



Thesis

By

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Ola**

**UNIVERSITY,
OTA, OGUN
STATE,
NIGERIA.**

**Widowhood and Property Inheritance
among the Awori of Ogun State, Nigeria**

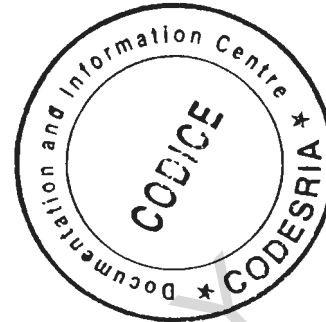
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**WIDOWHOOD AND PROPERTY INHERITANCE AMONG THE
AWORI OF OGUN STATE, NIGERIA**

BY



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(MATRIC NO.: CUGP050174)**

**A THESIS SUBMITTED
IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE
DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY OF
COVENANT UNIVERSITY,
OTA, OGUN STATE, NIGERIA.**

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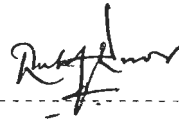
CERTIFICATION

This is to certify that this study was carried out by Mrs. Tayo Ola GEORGE (nee Atalabi), of the Department of Sociology, Covenant University, Ota, under our supervision and that the thesis has not been submitted for the award of any Degree in this or any other University.

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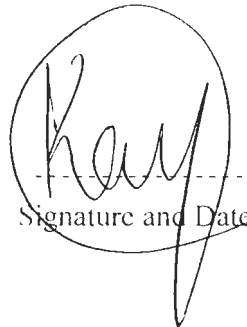
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2

DEDICATION

To the ever faithful God for making this dream come true.

To my late father, Lt. Col. (Dr.) Gbadua Olufemi Atalabi, for giving me the best legacy of education and also for conceiving the idea of my pursuing a Doctorate Degree before his untimely death. May his gentle soul rest in perfect peace (Amen).

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Finally, to my lovely children: Blessed, Emmanuel and David, I say thanks for their understanding in spite of the attention I denied them during the preparation of this work.

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ABSTRACT

The subservient position of women and the level of discrimination that accompanies widowhood practices and property sharing is an acknowledged social problem. In many societies, widowhood resulting from sudden death gives no room for a will or other preparations. Thus, property inheritance becomes a big challenge. Most studies on widowhood practices in Nigeria for instance, focus on the Southeast and Northern part of the country. The gap detected in the literature and research on the subject as it relates to the Awori sub-ethnic group of the Yoruba race is what this study intends to fill. Against this background, the study examines the traditional practice of widowhood and property inheritance among the Awori of Ado-Odo/Ota Local Government Area of Ogun State, Nigeria. This study was carried out in six selected Awori communities: Agbara, Atan, Iju, Ilogbo, Igbesa and Ota. The study was anchored on two theoretical platforms: Structural Functionalist Theory and the Feminist Political Economic Theory.

Using a triangulatory process, both quantitative (survey method) and qualitative (IDIs/KIIs, FGDs and case studies) were used in collecting the primary data. Widows, widowers, married men and women, senior citizens, traditional rulers and religious leaders (in the study area) constituted the study population. The purposive and snowball sampling techniques were adopted using a 65-item questionnaire containing both open and closed ended questions. The personal interview method was utilized to administer the instrument to Awori widows of different age categories and religions. Of the 997 copies administered, 982 were duly completed and returned, representing 98.5 percent completion rate. 942 were adjudged usable for analysis, employing frequency distribution, simple percentages, cross tabulations, and linear regression to validate the three hypotheses formulated for the study. For hypothesis 1, the independent variables which include: (age, education, occupation, income and type of marriage (personal attributes of widows) were tested against widowhood practices and property inheritance.

The results from the regression analysis reveals that education of widow is significantly and negatively related to widowhood rites at a p value of 0.000. This was reflected by widows with tertiary education who declined from observing widowhood rites compared to their counterparts without schooling. The study found that there exists a positive relationship between will left by widow's husband and observance of widowhood rites by the widow. However, the presence of a will was not statistically significant (p value of 47.5 percent). Availability of a widow's husband will shows a negative relationship with property inheritance but not significant. The study reveals that

none availability of a will implies negative gender value/orientation. Hypothesis 3 which captures the relationship between lineage-based family reciprocity and widowhood rites/property inheritance shows that a situation in which the widow's husband inherited property or received support from extended family, such a widow's husband can be said to have enjoyed lineage-based family reciprocity. If otherwise, lineage-based family reciprocity is absent. Thus, the extended family may not have a stake in widowhood rites performed by the widow and property inheritance issues. A legal document stating the beneficiaries of property inheritance 'will' is almost non-existent in the study area. However, the few cases in which the widow's husband left a will, the content was usually respected. Neither widows nor widowers inherit property in the area. The deceased's children, irrespective of age, sex and educational attainment inherit property. Equal access/ownership of property by a deceased's children is informed by equity in bearing financial burdens in addition to the fact that preference for a particular sex of children is not common. Over fifty percent of the Awori widows sampled earned less than ₦10,000.00 monthly which translates to less than \$1 per day (indicating, a high level of poverty). Lineage-based family reciprocity was virtually absent as majority of the widows claimed that neither their husbands (while alive) nor themselves presently enjoy supports/favours from the extended family.

The study concludes that education influences a widow's ability to accept and/or reject obnoxious widowhood practices and/or attainment of self-assertiveness, including positive property inheritance outcomes. Therefore, interventions through (formal/informal) education channels by all stakeholders (Government, NGOs and Corporate organizations) to empower widows/widowers is crucial. Education on timely will preparation will minimize associated problems with property inheritance. Establishment of widows' centre/data bank in accessible locations to enhance the collation of baseline data for direct policy intervention is urgent. In addition, the introduction of user-friendly micro-finance products by relevant banks/finance houses to enable widows to access credit with minimal bottlenecks is recommended for the bulk of the widows currently involved in petty trading in the study area.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|-------------------|------|
| Cover page | i |
| Certification | ii |
| Dedication | iii |
| Acknowledgements | iv |
| Abstract | viii |
| Table of Contents | x |
| List of Tables | xiv |
| List of Figures | xvii |

CHAPTER ONE: Introduction

| | |
|---|----|
| 1.1 Background to the Study | 1 |
| 1.2 Statement of the Problem | 5 |
| 1.3 Research Questions | 6 |
| 1.4 Aim and Objectives of the Study | 7 |
| 1.5 Justification of the Study | 7 |
| 1.6 Definition of Terms or Key Concepts | 9 |
| 1.7 A Priori Expectations | 11 |
| 1.8 Structure of Thesis | 12 |

CHAPTER TWO: Literature Review And Theoretical Framework

| | |
|---|----|
| 2.1.0 Literature Review | 14 |
| 2.1.1 Widowhood | 14 |
| 2.1.2 Widowhood Practices | 16 |
| 2.1.3 An Overview of Widowhood Practices Across some Geo-political Zones in Nigeria | 18 |
| 2.1.4 South- East: Anambra State | 18 |
| 2.1.5 South-West: Ondo State | 19 |
| 2.1.6 South-South: Edo State | 19 |
| 2.1.7 North-Central: Benue State | 19 |
| 2.1.8 North-West: Kano State | 20 |
| 2.1.9 Health Implications of Widowhood | 20 |
| 2.1.10 Psychological Implications of Widowhood | 21 |
| 2.1.11 Economic Status and Widowhood | 22 |
| 2.1.12 Property Inheritance | 23 |
| 2.1.13 Women and Property | 25 |
| 2.1.14 Women`s Property Rights | 26 |
| 2.1.15 Women`s Inheritance Law | 27 |
| 2.1.16 Gender Power Relations | 27 |
| 2.1.17 The Role of the Extended Family | 28 |
| 2.1.18 Marriage and its Functions | 30 |

| | | |
|--------|--|----|
| 2.1.19 | The Role of Patriarchy in widowhood practices | 31 |
| 2.1.20 | Modes of Production | 31 |
| 2.1.21 | The Role of Religion in Widowhood and Property Inheritance | 31 |
| 2.1.22 | Christianity | 33 |
| 2.1.23 | Islam | 34 |
| 2.1.24 | Traditional Religion | 35 |
| 2.1.25 | The Influence of Western Education on Widowhood Practices and Property Inheritance | 37 |
| 2.1.26 | Support Sources and Coping Mechanisms for Widows | 38 |
| 2.1.27 | Widow Care | 39 |
| 2.1.28 | Tina Sam Ibekwe Foundation | 40 |
| 2.1.29 | Bounty Food for Hunger Relief Initiative (BFHR) | 40 |
| 2.1.30 | Women's Rights Advancement and Protection Alternatives (WRAPA) | 41 |
| 2.1.31 | Constitutional Provisions, Widowhood Practices and Property Inheritance | 41 |
| 2.2.0 | Theoretical Framework | 43 |
| 2.2.1 | Structural Functionalist Theory (SFT) | 48 |
| 2.2.2 | African Political Economic Theory (APET) | 47 |
| 2.2.3 | Feminist Political Economic Theory (FPET) | 49 |
| 2.3 | Study Hypotheses | 53 |
| 2.4 | The Conceptual Model | 53 |

