kind is the one most women would prefer to have which is, she will be given collective protection and care by the relatives of her deceased husband. The second is that she could decide to be remarried to the oldest eligible male relative of her husband's family. These ideas of protection which were formulated and practiced in time past has been eroded over the

years with bad practices occasioned by the emergence of evil and inhuman practices. These practices vary from place to place (Umeziwa, 2007).

The Bini widow is called “Nodegbo” meaning “One who has disappointed the family”. As soon as a man dies, the wife is expected to mourn him publicly for at least seven days (Egharevba, 1971; Okojie, 1960). In Bini land, widowhood practices are in two stages. First, the widow is confined to a room outside the family house for seven days immediately after the interment of the deceased husband, she is dressed in black with her hair left unkempt and she is not allowed to take her bath. She must look mournful, sober and must cry, morning and evening. As soon as the body is taken away for burial, the widow is armed with ‘IKHIMIN’, which is a many-sided fruit from a tree that looks like the oil bean tree and believed among the Binis to be much shunned by spirits. On the seventh day, after everything as Egharevba, (1971) observed, a wake keeping ceremony is held and the widow is forbidden by custom to sleep because the spirit of the dead man will come around and kill her if she is found not awake and waiting for his arrival. On that same day, she performs the semi purification rites by taking her bath around 4 a.m at a road junction all by herself then walks back to the house fully naked (Obarisiagbon, 2015). If she returns safely, she is considered innocent of her husband’s death. The second stage of the mourning begins at the end of the seven days. The widow rubs her body and clothes with black charcoal and remains so for three months to a year (depending on the particular family). (Egharevba, 1971).

Effects of widowhood practices on the Widows

Scholars like Owosano (1997) have agreed that “the trauma associated with widowhood is a well-recognized phenomenon especially among women”. Without doubt, these widowhood practices have major effects on the widows.

Psychological effects- stress, depression and fear. Widowhood, though an inevitable status has impact on the lives of people when it occurs. Most widows react with shock, disbelief, overwhelming sadness, depression, fear, loneliness, lack of any social interaction and majorly weeping. Going through all the stress of widowhood practices makes most widows to be lost in the ocean of life without a clear picture of what the future holds for them.

Social health problems such as neglect, abandonment, humiliation and marginalization are usually suffered by widows where mourning practices stipulate neglect of bathing and other personal care, the widow’s health is at risk. Most of them end up with gastro-intestinal infections, typhoid, skin diseases, diarrhea, malaria, pneumonia, stroke and even hypertension.

Physical harm. Enforced persistent wailing is physically debilitating and excessive crying and rolling on the ground, causes insomnia, loss of appetite, shortness of breath and pneumonia. Nwadinobi (2001) is of the opinion that such widowhood practices have medical effects such as scabies, typhoid, malaria, pneumonia, viruses’ diarrhea, etc. It may also cause hunger and starvation, physical pain, untidiness and lack of personal hygiene.

The Role of the Television

The mass media in general are the channels and means of disseminating messages to a large audience of heterogeneous background that are scattered over a large geographical area at the same time. It is divided into three broad categories, which are; the print media, the broadcast media and the new media. The print media comprises of all mass communication materials that undergo the printing process. Basically newspapers and magazines fall into this class with the addition of pamphlets, leaflets, books and every other printed material that is used in disseminating messages to a large audience. The new media includes majorly, internet supported means of communication while the television is a dual medium because it makes use of sight and sound. It has a unique characteristic of being able to merge or marry audio and visuals. This audio-visual advantage makes it more accessible and understandable to all the various levels of people in the society. Though relatively expensive, unlike radio, it is flexible and comparably cheap as against newspapers and magazines. The messages transmitted via the television media are usually very swift. It makes a lot of impact due to the appeal of sight and sound. Okunna (2002) has noted that the television performs the following in the society; Education, Information, Entertainment, Transmission of cultural values and Interpretation. He insists that the television stimulates emotions, creates moods and sustains a particular tempo. Due to the impact of television, its messages are capable of achieving a high level of penetration, retention and are very influential. Unlike its counterparts; the newspaper or magazine, the television serves and makes it possible for both literate and illiterate members of society to relate to programmes broadcasted. This ability or advantage of the television medium makes it possible to have a larger audience formation which is necessary for the publicizing and creation of awareness of the public on the issue in focus, because a larger number of people get to be exposed to it. In today's media, television is the most dominant form. Instead of just reading or listening only to what happened in a story, television viewers can see it as well. With proper editing, television is the most compelling and attention grabbing medium. It has the ability to hold its audience attention.