CHAPTER THREE: Research Scope And Methodological Procedures

| | | |
|--------|---|----|
| 3.1 | Introduction | 59 |
| 3.2.0 | Geographical Location and Population | 59 |
| 3.2.1 | History of the Awori | 62 |
| 3.2.2 | Background Information of Ota Community in Ogun State | 66 |
| 3.2.3 | Residential Patterns and Housing facilities | 69 |
| 3.2.4 | Economic Activities | 69 |
| 3.2.5 | Educational Opportunities | 70 |
| 3.2.6 | Religious Beliefs | 71 |
| 3.2.7 | Festivals | 71 |
| 3.3 | Research Scope and Focus | 72 |
| 3.4 | Methodological Procedures | 73 |
| 3.4.1 | The Study Population | 73 |
| 3.4.2 | Sample Size and Sampling Procedures | 74 |
| 3.4.3 | Instruments of Data Collection | 75 |
| 3.4.4 | Structured Questionnaire | 76 |
| 3.4.5 | In-depth interview Guide | 76 |
| 3.4.6 | Focus Group Discussion (FGD) Guide | 76 |
| 3.5 | Data Collection | 77 |
| 3.5.1 | Recruitment and Training of Field Workers | 77 |
| 3.5.2 | Pilot Testing | 78 |
| 3.5.3. | The Survey | 78 |

| | | |
|-------|---|----|
| 3.5.4 | Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) | 79 |
| 3.5.5 | Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) | 80 |
| 3.5.6 | Case Study of Widows | 80 |
| 3.6 | Categorization of Widows | 81 |
| 3.7 | Problems Encountered During Data Collection | 81 |
| 3.8 | Data preparation and Data Entry | 84 |
| 3.9 | Methods of Data Analysis | 84 |
| 3.10 | Test of Hypotheses | 84 |

CHAPTER FOUR: Data Presentation and Analysis

| | | |
|---------|---|-----|
| 4.0 | Introduction | 86 |
| 4.1 | Distribution of Widows Demographic Characteristics | 86 |
| 4.2 | Distribution of Widows by Socio-economic Characteristics | 89 |
| 4.3 | Distribution of widows by Religion, Type of marriage and Number of wives including Widow | 92 |
| 4.4 | Distribution of Widows by Religion and by Property Inheritance | 93 |
| 4.5 | Distribution of Widows by level of Education and by Property inheritance | 95 |
| 4.6 | Distribution of Widows by Occupation and by Property Inheritance | 96 |
| 4.7 | Distribution of Widows by Opinion on whether Income level influence Property Inheritance | 97 |
| 4.8 | Distribution of Widows by Opinion on whether Widows were subjected to Widowhood rites in spite of level of Education attained | 98 |
| 4.9 | Distribution of Widows by Type of Marriage Consummated and by Property inheritance | 98 |
| 4.10 | Cultural and Religious Factors in Widowhood Practices | 100 |
| 4.10.1 | Duration of Widows Confinement indoor | 102 |
| 4.10.2 | Widowhood practices detested most by Widow | 103 |
| 4.10.3 | Widows' Opinion on Widowhood practices observed | 104 |
| 4.10.4 | Influence of Religion on Widowhood practice | 105 |
| 4.10.5 | Custodians of Widowhood practices | 106 |
| 4.10.6 | Common Widowhood Practices among the Awori | 106 |
| 4.10.7 | Confinement Indoor | 106 |
| 4.10.8 | Sitting on a Mat | 107 |
| 4.10.9 | Observance of Vigil | 108 |
| 4.10.10 | Taking of Special Bath | 108 |
| 4.10.11 | Wearing of Dark Clothing and Accessories | 108 |
| 4.10.12 | Usage of Separate Utensils and Items | 109 |
| 4.10.13 | Disposal of all Items Used | 110 |
| 4.11.0 | Key Issues in Property Inheritance | 111 |
| 4.12 | Coping Devices and Strategies | 116 |
| 4.13 | Hypotheses Testing and Interpretation | 119 |
| 4.14.0 | Case Studies | 128 |
| 4.14.1 | Case Study (1) | 129 |

| | |
|---|-----|
| 4.14.2 Case Study (2) ----- | 130 |
| 4.14.3 Case Study (3) ----- | 131 |
| 4.14.4 Case Study (4) ----- | 131 |
| 4.14.5 Discussion of Case Studies ----- | 132 |

CHAPTER FIVE: Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations

| | |
|---|-----|
| 5.0 Summary of Study Findings ----- | 138 |
| 5.1 Major Findings and Discussion ----- | 138 |
| 5.1.1 Personal Attributes of the Widows ----- | 140 |
| 5.1.2 Cultural Environment ----- | 142 |
| 5.1.3 Lineage Based Reciprocities ----- | 143 |
| 5.1.4 Widowhood Practices and Experience ----- | 143 |
| 5.1.5 Property Inheritance ----- | 147 |
| 5.1.6 Widows' and Widowers' Coping Strategies ----- | 150 |
| 5.2 Conclusion ----- | 153 |
| 5.3 Recommendations for Policy ----- | 158 |
| 5.4 Contributions to Knowledge ----- | 160 |
| 5.5 Research Implications and Directions ----- | 161 |
| 5.6 Suggestions for Further Studies ----- | 162 |
| Bibliography ----- | 163 |

APPENDICES

| | |
|---|-----|
| Appendix I- Questionnaire Schedule ----- | 175 |
| Appendix II- Focus Group Discussion (FGD) Guide form for Note Takers ----- | 181 |
| Appendix III- FGD Guide Contd ----- | 182 |
| Appendix IV- In-depth Interview Guide for Widows, Opinion Leaders, Married Men and Women ----- | 184 |
| Appendix V- In-depth Interview Guide Widowers Only ----- | 186 |
| Appendix VI - Letter of Request for Widows ----- | 187 |
| Appendix VII - Some Yoruba Words and Phrases used in the Thesis ----- | 188 |
| Appendix VIII- Some Important Dates and Events in Ota (1842-2001) ----- | 190 |
| Appendix IX - Abbreviation ----- | 192 |
| Appendix X - Population Figures for Ogun State ----- | 193 |
| Appendix XI - Photograph Section ----- | 194 |

LIST OF TABLES

| | |
|---|-----|
| Table 3.1: Distribution of Widows by Community | 75 |
| Table 4.1: Distribution of Widows by Demographic Characteristics..... | 88 |
| Table 4.2: Distribution of Widows by Socio-economic Characteristics | 91 |
| Table 4.3: Distribution of Widows by Religion, Type of Marriage and by Number of Wives .. | 93 |
| Table 4.4: Distribution of Widows' by Religion and by Property Inheritance..... | 94 |
| Table 4.5: Distribution of Widows' by Level of Education and by Property Inheritance | 96 |
| Table 4.6: Distribution of Widows' by Occupation and by Property Inheritance..... | 97 |
| Table 4.7: Distribution of Widows' by Income and by Property Inheritance | 97 |
| Table 4.8: Distribution of Widows by Widowhood Rites and Educational Attainment--- | 98 |
| Table 4.9: Distribution of Widows by Type of Marriage Consummated and Property Inheritance | 99 |
| Table 4.10: Cultural and Religious Factors in Widowhood Practices..... | 100 |
| Table 4.11a: Key Issues in Property Inheritance | 110 |
| Table 4.11b: Inheritable Property..... | 112 |
| Table 4.12: Coping Devices and Strategies | 115 |
| Table 4.13: Coefficients of widows personal attributes and widowhood rites..... | 120 |
| Table 4.14: Coefficient of widows personal attributes and property inheritance..... | 121 |
| Table 4.15: Coefficient of husbands' gender orientation/values and widowhood rites..... | 122 |
| Table 4.16: Coefficient of husbands' gender orientation/values and property inheritance | 123 |
| Table 4.17: Cross tabulations of sex of children preferred and property inheritance..... | 125 |
| Table 4.18: Ethnographic Table showing the Twelve Case studies of widows in Aworiland | 132 |
| Table 4.19: Ethnographic Table showing the Twelve Case studies of Awori widows sampled and types of widowhood practices performed | 135 |
| Table 4.20: Ethnographic Table showing the Twelve Case studies and items inherited | 136 |

LIST OF FIGURES

| | |
|--|----|
| Fig 2:1 Conceptual Framework for the Study----- | 54 |
| Fig 3.1 Map of Nigeria showing Ogun State----- | 64 |
| Fig 3:2 Map of Ogun State Showing the selected Awori communities : Ado-Odo/Ota LGA---- | 65 |
| Fig 3.3: Map of Ota - The traditional Home of the Awori in Ogun State----- | 66 |

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

The traditional practice of widowhood and property inheritance is as old as human beings. The inevitability of death in spite of the great strides made in scientific and technological research, leads us to assert that there is no human society without widows and widowers. Yearly, there are seven million widows globally (United States Bureau of Statistics, 2008). The increasing number of widows across the world in recent times has become a social problem. In Nigeria, widowhood is a common phenomenon attributed to the high and increasing mortality rate (Oyekanmi, 2007). The fact that females have higher average life expectancy than males and the practice whereby men marry women younger than themselves likely result in more widows than widowers in the society. As Potash (1986:1) opines, “Widows make up about half the adult female population in Africa”. Even though this view is not justifiable by available data, one striking feature in most parts of Nigeria is the fact that until the 1990s, not much research had been done on widows and their plight as determinable from relevant discourse. Yet, this is one specific sub-group that should be targeted for intervention, considering the incidence of depression among members, the socio-economic setback that the crisis of widowhood brings to them, and the sudden change in their status (Sesay and Odebiyi, 1998).

A popular Nigerian folklore has it that all enduring marriages ultimately end with the death of either the husband or wife or both. However, the challenges and traumatic experience which accompany the death of a husband tend to be greater than those which accompany the death of a wife (Oloko, 1997:9). Even though men and women could die prematurely owing to a number of factors such as ill-health, accidents and wars amongst other unforeseen circumstances, it is observed from the relevant literature that, unlike a wife’s death, the death of a husband is culturally challenged in many African societies. When a husband dies, the ready suspect is the wife. Deaths, even in circumstances where the causes are natural and explicable, are never perceived as such. Magico-religious factors and widows’ bewitchment or sorcery are evoked for the death of the partners (Erinosho, 2000:1). The widespread belief is that someone must necessarily cause the death of a man and that person is likely to be his wife. This assertion is corroborated by a popular saying in many societies in Nigeria that “no man dies naturally, but at the hands of a bewitching wife”. According to Ilogu (1974:40),

“I have not come across any death that any Igbo accept as a natural and biological end”. Similarly, Afigbo (1989) observes that in almost all societies, the immediate or remote cause of death is blamed on man’s inhumanity to man or of a malevolent ancestor or ghost. Suffice it to add that the situation described above is not age specific. However, the cultural belief and explanation of death vary from one society to another.

In many parts of Nigeria, death is often attributed to some unnatural causes. When a woman dies, it is more often than not taken with fatalism; even when such a death is queried, the culprit is sought amongst her contenders (e.g. co-wives or neighbours), and rarely is her husband seen as being responsible. Instead of suspicion and accusations, the husband receives more sympathies and support. For instance, in some Yoruba communities, a woman is arranged to sleep with the man for a night so that he is not haunted by the spirit of the dead wife. According to Lasebikan (2001:19), a widower is evidently pitied and consoled genuinely and encouraged out of his situation as early as possible while arrangement for a substitute is made quickly, because “*Opo’kunrin ki da sun nitori iyawo orun*” (Yoruba). In other words, “A widower does not sleep alone because of the dead wife’s spirit”. Though the widower experiences emotional trauma at the loss of a wife, he is usually given more social support in order to cope, and to eventually re-adjust to a new life. In a polygynous setting, other living co-wives become a source of succour. A woman is seen as part of her husband’s property: at death, family members do not often challenge the husband with respect to her assets and wealth. However, if the marital relationship was undergoing stress the relatives of the woman might query the husband’s wish to inherit her property.

Under normal circumstances, a widow is to be empathized with, and helped out of the psychological valley into which the unexpected has plunged her. Unfortunately, this is often not the case. In most Nigerian societies, she is stigmatized as the killer of her husband, oppressed, suppressed, afflicted, neglected, accused, openly insulted and consequently made to succumb to widowhood rites on account of customs and traditions. Usually, the widow’s ordeal begins the very moment her husband breathes his last.

As Dei (1995:6) reveals for the Igbo society in eastern Nigeria,

The sympathy for her ends on the spur of the moment. Promises and assurances are made at the graveside. But as soon as the earth swallows the dead, the widow becomes a victim of neglect, accusation, and bizarre cultural practices. In most cases, the in-laws use the mourning period as an avenue to give vent to their anger and ensure that the widow's solitary life is made more miserable. They strip her virtually of her self-esteem and all the toil she had acquired with her spouse.

Consequently, the death of a husband dramatically alters a woman's status and leaves her at the mercy of her husband's relations who are customarily empowered to take decisions concerning her and the properties left behind by the deceased, not minding her welfare and that of her children, if any. As observed in *Women's Rights Wake Up Call Assessment Report* (2001:202), the plight of widows is made worse by various widowhood rites, which, though not uniform in all societies, exist in one form or another almost everywhere. While it is more entrenched in the rural areas, the practice affects many urban women in the Nigerian societies especially as it is common with those who die in the cities but are to be buried in rural areas ("hometown burial"). As the prime suspect of her husband's death, the widow is usually compelled to go through an ordeal to prove her innocence. In some cases, she is made to drink the water used to wash the corpse (Kantiyok, 2000:61). "To express their grief, widows are sometimes required to sleep on the floor, abstain from taking baths, shave their hair, and wear dirty rags as clothes for as long as mourning lasts". In a similar vein, "She is made to cook with broken pots and eat with unwashed hands" (Akumadu, 1998:29).

These practices, which stem from societal traditions and family beliefs, are harmful besides being extraordinarily harsh. Moreover, most of these rituals erode the dignity of the widows and also traumatize them. Besides exposure to diseases such as cholera, diarrhoea, etc, occasioned by eating with unwashed hands, drinking water used to bathe the corpse could be poisonous. Worse still, any attempt to contest such practices is met with stiff resistance and sanctions. The confined widows, in the wake of these treatments, suffer from social degradation, inferiority complex and low self-esteem. While lamenting over cultural practices against widows in Ghana, Oduyoye (1995:1) in a keynote address states:

And today, the category of woman called widow, is often disinherited specie, sharing no part of the legacy of her father or her husband and unable to have saved or acquired property because she was busy being a traditional wife, spending on spouse, children and the extended family.

In many African societies, particularly in East and South Africa, the practice of levirate, a marital union of the widow to her deceased husband's brother still thrives. In some cases, levirate is responsible for the wiping out of extended family members if the spouse(s) of the dead man had already been infected with HIV (*The New York Times*, 17 Sept, 1990 p14). This report by *The New York Times* may not be true for all cases and could pass for an over-exaggeration. The fact that an extended family was wiped out may not be as a result of HIV. Also, this report ought to have taken cognizance of other factors such as magic, sorcery, witchcraft as well as other inherited diseases in Africa. However, the possibility of HIV cannot be completely ruled out.

Adepoju (1997:16) observes that despite campaigns to eradicate levirate, it is closely linked to the distribution of and right to wealth and property of the deceased. As Kantiyok (2000:61) opines in her study of Kano State North-western Nigeria, no widow is completely free from the plight of widowhood rites (and its effects). As much as there could be diverse cultural practices within the same country, regarding widowhood rites and property inheritance, one common feature is the fact that the intensity of a widow's unpleasant experiences varies within communities and according to various religious beliefs. While those economically endowed may be able to pay their way in order to avoid some of the traditional widowhood rites, others rarely escape. For widows with children (male/female), the sex of the children is often an issue of contention in property inheritance, while widows without children are rarely considered.

Nzewi (1996), for instance, notes that in certain parts of Imo State, Eastern Nigeria, immediately the death of the man is announced, the in-laws demand a list of the man's property, holdings, investments, bank accounts among others. The widow is expected to take an oath as a proof that she has not concealed any relevant information about her husband's wealth. The acknowledged weak and defenceless position of the widow according to Afigbo (1989:14) is borne out of the fact that she has no legal right to the property of her husband. It is against this background that this study attempts to investigate widowhood and property inheritance in the context of the Awori traditional family structure with a view to identifying points of convergence or divergence.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Most African societies are patriarchal and a major element of patriarchy is the subservient position of women and the level of discrimination that accompanies widowhood practices and property sharing. In the Awori tradition, when a woman dies, the man is consoled. If he is a monogamist, a woman is given to accompany him for the night and within six months or a space of two years the widower remarries. If he is a polygynist, he naturally takes solace in his other living wives. Even though widowhood is a condition shared by both men and women, differences in experience along gender lines have made it more of a woman's problem. While the man enjoys social support and goes through minimal widowhood rites, the Awori woman is not so spared. Lasebikan (2001:19) aptly captures a widow's situation in the following statement: "what the Nigerian widow experiences during widowhood are better imagined than expressed".

In many parts of Nigeria, death is often attributed to some unnatural causes. When a woman dies, it is more often than not taken with fatalism; even when such a death is queried, the culprit is sought amongst her contenders (e.g. co-wives or neighbours), and rarely is her husband seen as being responsible. Instead of suspicion and accusations, the husband receives more sympathies and support. For instance, in some Yoruba communities, a woman is arranged to sleep with the man for a night so that he is not haunted by the spirit of the dead wife. According to Lasebikan (2001:19), a widower is evidently pitied and consoled genuinely and encouraged out of his situation as early as possible while arrangement for a substitute is made quickly, because "*Opo'kunrin ki da sun nitari iyawo orun*" (Yoruba). In other words, "A widower does not sleep alone because of the dead wife's spirit". Though the widower experiences emotional trauma at the loss of a wife, he is usually given more social support in order to cope, and to eventually re-adjust to a new life.

Widowhood resulting from sudden death gives no room for a will or other preparations. Thus, property inheritance becomes a big challenge. For instance, it has been a long standing custom in most parts of Nigeria, including Aworiland, for women not to inherit property (Oke, 2001:52). Women are almost always regarded as their husband's property and being themselves property can not aspire to own property (Orebiyi, 2002).

The seriousness attached to property in the Awori culture is reflected in the manner the properties of the deceased male members of the family are usually handled. Instances in which the relatives of the deceased insist on their right to inherit the property of the deceased, often to the exclusion of the wife/wives and children, can be a terrible plight for the widow(s). In spite of statutory and Islamic

laws which provide for women to inherit property following the death of their husbands, one noticeable problem among the Awori people of Ogun State, Nigeria, is that, in practice, legal or religious laws are often overridden by the customary laws of succession. Widespread practices among this local group reveal that women under traditional customary laws are often denied their rights to inheritance. The law ranges from denial of rights to commonly held property with their husbands die to lack of or restricted access to the children produced from such unions. It is most shocking that the cases of joint property ownership, the family/relations of the deceased man do not consider this. Rather, the woman is completely ostracized and barred from having access to such joint property. In some cases, no consideration is given to the widow and her children by the extended family. In fact, the widow without children is rarely considered in property inheritance. Yet, she is not exempted from performing widowhood rites.