They shape, to a great extent, peoples dispositions, speech behaviors, characters, way of life, idiosyncrasies and so on. Onabanjo (2009) stated that the people's social, cultural, physical, psychological, spiritual lives and even education can be made by these highly influential channels of mass communication. This is because what we see and hear filters so much into our subconscious that we begin to act or live out those things one way or the other.

The television is a major channel through which people can be educated. It achieves this through broadcast of educational programmes, talk shows and discussion programmes. Majority of the widows in rural areas are illiterate. Mba (1982) asserts that education has an immense impact on the level of women's participation in widowhood practices. Education can help broaden their minds as well as enhance their confidence building tool (Erinosho, 2000). Education and media exposure can help empower widows by equipping them with the information and means to function effectively in the modern world. Most educated women are less likely to succumb to backward, archaic and inhumane mourning rites and rituals as they are very conversant with the negative effects such practices have on the victims.

Passing on information is another major function of the television. Through jingles, advertisements and news stories, the television audience is imparted with knowledge of the things that are going on the society within and outside the vicinity they are in. This medium can be used to inform people on the various laws that fight against the maltreatment of widowhood practices.

On their part, Obarisiagbon and Ekerikevwe (2015) in their study made a strong appeal to the government on the need to encourage mass media practitioners so that they in turn could enlighten and inform women and even men on the ills of harmful widowhood practices.

Theoretical Framework

This study adopted Agenda setting theory which was propounded by Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw (1972) as its theoretical framework.

The Agenda setting theory according to McCombs is the idea that the news media, by their display of news, come to determine the issue the public thinks and talks about. The news media, in their function, call attention to certain items and such items gain prominence among the audiences as the prevalent issue to think and talk about. It is assumed that the new media possess this power as a result of surveillance or information provision function, correlation or criticism function and entertainment function. The theory has been reviewed a lot; hence there are some criticisms which now give rise to its new dimension known as agenda building rather than agenda setting. Agenda building suggests that matters reported in the media do not instantly become prominent on the list of what the public thinks and talks about, but a process that takes time and goes through several stages.

Mass communication plays an important role in our society. Its purpose is to inform the public about current and past events. It is defined as the process whereby professional communicators use technological devices to share messages over great distances to influence large audiences. It is therefore the duty of the mass media through its agents such as the radio, television even newspapers and magazines to dispense information about the negative and inhumane effects of widowhood practices. This can occur through accessibility which implies that the more frequently and prominently the news media cover an issue, the more accessible instances of that issue become in audience memories, for instance the use of video films. It is a mirror of the society which reflects the societal way of living. Film makers tend to utilize the medium in the projection as well as correction of a lot of social ills.

The choice of this theory was based on the fact that the major objective of this study is to examine the role of the television in the eradication of harmful widowhood practices in Benin metropolis and a very useful tool for curbing this trend is the use of the mass media. The theory explains that the media has the ability to transfer salient issues through their news agenda so the public agenda can form their understanding of such issues. There are two basic assumptions that underlie most research on agenda setting;

1. The press and the broadcast media do not reflect reality, they filter and shape it.

2. Media concentration on few issues, lead the public to perceive those issues as more important than other issues.

The theory therefore helps to bring to the limelight the ways in which the television can help in the eradication of harmful widowhood practices. The television encourages the fight against harmful widowhood practices and establishes a good relationship between the media and society and makes them pay more attention to the plight of widows. In this way, media emphasis on it will set public concern and reaction to it.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

Data for this study were collected through a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods. Fieldwork started with the qualitative aspect of the study which provided important insight for the investigation of the study. As it is common practice in most studies using triangulation, qualitative data are immensely important and must precede the survey method in order to facilitate the design of the questionnaire. Qualitative data for the present analysis were elicited through twenty (20) in depth interviews which employed the purposively sampled method while the questionnaire was used for the quantitative method. A total of 400 questionnaires were administered out of which 388 were returned for analysis. This however represents a return rate of 96.8 % and is considered significant. Benin metropolis was stratified along the already existing 12 wards. Thirty Three were administered each to the existing 12 wards in Benin Metropolis. With the aid of simple random sampling method, the final elements were chosen from these 12 wards.