Against this background, this study examines widowhood practices and property inheritance among the Awori with a view to ascertaining the coping mechanisms of widows compared to their male counterparts. This is because the challenges arising from widowhood and property inheritance have created numerous problems for the Awori society. They have rendered many widows psychologically and economically incapacitated. Women empowerment and the need for a critical appraisal become urgent. However, there is no known study on widowhood and property inheritance among the Awori. Most studies in Nigeria (Afigbo, 1989; Ahonsi, 1997; Akumadu, 1998; Anyanwu, 2002; Imam, 1997; Korieh, 1996; Kantiyok, 2000; Nzewi, 1989; Nwoga, 1989; Okoye, 1995; and Onyenuchie, 2000) focused on the Southeastern and Northern part of the country. These scholars' contributions on widowhood practices, levirate, aged widows, etc, have no doubt increased contributions immensely for our understanding of the uniqueness of widowhood practices in other societies. However, the gap caused by the absence of literature and research on widowhood and property inheritance among the Awori sub-ethnic group of the Yoruba race is what this study intends to fill.

1.3 Research Questions

This study attempts to understand widowhood practices as a socio-cultural phenomenon in relation to property inheritance among the Awori of Ogun State. In the light of the above, the study investigates the following questions:

1. What is the extent to which the widow's personal attributes (age, education, occupation, income, and type of marriage etc) influence widowhood rites and property inheritance?

2. How does culture define widowhood practices and property inheritance among the Awori?
3. Of what significance is material relationship in widowhood practices and property inheritance?
4. What relationship exists between lineage-based family reciprocity, widowhood rites and property inheritance?
5. How do gender values and orientations impact on widowhood rites and property inheritance?

1.4 Objectives of the Study

The broad objective of the study is to investigate and describe widowhood practices and property inheritance within the context of the Awori traditional family structure.

The Specific objectives are to:

1. Examine the extent to which the widow's personal attributes (age, education, occupation, income, type of marriage, etc) influence widowhood rites and property inheritance.
2. Identify and examine the role of culture in widowhood practices and property inheritance among the Awori.
3. Examine how material relationships can sustain widowhood rites and property inheritance.
4. Explore the relationship between lineage-based family reciprocity and widowhood rites and property inheritance
5. Examine how gender values and orientations impact on widowhood rites and property inheritance.

1.5 Justification of the Study

A study of widowhood and property inheritance among the Awori people is coming at a time when several aspects of the people's culture have been infiltrated by the wave of social change, modernity and globalization. This study is, therefore, significant in that it explains the ramifications introduced by the various aspects of social change. Widowhood and property inheritance are highly sociological, a culturally embedded study that aims at identifying, investigating, and explaining this aspect of Nigerian life, especially in the 21st century, is imperative. A research into this sensitive aspect of Awori social life will shed more light on certain aspects of culture and tradition as they relate to widowhood and property inheritance. Sociology as a scientific study of society, no doubt, has vital roles to play in explaining, questioning and challenging age-long societal practices such as widowhood and property inheritance as they relate for example to the Awori people.

Among the Awori of Ogun State, Southwestern Nigeria, the experience of widowhood is deeply gendered and there is no known study or available statistics on widowhood and property inheritance. Available works centre on the plight of widows within the context of widowhood practices and aging in other parts of Nigeria. This research is unique because it is a pioneer study that intends to provide data for further studies on the subject among the Aworis of the Yoruba cultural group.

There is the report of a widow from Ohafia in Imo State, in the Eastern part of the country, who had difficulty with her husband's extended family during and after widowhood. This brings to the fore the fact that widows of different age groups and categories exist. Similarly, the challenges associated with widowhood and property inheritance also vary across cultures and communities. For instance, the following case study by Effah-Chukwuma (1982:1) is one out of several insights on the subject:

Mrs. Gladys Michael, 44 years old became a widow 18 years ago (1982) when she lost the man she had married at the tender age of 16 years. According to her, "At the time my husband died in 1982, it was the tenth year of our marriage and I was eight months pregnant. It was a period of agony for me, especially as an expectant mother. My in-laws despite my condition did not take pity on me. They were more concerned about laying hands on his bank documents even while his corpse was still in the mortuary. They never cared about the six children we had, the eldest at the time being 8 years old. Up till date, no one of them has come to find out how we are faring. For eighteen (18) years now, I have been bearing the burden on my own".

The above example, which is just one among many, further makes any research into widowhood and property inheritance a unique and timely one in order to bring to the fore this aspect of African reality.

The content of this study is a gender sensitive one that touches the heart of every woman especially the widow. Denials of benefits in terms of property inheritance and fundamental human rights of widows via tradition are worth studying to better understand and predict this vital aspect of Awori experience. In addition, the dearth of statistical data coupled with the non existence of situational analysis of widowhood practices and property inheritance among the study population also necessitated this study.

Essentially, this research attempts to add to current knowledge on the socio-cultural variables that undermine the place of women in the society. Furthermore, the study brings to light the missing link between the variables currently being investigated and also assist in sensitizing the government, policy makers and especially the women to harmful traditional practices as they relate to widowhood and property inheritance. It is hoped that the findings from this research will go beyond suggestions and recommendations on the missing link.

This research will assist in terms of sensitizing the community, individuals and groups as well as policy makers on undocumented issues relating to widowhood and property inheritance and the way forward for both the Awori community and the larger society. Above all, this study will pave the way for further studies in this area of scientific enquiry.

Finally, this research serves as an avenue to contribute immeasurably to knowledge in this grey but sensitive aspect of African experience.

1.6 Definition of Terms or key Concepts

Below are the definitions of some concepts used in this study:

Confinement: This refers to total restriction of the widow's/widower's movement within a particular place throughout the mourning period. The place of confinement could be either the widow's family house, place of abode or any place so approved by the spouse's family members. However, the duration of confinement varies from one community to another for the widow and the widower.

Family Size: This means the number of children that a woman has. It refers exclusively to the number of living children a woman has irrespective of age, sex, religion and type of marriage consummated.

Inheritance: Inheritance implies the practice of passing on property titles, debts, and obligations upon the death of a spouse (husband) or father to members of his immediate or extended family.

Levirate: It is the practice of marrying one's deceased brother's wife. Among the reasons for encouraging the practice of levirate in some societies are to ensure stability and continuity of the deceased's lineage as well as provision of economic, moral and psychological support for the deceased's wife and children by the new husband (the deceased brother's). Unlike wife inheritance

in which the children born as a result of this union belong to the new husband, in levirate, the children born belong to the deceased brother of the new husband.

Monogamy: This is a system of marriage in which a man marries only one wife. This type of marriage is predominant among the Pentecostals of Christian denomination.

Patriarchal society: In this society, men possess the dominant control of family affairs and authority. The male line dominates and reserves the authority to inheritance.

Patrilineage: This defines a society in which the derivation of inheritance (financial or otherwise) originates from the father's line. Patrilineage is a common practice in most patriarchal societies where male dominance persists.

Partial widowers: This refers to married men with more than one wife who have another/other living wife/wives in spite of the death of one of the wives. Partial widowers are commonly found in a polygynous setting among Muslims and adherents of African Traditional Religion (ATR), where marriage of one man to several women is not an issue; they are also found among Christians of Cherubim & Seraphim as well as Celestial Church denominations.

Personal Attributes of widow: These refer to those factors that are internal and personal to the widow which she has control over to a large extent and these include: age, education, occupation, income, number of children, type of marriage, religion, etc. Each of these independent variables are explained in detail in the section on test of study hypotheses.

Polygyny: This is a system of marriage in which a man marries more than one wife. It is a common indigenous system of marriage among Muslims, adherents of Traditional religion and Christians who belong to certain denominations which have their root in Africa.

Property: Property means any tangible possession that is legally owned by an individual or entity. It goes beyond money and other tangible items (land, houses, farmland/material possession) of value to include intangible right considered as a source or element of income or wealth.

Rituals: This refers to a set of actions such as widowhood practices, often thought to have symbolic value, the performance of which is usually prescribed by religion or by the traditions of a community because of the perceived efficacy of those actions.

Widows: This refers to married women regardless of socio-economic status (young or old, literate or non-literate, low or high income earner, etc) whose husbands have died and have not remarried. Sometimes women who had children for a man outside wedlock are called widows too.

Widowers: Widowers are men who have at one time or the other lost their wife or wives and who might have remarried. The existence of partial widowers in most African societies and especially among the study population necessitates this definition.

Widowhood: Widowhood refers to a state or condition of being a widow/widower. It is a state of loss of a marital partner (either a wife, or husband as the case may be).

Widow Inheritance: This is markedly different from levirate and must not be used interchangeably. Under this practice, a male kinsman such as the deceased's son marries his dead father's widow. The children born out of this union belong to the new husband.

Widowhood Practices: These are traditional and cultural dictates observed by a widow/widower during the mourning period. They include all actions or activities carried out by the widow or against the widow by the relatives or non-relatives of the deceased in fulfilment of rites during the mourning period.

Will: This is a written legal document containing information on property and persons entitled to property inheritance. Will is a common feature of most western industrialized societies where property inheritance is a usual occurrence. Some individuals in traditional societies with inheritable property who are knowledgeable about the importance of will due to exposure to western education usually write a will for ease of their property sharing in case of death.