The quantitative data was edited and cleaned to eliminate inconsistencies which could undermine the validity of the data. A descriptive analysis of data was undertaken using frequency distribution, pie and bar charts while the qualitative data was analyzed using a manual content analysis. The procedure began with a transcription and translation of a tape recorder of the IDIS. This was thereafter followed by the examination and isolation of various responses that were relevant to the study objectives.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Table 1:

PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS BY SELECTED SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

Categories	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Sex	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Male	182	46.9
Female	206	53.1
Total	388	100
Age in Years	Frequency	Percentage (%)
16- 26	99	25.52
27- 37	136	35.05

38- 48	68	17.53
49- 59	67	17.27
60 and Above	18	4.63
Total	388	100
Marital Status	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Single	35	9.02
Married	235	60.57
Divorced	50	12.88
Widowed	68	17.53
Total	388	100
Religion	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Christianity	323	83.25
Islam	22	5.67
Traditional Religion	43	11.08
Total	388	100
Educational Qualification	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Primary Education	13	3.35
Secondary Education	19	4.89
OND/N.C.E	46	11.86
H.N.D/B.SC/BA	308	79.38
No Formal Education	2	0.52
Total	388	100

Source: Field work, December, 2015

Table 1 displays information on selected demographic variables of respondents. of the three hundred and eighty-eight (388) respondents by sex. Of the three hundred and eighty-eight (388) respondents, 182 (46.9%) were males while 206 (53.1%) were females. The high incidence of female respondents could be attributed to the fact that they are more accessible and interested in the subject matter of this study.

99 (25.52%) of the respondents were within the age bracket of 16-26 years while 136 (35.05%) fell within the age bracket of 27- 37 years. 68 (17.53%) and 67 (17.27%) of the respondents fell within the age bracket of 38- 48 years and 49-59 years respectively. Only 18 (4.63%) of the respondents were aged 60 and above.

35 (9.02%), and 235 (60.57%) of the respondents were singles and married respectively while 50 (12.88%) and 68 (17.53%) of the respondents were divorced and widowed respectively. The high incidence of married respondents compared to singles and divorced show that the subject matter is of interest to them due to their marital status.

323 (83.25%) and 22 (5.67%) of the respondents were Christians and Muslims respectively while 43 (11.08%) were adherents of Traditional Religion. The predominance of Christian respondents is most likely due to the fact that Benin had very early contact with the white Christian missionaries and more particularly the evangelical works of late Arch-Bishop Benson Idahosa, founder of Church of God Mission, International.

13 (3.35%) and 19 (4.89%) had primary and secondary education respectively. 46 (11.86%) and 308 (79.38%) while 2 (0.52%) had no formal education. The high incidence of HND/B.SC/BA respondents can be attributed to the fact that they understood the essence or import of research as well as the accessibility to formal education these days by all and sundry.

In the course of this study, four research questions were generated. In this section, effort was geared towards testing these research questions with the aid of the simple percentage.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Research Question One

What are the roles of the television in the eradication of widowhood practices?

Table 2:

Showing that the television has roles to play in society

Question	Response	Frequency	Percentage
Do you think the Television plays an informative role in social phenomenon like harmful widowhood practices vis-a-vis its eradication in the society?	Agreed	315	81.18
	Disagreed	67	17.26
	Undecided	6	1.55
	Total	388	100

Source: Field work, 2015

Figure 1:

Television plays a role in the eradication of widowhood practices

Role of Television in eradicating widowhood practices

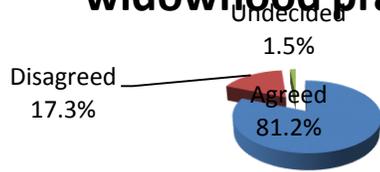


Table 2 and Figure 1

Shows that 81.18% of the respondents agreed that the television plays an informative role in social phenomenon, while 17.26% and 1.55% disagreed and were undecided respectively.

Research Question Two

Does television contribute adequately towards the campaign against harmful widowhood practices?

Table 3:

television contributes adequately to the eradication of widowhood practices.