1.7 A Priori Expectations

1. The study will help to chart a new understanding of widowhood and property inheritance through material relations within the household economy.
2. It is expected that this study will establish the relationship between the widow's personal attributes (age, education, religion, number and sex of children, income, type of marriage, etc), gender value/orientation, lineage-based family reciprocity, widowhood rites and property inheritance in the study area.
3. The study will assist in expanding the landscape of understanding the implications of the capitalist mode of production and property ownership on widows.
4. Baseline data will be provided on the extent of the problem of widowhood and property inheritance among this local group. These will be useful for direct programme intervention.
5. The roles played by various institutions i.e. the State, NGOs, religious groups and the local institutional structures to resolve and sustain this problem will be identified.
6. Finally, data will be provided on the coping mechanisms of widows, and to some extent widowers across different socio-economic groups with particular reference to property inheritance.

1.8 Structure of Thesis

This thesis divided into five chapters. The first chapter deals with the introduction which comprises the background to the study, statement of the problem, the research questions, aim and objectives of the study, the research hypotheses, justification of the study, clarification of basic concepts used in the research and a priori expectations of the research.

The second chapter is in three parts. The first part deals with the review of relevant literature, the second part discusses the theoretical framework adopted for the study while the third part presents the conceptual framework designed for the research. In the first part there is a systematic review of previous works on widowhood, widowhood practices (with a review of widowhood practices in certain geo-political zones in Nigeria), property inheritance, women and property, gender power relations, economic status and widowhood, the psychological and health implications of widowhood, the role of the extended family, marriage and its functions, foreign religions (Islam and Christianity) and the role of western education in widowhood practices and property inheritance were also examined. It concludes with some legal provisions on the research subject. The second part presents relevant sociological frameworks: Structural Functionalist Theory and the Political Economic Theory with particular emphasis on Feminist Political Economic Theory. The last segment of the chapter shows a conceptual framework employed for this research. This section offer a detailed explanation of the independent, dependent, and intervening variables in addition to the cultural environment of the widow's husband in relation to the dynamics of widowhood practices and property inheritance among the Awori local group. The hypotheses stated for the study are tested at the end of the chapter.

Chapter three describes the research setting and scope and also presents the methodological procedures adopted in the study. The research setting centers on a description of the study area which includes the history of the Awori people and the communities within the area. The geographical location, physical setting, residential pattern, economic activities, socio-cultural beliefs, practices and common festivals of the research area are also discussed. The methodological aspect presents and describes the research design including the study population, sample size, sampling procedure and data collection procedures. This chapter also highlights the problems encountered during the process of data collection. In addition, it describes methods of data management and the analytical techniques adopted.

Chapter four is divided into three parts. The first part presents the frequency and percentage distribution of respondents by demographic, cultural, economic and social characteristics and these include percentage distribution of respondents by settlement, ethnic composition of respondents, average age of respondents, religion, type of marriage consummated, number of living children, number of males/females, highest level of education attained, preference for a particular sex of children, number of wives by husband including widow, present occupation, income of widow and number of years lived in Aworiland among others. In addition, cross tabulations of key variables: religion, income, education, and marriage type against property inheritance and widowhood rites performed were done with a view to ascertaining their major roles in widowhood and property inheritance. The second part of chapter four examines widowhood experiences and practices, property inheritance modalities, persons entitled to inherit property, types of property usually inherited, family decisions on property inheritance and, lastly, it presents the various sources of support and coping mechanisms of widows in the study area. The last part of the chapter considers case studies of selected widows in the study area. The third aspect grapples with the presentation and analysis of the study hypotheses in addition to data generated from both quantitative and qualitative methods. Some case studies of widows and other relevant data obtained from content analysis are critically examined and analyzed in order to bring to the fore major findings in this research. The final chapter presents the summary of major findings in the research on the basis of which conclusions are drawn and recommendations made for policy.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Literature Review

This chapter is in three parts. The first part deals with review of relevant literature, the second part discusses the theoretical framework adopted for the study while the third section presents the conceptual framework designed for the research. In the first part, a systematic review of previous works on widowhood, widowhood practices (with a review of widowhood practices in certain geographical zones in Nigeria), property inheritance, women and property, gender power relations, economic status and widowhood, psychological and health implications of widowhood, the role of the extended family, marriage and its functions, foreign religions (Islam and Christianity), and the role of western education in widowhood practices and property inheritance. It concludes with some legal provisions on the research subject. The second part presents relevant sociological frameworks: Structural functionalist theory, African political economic theory and emphasis on feminist political economic theory. The last segment of this chapter shows the conceptual framework employed in this research.

2.1.1 Widowhood

The subject of widowhood has been a topic of interest to few researchers. Afigbo (1989) opined that, while topics like marriage and family, the economic role of women and, recently, the political rights of women have received a fair measure of attention, a subject like widowhood practices remains largely neglected even in anthropological monographs on African communities. Similarly, Okwuosa (1989) observed that the plight of widows in the traditional milieu of Nigerian society had hitherto been a neglected area and that the social and legal discrimination against Nigerian women has been glossed over by the society. Commenting on the paucity of studies on widowhood rites for instance, Nwoga (1989) pointed out that “the present paucity could be because married women do not talk freely about widowhood for fear of becoming widows and the tendency to look down on widows, hence widows are anxious not to give an image of themselves that could upset their extended families or expose them to self-pity”. Widowhood is defined as a state of loss of a marital partner (Hornby, Cowrie, and Grimson, 1994 and Obazele et al, 1993). Cavello and Warner (2002:835) defined widowhood as a phase of marriage following the death of one of the partners. Lopata (1971), on his part, postulated that widowhood involves not only the loss of the role of a wife but also the

loss of a person most supportive of the woman. She stressed that for many women, widowhood can result in an identity crisis if the woman's sense of identity was tied to her role as wife. More contemporary definitions, however, consider as widows/widowers only people who do not remarry at the death of their partners. This view is corroborated by Ore and Akin (1998) in their assertion that, widowhood is not a thing of joy, yet nature has made it a necessary evil consequent upon the death of a spouse. Indeed, the state of widowhood can be considered as one of personal loss, encompassing everything from the immediate psychological impact of the loss of a partner to the material deprivation of an income, a home or of contributions to domestic economy (Olapegba and Chovwen, 2007:835-836). As Akujobi (2009:3) notes, widowhood throughout Africa is a period of hardship and deprivation as it includes varying degrees of physical seclusion and a state of ritual contamination or impurity calling for purification. This view is corroborated by Machel (2001: 2):

Wherever they are, irrespective of their religion and culture, a common feature of widowhood is the violence perpetrated against them at the hands of near relatives and condoned by the inaction of governments. Many widows are hounded from their homes and denied access to essential resources such as shelter and land to grow food. They are also subjected to degrading and life-threatening traditional practices. They have no status and often they are figures of shame and ridicule. This neglect of millions of widows has irrevocable long term implications for the future well-being and sustainable development of all our societies.

Widowhood, though an inevitable status, has impact on the lives of people when it occurs. The death of a spouse can be one of the most stressful role transition which results in profound change in the status, stability and security of the woman. The death of a spouse results in a problem of re-adjustment. Most times, the widow suffers from insecurity and wants especially with regard to the maintenance of the house and children, which had previously being a joint responsibility of the couple. Among the Igbo of eastern Nigeria for instance, the widow is more or less regarded as the 'owner' of the corpse, thus, the popular saying "the sympathizer does not cry more than the owner of the corpse". The loss of a wife rarely alters a man's status, while the loss of a husband invariably and irrevocably brings about a change in a woman's life.

For instance, Babalola (2001) points out that, "many studies have documented that the amount of resources a woman controls determines her relative position in household decision making and her ability to resist manipulation and interference by members of her husband's (conjugal) family".

Similarly, in the case of widowhood, the extent to which women can avoid prescribed rites appears to depend on the amount of resources in terms of education and income that she possesses.

A fundamental question that emanates from the above assertion is: Can we say that economic empowerment will be an elevation for women? Given this situation, such a critical appraisal is pertinent for it will adequately explain this aspect of African reality so as to enable global communities keep abreast with prevailing issues on widowhood and property inheritance among the study population.

2.1.2 Widowhood Practices

Nwoga (1989) defined widowhood practices as a set of expectations as to action and behaviour by the widow, actions by others towards the widow, and rituals performed by, or on behalf of the widow from the time of the death of her husband. Similarly, Nwaogugu (1989) considered widowhood practice as one manifestation of the ritual cleansing which tradition prescribed for all members of the community following any death or other influences regarded as corrupting. He adds that in Igbo land, soldiers returning from war were expected to undergo a ritual cleansing of the hands before resuming normal relations with other members of their communities. In the same manner, the widow, being considered as corrupted and defiled by her close contact with death through her husband, would be subjected to a period of regimented seclusion. In the words of Nwaogugu (1989) “this period would enable her undergo the appropriate cleansing ritual”.

Ahonsi (2001) states that widowhood practices differ from one location to another even within the same domain. However, what remains a general fact is that in addition to her loss and its attendant consequences, the widow is subjected to the whims of a culture she has no control over and to which she must submit herself.

According to Oyekanmi (2007:3), some widowhood practices in Nigeria as identified by Otite and Ogionwu (1979), Ahonsi (1997), and Nwadinobi (1997), include the following:

Defacement – This is done through several means like the need to shave off the hair, which is generally seen as the woman’s beauty, wearing of black dress, looking unkempt and unattractive to show the extent of her mourning resulting from the death of her husband.

Dethronement-The loss of a husband often means the loss of all the widow’s entitlements and position in the family. For widows that have scores to settle with their husband’s family, the

mourning period is an opportunity to remind the widow of the loss of her position and other entitlements. This is physically demonstrated by her sitting on the floor throughout the mourning period.

Confinement- This is a situation in which the widow is isolated in a small unventilated and unfurnished hut to mourn the death of her husband. She is expected within this period to cry continually for her loss by living in an unclean surrounding, she is expected to use unwashed utensils for her meals and may have to release her waste within such confinement. Women are not expected to marry or have sex within the confinement period as violation is considered an abomination. Under Islamic law, the period of confinement is often used to ascertain if a widow is pregnant or not and also for women to purify themselves.

Establishment of Innocence- The culturally established traditions for ascertaining the extent of a wife's involvement in her husband's death vary from one society to another. This is often done by the need for consistent wailing and crying. In some societies, widows are sometimes locked-up with the dead body in solitary confinement for a period of time, and the woman might be made to drink the water used to bathe the corpse to prove her innocence.

In spite of the prevalence of widowhood practices across most societies in Nigeria, there exists a dearth of literature on this vital aspect of the people's culture. For instance, Korieh (1996) opined that much of the scanty information on widowhood practices is what may be considered as raw or unprocessed information. In a similar vein, Afigbo (1986:8) stated that, "attempt has not been made to explain the practice in their sociological and cosmological terms". The dearth of scholarly works that would have questioned this aspect of women's life shows evidence of her 'silence and invisibility'.

Commenting on the paucity of studies on widowhood rites for instance, Nwoga (1989) pointed out that "the present paucity could be because married women do not talk freely about widowhood for fear of becoming widows and the tendency to look down on widows, hence widows are anxious not to give an image of themselves that could upset their extended families or expose them to self-pity". In response to the dearth of studies and scholarly materials on Nigerian widows, the Inter-African Committee (Nigeria) sponsored a multi-site research on wife inheritance and current widowhood rites. The aim was to expand knowledge and to provide the basis for articulating appropriate intervention strategies and programmes (Erinosho, 2000:3). In spite of this bold step, the plight of widows in terms of widowhood practices and property inheritance leaves much to be desired.

Against this background, the next section presents a brief summary of widowhood practices across some geo-political zones in Nigeria with a view to buttressing the existence of different widowhood practices by peculiarities of culture, religion and other social indices in those societies.

2.1.3 An overview of widowhood practices across some geo-political zones in Nigeria

This section briefly summarizes widowhood practices across some geo-political zones in Nigeria as revealed in a study on *Rights and Widowhood Rites in Nigeria* published by the Inter-African Committee (Nigeria) on traditional practices affecting the health of women and children. This is done with a view to making comparison and identifying areas of differences especially among the Awori of Ogun State, Southwest Nigeria on which this study is based. The relativity and dynamism of culture as regard widowhood practices and property inheritance is no doubt reflected in the findings below:

2.1.4 South East – Anambra State

Research carried out in Ogidi town, in Idemili L.G.A. of Anambra State clearly reveals that mourning period is one year during which, the widow is restricted to the house where she sits on the bare floor for four weeks and her hair is scrapped. She is not allowed to talk, laugh, shake hands or greet people, bake or cook. Her attire is called “*Ogodo upa*, that is, mud cloth” and wears “the *ikpim*, that is, a pitch black cloth called mourning dress” for the rest of the year. Similarly, in Nanka town of Orumba L.G.A., the only peculiarity of these people is that the widow is forbidden to see the corpse of her husband. Christianity or not, ... “any widow who contravenes this custom literally ceases to exist ... she neither buys from nor sells to any other member of the community. All men run away from her... she is avoided till death....” In spite of modern civilization, this cultural practice is held in high esteem till date. Not even the dominance of Christian religion like Catholicism has been able to alter the practice.

2.1.5 South West – Ondo State

When a husband dies, the widow goes into confinement for seven days. During this period she is not allowed to go out, even to the toilet or take her bath. On the seventh day, her head is shaved to sever the bond between her and the dead husband. She also keeps vigil and appears very sorrowful by wailing and crying profusely. If she fails to mourn, it is believed that “she may become mentally deranged, or forfeit the right to any benefit”. After this, she goes into mourning proper, which is for a

period of three months. During mourning, the widow is expected to be of impeccable character, she is not expected to court, leave the family, go away with the children, or look in the mirror for fear of seeing the deceased. Until recently, she was not allowed to sit on the bed.

2.1.6 South South – Edo State

Among the Binis, widowhood rites are in two stages. First, the widow is confined to a room outside the family house for seven days immediately after the internment 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 and sober and must cry, morning and evening. On the seventh day, a wake keeping ceremony is held and the widow is forbidden (by custom) to sleep. On the same day, she performs the semi-purification rites by taking her bath around 4am at a road junction (all alone). Her safe return proves her innocence.

The second stage of mourning begins at the end of the seventh day. The widow smears herself and her clothing with black charcoal and remains so for three months. At the end of the third month, the final purification, which admits her into the society, is performed. On inheritance, both the widow and property are inheritable objects.

Among the Esan, the practice is almost the same as the Bini, but for some little differences. During the seven days of mourning, the widow carries an *ikhmin*, which is a many sided plant used to ward off evil spirit. She is also forbidden to sleep on the night preceding the seventh day. It is believed that, the husband will visit and carry her away if she sleeps!

2.1.7 North Central – Benue State

The widow of north central region in Benue State is restricted to one place at the death of her husband. If she is still within the childbearing age, she is restricted to one room. She cannot go to the toilet unaccompanied; neither can she go to the farm to get food, even for her children.

Among the Etulo people, a widow is confined in mourning for three months during which it would be confirmed if she is pregnant or not. Her only attire is a piece of cloth called bento, which has a ritual object ascribed to it. This cloth is tied round the waist of the deceased man, and the widow now wears it as a symbol of her sexual relationship with the late husband. It is also believed that, this bento deters the widow from any act of flirtation or promiscuity before she is culturally freed from widowhood. After the three months of mourning, she exchanges the bento for a white dress, which, she also stops wearing after the outing ceremony. On the issue of inheritance, the *Etulo* is a

matrilineal society where inheritance right is through the female lineage. A barren widow has no rights to any of her late husband's property. Even where the widows have children, the property still goes to the maternal relations of the deceased husband who may out of good will and pity give part of it to her children.

Among the Idoma, the widow mourns for at least one year wearing sackcloth. She performs the cleansing/outing ceremony with the help of her age grade (peers) at the end of the mourning period. After this is done, she is free to remarry either within or outside the family. In Idoma land, the late man's property belongs to his relations. The widow has no share in his property neither do his children especially if they are still very young. If however, the children are adults, the property is shared between them and their father's relations.

2.1.8 North West – Kano State

At the loss of a husband, the widow observes the Takaba i.e a four-months and ten days mourning period in seclusion talking to no one and sitting in a place. After the mourning, the widow is free to remarry again within or outside the family. In this part of the country, inheritance issues are according to Islamic injunctions. The manner in which property of the deceased is shared is explicitly stated in the Qur'an. Under Islamic law, the formula for sharing property inherited is that widows are entitled to inherit at least $1/8^{\text{th}}$ of the dead husband's property and land. However, human factors, especially the relationship of the widow to her in-laws, education of the apportioning parties and cultural leanings have brought about injustices in property sharing these days. Hence, Islamic injunctions in property sharing are not strictly adhered to.

2.1.9 Health Implications of Widowhood

Report of health challenges and consequent deaths during mourning period have been recorded in certain communities in the eastern part of the country. A woman was once forced to drink the water used for bathing her husband's corpse and ended up convulsing. According to that report, it was interpreted by the perpetrators that she was guilty. This report is corroborated by Kantiyok (2000:61) study of widows in Kano State that, "As the prime suspect of her husband's death, the widow is usually compelled to go through an ordeal to prove her innocence. In some cases, she is made to drink the water used to wash the corpse". To express their grief, she adds that "widows are sometimes required to sleep on the floor, abstain from taking baths, shave their hair, and wear dirty

rag as clothes for as long as mourning lasts”. In a similar vein, Akumadu (1998:29) posits that, in certain parts of Anambra State south east Nigeria, “the widow is made to cook with broken pots and eat with unwashed hands”. These practices which stem from societal traditions and family perception are no doubt harmful to the health of the widow in question besides being extraordinarily harsh. Moreover, most of these rituals erode the dignity of the widows and also traumatize them. Besides exposure to diseases such as cholera, diarrhoea, etc, occasioned by eating with unwashed hands, drinking the water used to bathe the corpse is also poisonous. The forced cry which some widows are subjected to could result in ill health while malnutrition could result from poor feeding habits. Also, sleeping on cold floors sometimes with ashes poured on her without taking regular baths is not hygienic. Ill health from the diseases that could affect her are usually not considered. In instances where she is allowed to take her bath, cold bath in the wee hours of the morning could make the victims contract pneumonia. Besides other harmful cultural practices which involve the confinement of the woman to a room for months, she is made to wear the same set of black clothes for the duration of the mourning period. Worse still, any attempt to contest such practices is met with stiff resistance and sanctions. The confined widows, in the wake of these treatments no doubt, suffer from social degradation, inferiority complex and low self-esteem.