Question	Response	Frequency	Percentage
The Television has been contributing adequately towards the eradication of harmful widowhood practices?	Agreed	131	33.76
	Disagreed	252	64.95
	Undecided	5	1.29
	Total	388	100

Source: Field work, 2015

Figure 2:

Television contributes towards the eradication of widowhood practices

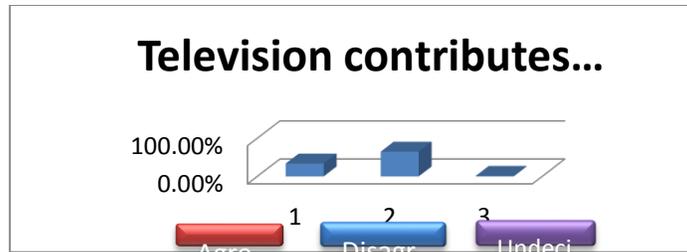


Table 3 and Figure 2 reveals that 3.376% of the respondents agreed that television contributes adequately to the eradication of widowhood practices, while 64.95% and 1.2% disagreed and were undecided respectively.

Research Question Three

What is the degree of responsiveness of the people to the televisions campaign against harmful widowhood practices?

Table 4: Degree of responsiveness to programmes on widowhood practices

Question	Response	Frequency	Percentage
Women respond positively to television programmes against widowhood practices.	Agreed	279	71.91
	Disagreed	106	27.32
	Undecided	3	0.77
	Total	388	100

Source: Field work, 2015

Figure 3: Responsiveness to television campaign and widowhood practices

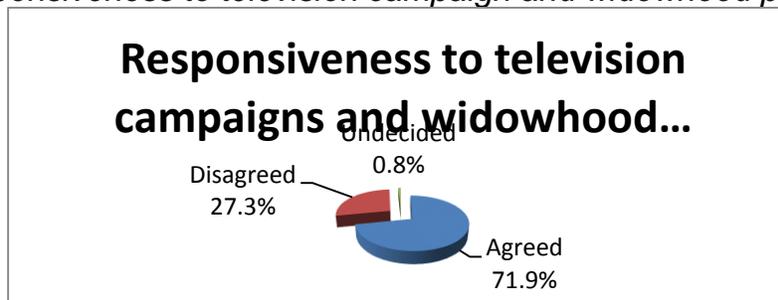


Table 4 and Figure 3 above indicates that 71.91% and 27.32% of the respondents agreed and disagreed respectively to the assertion that women respond positively to television programmes against widowhood practices, while 0.77% were undecided.

Research Question Four

How can the performance of the television be improved in relation to the eradication of harmful widowhood practices?

Table 5: *More Programmes against maltreatment of widows should be aired on the television*

Question	Response	Frequency	Percentage
Widowhood practices will be reduced if there are more programmes against maltreatment of widows aired on the television.	Agreed	309	79.64
	Disagreed	79	20.36
	Undecided	-	-
	Total	388	100

Source: Field work, 2015

Figure 4: *Television performance and eradication of widowhood practices*

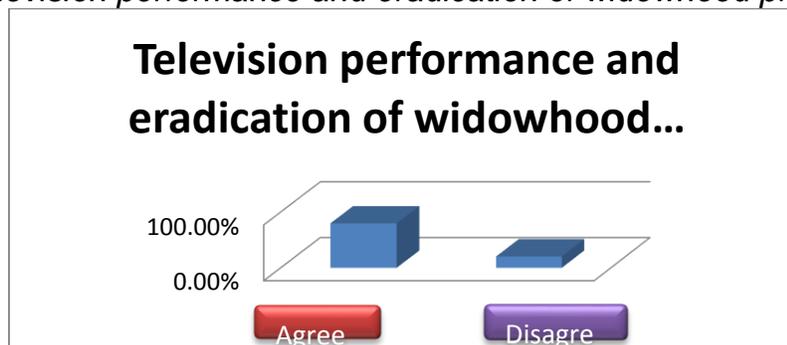


Table 5 and Figure 4 shows that 79.64% and 20.36% of the respondents agreed and disagreed respectively to the statement that widowhood practices will be reduced if there are more television programmes against maltreatment of women.

Another related question to research question four in the questionnaire:

Table 6: *Laws should be publicized*

Question	Response	Frequency	Percentage
Women will fare better if the various	Agreed	239	61.59
	Disagreed	143	36.86
	Undecided	6	1.55

laws against harmful widowhood practices are well publicized on television.	Total	388	100
---	-------	-----	-----

Source: Field work, 2015

4.3 Discussion of Findings

The general objective of this study was to examine the role of the television in the eradication of harmful widowhood practices in Edo State. To achieve this general objective, four research questions were generated in the study and data were subsequently collected to test the research questions. The data collected from the field work were analyzed with the aid of the simple percentage and illustrations made with the aid of the pie and bar charts.

The study reveals according to the research questions, that the television has roles to play towards the eradication of widowhood practices in Edo State. This conclusion can be gleaned from the fact that 81.18% of the respondents agreed that the television plays an informative role on social phenomenon like harmful widowhood practices vis-à-vis its eradication. This is as against 17.27% who disagreed. Similarly, 78.87% of the respondents as against 16.75% agreed that the television educates people on harmful widowhood practices. Onabanjo (2009) supports this finding when he stated that people's social, cultural, physical, psychological, spiritual lives and even education can be made or marred by these highly influential channels of mass communication (television). This is because what we see and hear on the television filters so much into our sub consciousness that we begin to act or live out those things one way or the other.

This view collaborated the opinion of some IDI respondents as clearly captured by one interviewee:

"It is true that television with its catching jingles, dramas and programmes

Has a way of sending messages to the viewers in order to make the more Informed about things going on in the society".

(Austin, Male, Media practitioner, NTA Benin, 510|15)

Findings on research question two clearly shows that the television does not contribute adequately towards the campaign against harmful widowhood practices in Edo State as 64.95% of the respondents as against 33.96% held this view.

This study further revealed that the television does not contribute adequately towards the campaign against harmful widowhood practices due to the fact that the programmes on widowhood practices are not frequently aired on the television. This is gleaned from where 67.78% of the respondents as against 31.70% held such view. This finding perhaps explains why Obarisiagbon and Ekerikevwe (2015) made very strong appeal to the government on the need to encourage mass media practitioners

so that they in turn could enlighten and inform women and even men on the ills of continuing harmful widowhood practices.

This view is further given credence to by the opinion of one of the interviewees when he said:

“Honestly, we don’t get to see or hear any programme these days on whether positive or negative aspects of widowhood practices on the television.

The television operators need to wake up from their sleep and be more active in this regard”. (Ruth, Female, Civil servant, Airport Road, Benin, 5|10|15)

The finding of this study on research question three shows that there is high degree of responsiveness of the people to the television campaign against harmful widowhood practices in Edo State as 71.91% respondents as against 27.32% held this view. This finding is further given credence to by Okunna (2002) when she stated in very clear terms that the messages transmitted through the television are usually swift and makes a lot of impact due to the appeal of sight and sound. Little wonder therefore that there is a high degree of responsiveness to its messages.

This position is supported by the observation made by one of the respondents”

“I like to watch programmes that are highly educative like the one they Showed on NTA many years ago on widowhood practices. Some of my Neighbours even rushed to come and watch it with me and it was very interesting”.

(Bosede, Female, Teacher, Idia College, Benin City, 8|10|15)

Findings on research question four reveals that the performance of the television can be improved in relation to the eradication of harmful widowhood practices in two significant ways as depicted where 79.64% of the respondents as against 20.36% held that widowhood practices will be reduced if there are more television programmes against the maltreatment of widows aired on television. Similarly, 61.89% of the respondents as against 36.86% held that women will fare better if the various laws against harmful widowhood practices are well publicized on the television. This research finding gets support from Erinoshio (2000) when he stated that Education and media (television) exposure can help empower widows by equipping them with information and means to function in the modern world.

His view is further supported by one interviewee who opined that:

“How I wish that television can air more programmes on widowhood practices and be supported by government with laws to compel television stations to do so. If this is done, it will greatly reduce the ordeal widows go through when they lose their husbands”.