2.1.10 Psychological Implications of Widowhood

Widowhood, though an inevitable status has impact on the lives of people when it occurs. The death of a spouse can be one of the most stressful role transition which results in profound change in the status, stability and security of the woman. The death of a spouse results in a problem of re-adjustment. Most times, the widow suffers from insecurity and wants especially with regard to the maintenance of the house and children. In the past, this role was a joint responsibility of the couple. The psychological impact on the surviving spouse who is deprived of the companionship of the dead may be the same all over the world, but the treatment meted out to widows are diverse among cultures. Lasebikan (2001:19) captures the situation of widowhood in her statement: “what the Igbo widow experience during widowhood is better imagined than experienced”. Widowhood practices still exist in their bizarre forms in some parts of the world including some communities in Nigeria (HDI, 2005). This is premised on the fact that widowhood practices that invade the privacy of widows and violate their fundamental human rights are glaringly enforced. Literature shows that in many parts of Nigeria widows are often debarred from enjoying any inheritance rights in property owned by their husbands. A widow thus loses her home, the land she has worked for subsistence as

well as her household possessions (Oyekanmi, 2007). Harmful widowhood practices such as confinement indoors for several days and months no doubt result in the denial of freedom for the bereaved women just as their businesses and careers are stalled and sometimes lost due to long mourning periods. These rites vary from one socio-cultural group to another. The above assertion no doubt, paints a gloomy picture of widowhood in the Nigerian context. Ironically, other women in the community, especially relations of the deceased husband, are those who execute and enforce harmful cultural practices. Among the Igbo of Eastern Nigeria, these women are called the '*Umuada sisters*' which means sisters in the family'. This is the danger of the process of socialization or enculturation that is a by-product of gender relations. Such experiences again show that certain aspects of our culture inhibit development. According to UNDP Report (2004), "development that is not engendered is endangered".

2.1.11 Economic Status and Widowhood

When one considers the long mourning period associated with widowhood and the various traditional rites which widows face and the consequent denial of their fundamental rights of freedom among others, one is tempted to state that widows are by this practice rendered economically incapacitated and this aggravates their poverty. To a large extent, disinheritance pauperizes most widows so much so that they lack the means of sustaining themselves and their children, particularly if they do not accept relatives assigned/given to them as their new husbands. As part of the mourning rites, the widow in some Eastern Nigerian societies is not allowed to return to work for months for as long as mourning lasts. However, the mourning duration varies from one tradition to another. To corroborate this assertion, Olapegba and Chovwen (2007:837) opined that, "a widow that is confined, dethroned and disinherited may not see any support around her". It is obvious that these cultural practices which erode the dignity and self-esteem of the widows are counterproductive. In a similar vein, Aderinto (2000:12) revealed that a drop in the economic well-being of women accompanies widowhood and adds that the situation is made worse when the woman has been deprived of access to the late husband's savings and resources.

Despite changes in women's employment patterns towards more full-time and life-long employment and the narrowing of the male-female earning gaps, the reality is that many women continue to organize their employment around partners and family demands (and societal expectations). Consequently, their lifetime earnings are low and the risk of economic insecurity, if and when their marriage ends, remains high.

As James (1999) points out:

The absence of labor force participation and asset ownership among women was part of a traditional family system in which husbands participated in the formal markets and wives worked in the home. Women provided non-monetized services, especially when young, while their monetary needs were supposed to be covered by their spouses and eventually their children. But in many cases, this system fails, especially in old age, when women are at the receiving end of the lifetime contract. Marriages break up and the husband is the one with the formal income. Husbands die earlier than wives, with their retirement benefits used up, and often do not leave adequate resources to support the surviving spouse.

Other researches and analyses suggest a negative impact on the economic well being of women, particularly widowed women in old age (James, 1999; Hard and Wise, 1991; Williamson & Rix, 1999).

2.1.12 Property Inheritance

Several definitions of property and inheritance exist in literature. In this study, Aboki's (1997:2) definition of property 'as a jural relation between two or more persons with reference to a thing or things, the right to use and enjoy or to exclude the use and enjoyment of such a thing or things', is hereby adopted because it explains that, it is not the thing (property) itself that is important but the right to put such to use without any opposition or victimization. On the other hand, Ige (1993:1) defines inheritance "as an act of receiving property from one who is dead. This can either be written or documented as in a will or without a will (i.e. interstate)".

Among the Ondo, a Yoruba sub-ethnic group in Southwest Nigeria, property belongs to the wife/wives and the children of the deceased. It is shared as *Ori o ju ori*-Yoruba phrase meaning equality among children (including girls), or as *Idi'igi* i.e. equality among the wives in a situation in which the man has married more than one wife (polygyny), though the eventual beneficiaries are the children. Where the widow has no child, she may not get anything from her husband's property. It reverts back to the family. The issues which widows generally face and those encountered by women in developing countries are a cause for concern. In almost every society, rules have been designed to determine who will take over property and responsibilities after a death in the family. Even where laws emphasize equity, customs and traditions dominate and prevent girls from inheritance (Iruonagbe, 2009).

Discrimination against women is especially serious in the case of widowhood and property inheritance. In certain parts of eastern Nigeria, for instance, women usually end up being denied inheritance rights and finding themselves subjected to harrowing widowhood rites. A woman is forbidden from disposing of her property without the consent of her husband even though the husband may dispose of his property without the consent of his wife. The question therefore is, where then is the equality in right? (Oke, 2001:52).

Discrimination stems from customs that favour men for inheritance and property ownership. Many widows are barred by laws and customs from inheriting property, evicted from their lands and homes by in-laws and stripped of their possessions (Widows Right International, 2006). Even though a woman becomes a part of another family through marriage, she's hardly ever seen as a part of the family no matter the level of contribution she makes to the development of that family.

For Cook (1994:228), "Denials of individual's rights on the ground that they are women are human rights violation and oppression on account of their sex". This is particularly worrisome because the constitutions of most African states and Nigeria in particular do not specifically provide for property inheritance by women. "It has been a long standing custom in most parts of Africa for women not to inherit property" (Oke, 2001:52). The right of widows to property remains circumscribed in many Nigerian cultures, particularly among the Igbo where an acute shortage of land makes it a highly prized possession. Of particular significance is the denial of women's right to own land (Azogu, 1999:132).

Lamenting on widows dis-inheritance of property, Marire (2001) states, "if dead men could wake up from their graves for one minute, to see the pains and sufferings of their wives and beloved children, they would definitely regret not leaving a will or making their wives their next of kin". While some widows, knowledgeable of their rights, have challenged extended family members of their spouse in the law courts, others completely ignorant of their rights and legal provision tend to suffer in silence. One of such cases is a court case judged in Onitsha, Eastern Nigeria between *Ernest Nzekwu and others versus Christiana Nzekwu and others*. The issue involved in this case was the right of a widow in respect of her deceased husband's estate which devolved according to Onitsha customary law, on the male head of the husband's family rather than the widow. The Supreme Court ruled that any Onitsha custom which postulated that the head of the deceased family's husband could dispose

of the deceased's property without the widow's consent, was a barbarous and uncivilized custom, repugnant to equity and good conscience. In a similar case of Okagbue, the Supreme Court upheld the contention that a married woman had no right to inherit the property of her husband under the customary law of Onitsha (Azogu, 1999:132).

According to Ibhawor (1999:90), similar traditions which deny women the rights to property inheritance have been held by the courts to be a valid customary law that is applicable to the Yoruba. An example is the case of *Suberu versus Sunmonu*, where the Federal Supreme Court held that a wife could not inherit her husband's property because in the absence of surviving children, the property of a man devolved on members of "the family from which he came" Ibhawor (1999:90). Anyebe (1985:138), quotes one Nigerian jurist commenting on the customary law of inheritance reasoned that its discrimination against women is not without good cause. A realistic approach, he contends, is to examine the social and economic background against which such customary rules and institutions are set.

2.1.13 Women and Property

Okundare (1998) in a study of a Yoruba community in Nigeria observed that women were continuously looked upon as special guests, visitors, strangers and the likes in their matrimonial homes and that it is from this guest perspective that widows are dis-inherited at the death of their husbands who were considered their host in life. This view is corroborated by Nwankwo (1999) who noted that women in most south-eastern Nigerian societies are almost always regarded as their husband's property and it is more often than not unethical for them to aspire too much. This implies that, women as property are not expected to own property. Karibi-Whyte (1993) also noted that in all patrilineal societies, a wife has no right of succession of her husband's estate, her contributions to the acquisition of the estate notwithstanding. For instance, Eze and Nwebo (1989:1), in their study of widowhood practices in Igboland, cited court cases which further clarify the above notions. The scholars gave instances of two court cases heard in 1963 and 1967, which indicate that, women are not allowed to inherit landed property from their father and consequently, have no *locus standi* to bring an action in respect of the family property. George (1993) for instance, regretted that some widows were exposed to anti-social rural traditions or were frustrated and discarded by the relatives of their dead husbands.

While commenting on women's access to property, Alliyu (2007:6) observes that "any imbalance in access to property by either sex would definitely lead to power imbalance, imbalance relations and less contribution to development from the less powerful". Suffice to add that the legal and constitutional backing to protect women against discrimination and access to property is also more often than not unexecuted (Olawoye, 1991; Kabir, 1990; Whitehead, 1984; Aidoo, 1988; and Strathern, 1984).