(Tolu, Female, Teacher, Ihogbe College, Benin City, 8|10|15)

CONCLUSION

This study reveals that widows upon the demise of their husbands are made to go through terrible ordeals some of which are; confinement to a lonely and usually dark

room, eating separated food from dirty or broken utensils, sitting on the bare floor or on a mat, dressing in black with unkempt or scraped hair and walking naked to a particular road junction and taking her bath there. It was discovered in this study that many of these practices are done in order to prove the widows' innocence in the death of her husband as well as purify her so as to avoid the dead spouse from coming to take her to join him. Nevertheless, majority of these practices are harmful and inhumane as Owosanoye (1997) believes that the trauma associated with them is a well-recognized phenomenon. As found by this study, these harmful practices meted out on widows usually tend to cause Psychological effects-stress, depression and fear, social health problems such as neglect, abandonment, humiliation and marginalization as well as physical harm which Nwadinobi (2001) agreed with when he posited that widowhood practices have medical effects such as scabies, malaria, pneumonia, e.t.c

The study also looked at the importance of the television in the fight against widowhood practices. The television performs three pivotal functions of informing, educating and entertaining. It also plays the interpretative role and the transmission of cultural values which are all functions that are of great use in the campaign against harmful widowhood practices. From the findings of the study, the television has not really been contributing adequately to the campaign against widowhood practices, hence the study suggests that the five basic roles mentioned above as well as the agenda setting function should be properly tapped into as the study shows that Edo State people respond tremendously to such efforts.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Against the background of the preceding observation, the following recommendations are hereby made:

1. Programmes should be produced in the indigenous language that is peculiar to people of Benin Metropolis that discourage the practice of maltreatment of widows.
2. Media professionals in the television field and the government should promote public interest on the evils of harmful widowhood practices in order to guarantee consistency in the flow of information as regards maltreatment of widows.
3. Platforms should be created via the television whereby women are invited to share their experiences and also proffer solutions in order to tackle the problem as it has been discovered by this study that women are mostly the perpetrators of widowhood practices.
4. Video films serve entertainment purpose in many homes in Edo State. Television dramas should be produced emphasizing the evils of harmful widowhood practices and such dramas should evolve around real life experiences as much as possible.
5. Laws that fight against the maltreatment of widows should be well publicized with the aid of jingles and advertisements.

REFERENCES

Aderinto A.A. (2000) "Wives of the Graves: A Study of Widowhood Rites and Wife Inheritance in Ondo and Ekiti States" in Rights and Widowhood Rites in Nigeria. Published by Inter-Africa Cultures (Nigeria) on Traditional Practices Affecting the Health of Women and Children, Lagos Nigeria Monograph Number 3.

Erinosho, L. (2000). Widowhood Rites in Nigeria: Traditional Practices Affecting the Health of Women and Children. *Monograph Number 3*, Lagos.

Egharevba, J.U. (1971). *Benin Law and Custom*. Port Harcourt, Niger Press.

Mba, N. (1982). *Nigerian Women Mobilized: Lagos*, Macmillan Press.

McCombs, M.E. & Shaw, D.L. (1972). *The agenda-setting function of the mass media. Public Opinion Quarterly*, 36, 176-187.

Nwadinobi, E. (2001). *Introductory Presentations at the Widows Without Rights Conference, Fighting Back against Prejudice and Discrimination*, London 6-7, 2001.

Obarisiagbon, A. I (2015) The Role of The Television in the Eradication of Harmful of Harmful Widowhood practices in Edo State, Unpublished B.A Project, University of Benin.

Obarisiagbon, E.I and Ekerikevwe, S. (2015). *Socio-legal analysis of widowhood rituals, inheritance rights and the mass media inn Edo State*. Taraba State University Sociological Review Vol.2 No 6.

Okojie, (1960). *Esan Native Law and Customs*, Okwesa. Lagos.

Okunna (2002)

Onabanjo, O. (1999). *Essentials of Broadcast Writing and Production*. Lagos: Gabi Concept limited.

Onyienuchie ,A.M.T. (1999). *Widowhood and Wife Inheritance Practices in Edo and Delta States of Nigeria*. Report for IAC-Nigeria, (Benin City)

Owosanoye, B (1997) *Widowhood in Nigeria: Issues, Problems and prospects*. Lagos: Friederich Ebert Foundation The Holy Bible, Hebrew 9. 27.

Ugweuze, (1997). *Cultural Practices Against Women in Eastern Nigeria*. Port Harcourt, Winners Int. Enterprises.

Umezina, C. (2007). The Faculty Logic of Widowhood. *West African Journal of Philosophical Studies*, 10.