2.1.14 Women's Property Rights

Under both customary and statutory law, a married woman has the same right to hold property as any Nigerian male. This view is supported by the passage of the married Woman's Property Act of 1982 as amended in 1993 (Otaluka, 1989). In spite of this constitutional provision, it becomes problematic why women in most Nigerian societies especially in certain communities are often denied access to property inheritance. Research findings show, for instance, that it has been a long standing custom that women in Ozalla community of Edo State South western Nigeria cannot acquire immovable property such as land (Iruonagbe, 2009), unlike the Yoruba custom where both married and unmarried women have the full capacity to contract, acquire, and dispose of all forms of property, including land. The different practices and women's property rights no doubt support cultural differences from one society to another.

There is, however, a common trend across literature that women are very often disinherited and marginalized in terms of property inheritance compared to their male counterparts. Cook (1994:228) observed the "denials of individual's rights on the ground that they are women, human rights violation and oppression on account of their sex". The laws of Nigeria do not specifically provide for property inheritance by women. "It has been a long standing custom in most parts of the country for women not to inherit property" (Oke, 2001:52). Inheritance rights among the Esan people of Edo State in Nigeria reveals that in the native Esan law and custom, men are the receivers of inheritance. Female children have no status or position in the family. As Okogie (1994) points out, Esan idioms state that 'a woman never inherits the sword'; or, 'you do not have a daughter and name her the family keeper she would marry and leave not only the family, but the village, a wasted asset'. It is believed that when a woman marries, all her possessions go to her husband, thereby draining the family's wealth. Admittedly, it is on the basis of this economic consideration that a man, while alive, acts with restraint when sharing his property among his children in Esan community.

2.1.15 Women's Inheritance Law

Women's inheritance law varies across cultures in Nigeria. For instance, Yarhere and Soola (2008) stated that, "under the Yoruba customary law of intestacy, the succession rights of a male who dies without a will devolve not only on his children, but also on his brothers and sisters". On the other hand, the Igbo and Bini customary laws at the death of a male without a will that is, a man who dies intestate confers on the eldest son the right to inherit the deceased's estate. Unlike the Yoruba customary law, both Igbo and Bini customary laws are governed by the primogeniture principle. This inheritance law also explains the reason why high premium and value is placed on male children by both ethnic groups.

In most Nigerian societies, however, widows have no customary rights to inherit the interstate property of their spouse. Yarhere and Soola (2008) argues that:

Although death does not necessarily terminate a common (customary) law marriage, the rights of a wife to retain membership in her husband's family, and possibly maintenance, remains only insofar as she remains in her matrimonial home. This holds whether or not she chooses to marry her husband's kin (levirate), except where the latter is not raised as an option, but is made mandatory.

Under the Islamic law, the widow is allowed a quarter of husband's estate, whereas a widower takes half the net estate of the deceased wife (*Lewis v. Bankole 1909; Adedoyin v. Simeon 1928*).

2.1.16 Gender Power Relations

Gender refers to social and cultural roles. It describes the socially constructed roles, activities and responsibilities assigned to men and women in a given culture, location or time. According to Gallin and Ferguson (1989:122), gender is a social construct. The term denotes socially and culturally determined differences between men and women as opposed to biological differences determined by factors which are chromosomal, anatomical, hormonal and psychological.

Ahonsi (1997:1) states:

The differentiation between men's and women's role is one of complimentary and superior relationship in favour of the men. It involves a hierarchy in which men are given greater leverage over decision making and resources than women. The result is a cultural setting that invariably promotes male domination and female subordination.

Similarly, Kitzinger (1993:5) observes that women have always been ignored, denied, or invalidated under patriarchy. UNICEF (2002) defines patriarchy as the male domination of ownership and control at all levels of society, which maintains and operates the system of gender discrimination. In most patriarchal societies, the roles of men and women are not only treated differently, but are often given unequal weights and value. The age long restrictions placed on women's life choices and opportunities hinder not only their growth but the development of nations (Aina, 2007:1).

Also, Tiano (1981:4) contends that "gender" which is an ascribed characteristic continues to be a primary criterion for allocating social roles to the extent that a society has a sex based division of labour, women's economic roles are more likely to be determined by their gender than by their own personal achievement. According to the United Nations Development Project (UNDP) report (2004), "development that is engendered is endangered". Consequently, the plight of widows in widowhood and property inheritance can be explained from gender power relations which exist in most African societies, including the Awori communities which are the focus of this study.

2.1.17 The Role of the Extended Family

The family is regarded as the most basic and important institution in the society. According to Macionis and Plummer (2002:436), "the family is a social institution that unites individuals into cooperative groups...Most families are built on kinship, a social bond, based on blood, marriage or adoption, that joins individuals into families". Most Sociological researches have shown that as a society evolves and changes, so does the nature of the family. In the words of Marsh and Keating (2006:315), "expectations and assumptions about the family are constantly changing and it is impossible to study the family as a unit in isolation from the wider developments in the nature and structure of society". To analyze the different forms of family within the society, it is imperative to make a distinction between the nuclear and extended type of family. The nuclear family is often referred to as the 'immediate family' consisting of parents and children living in the same household.

The extended family goes beyond this, to include the wider kin such as aunts, uncles, cousins, nephews, and grandparents. As Adepoju (2001: 231) observed:

The African family is today in a state of flux. It is currently undergoing severe stress both from within and without. A series of external factors –social, political, economic and environmental–are impacting severely on the way the family functions, evolves, sustains itself and adjusts to these set of forces. Although as a social institution it procreates, socializes and educates the children, the African family still functions primarily as an economic organ, as a unit of both production and consumption.

With respect to sub-Saharan Africa, Oppong (1994) has noted that, “the extended family remains one of the strongest social networks”. The extended kins continue to place financial and emotional demands on the fragile conjugal unit; they often make more demands than do the wife’s kins. Otite (1994) on his part notes, “in spite of the process of change in the family structure, the extended family kin still figure importantly in the family arrangements of Africans located in rural, urban and industrial areas”. In Nigeria and most countries (industrialized or less industrialized), smaller family size no doubt is the common trend but it has not succeeded in completely weakening the traditional role of the extended family (Oppong, 1994). Other changes in African family structures and marriage relationships have had a profound effect on women. There is no doubt that the nuclear household seems to be gaining greater autonomy from the extended family especially in its day to day living patterns. However, the extended family ties remain important in many ways, for example, in financial arrangements and inheritance. This view is buttressed in a study by a multi-disciplinary group of researchers Women and Law in Southern Africa (WLSA) research, which established that the extended family is still the central institution in southern Africa dealing with death and inheritance (Noube and Stewart, 1995).

According to Locoh (1988a:118), the key features of African family structure are:

- (i) preference for an extended family structure;
- (ii) high degree of separation of male and female roles and responsibilities;
- (iii) integration of reproduction and productive functions at all generational levels of the family;
- (iv) stronger lineage than conjugal solidarity;
- (v) propensity to polygyny; and
- (vi) dominance by elders.

2.1.18 Marriage and Its Functions

Marriage is considered as one of the major social institutions in the history of humanity. The concept of marriage covers a wide range of varied situations with different social and legal arrangements (Anser, 2007). As a universal institution found in all known human societies across the world, there exist great diversity in the systems of marriage from one society to another. Essentially, the issue of marriage is core to human race irrespective of religious belief or affiliation. Several definitions of the concept abound in literature. For instance, Salawu (2007) defines marriage as a union between a man and a woman such that the children born to the woman are the recognized legitimate offspring of both partners. This definition implies that marriage is a union of one man with one woman in accordance with the traditions and customs of a society; he adds that, it is these traditions and customs that give marriage its legal foundation.

Marriage has also been defined as ‘a socially sanctioned sex relationship involving two or more people of the opposite sex, whose relationship is expected to endure beyond the time required for gestation and the birth of children’ (Hewith, cited in Mitchell, 1977:113). Marriage as a social institution has two different, yet related, facets. The biological facet involves procreation and socialization of children, while the social facet concerns regulating sexual relationships and parenthood. Traditionally, marriage is considered by the Yorubas not as a contract between a husband and a wife, but as a “symbolical union of two families... sacred institution... as important to the wider kinship group as it is to the two parties involved” (Beier, 1955:13). Like in most patriarchal societies, a woman is socialized into a culture of female subordination. She is not only subordinate to her husband and men in her own family of orientation, but also to all the members of her husband’s family (males and females). With marriage a woman becomes part of a new patrilineage. Her position in the affinal compound is defined by her relative status within the affinal group (Aina, 1998:3).

Different types of marriage are found in literature: monogamy, polygyny, levirate and group marriage. Polygyny which is a type of polygamy whereby a man is married to more than one woman simultaneously is a widely practiced marriage system among Muslims, adherents of Traditional religion and Christians who belong to independent African churches.

2.1.19 The Role of Patriarchy in Widowhood Practices and Property Inheritance

A patriarchal society is a male-dominated society in which male rule is prominent. Under patriarchy, widows are not entirely prevented from leading active and often successful lives, but their authority and behaviour are more often challenged than in the case of widowers. Widows are subjected to pressures widowers are not subjected to. For example, wailing and crying by a widower at the loss of his wife is often considered unmanly in many cultures in Nigeria, whereas the widow may wail and cry for days or months at the loss of her husband. The fact that most Nigerian societies are patriarchal in nature informs the way properties are usually inherited.

2.1.20 Modes of Production

As societies develop from simple to complex, pre-industrial to industrial, a number of modes of production exist. In this context, two types: lineage mode and the capitalist mode of production are examined. The lineage mode of production is a pre-capitalist mode, which emphasizes group interest above the individual interest, and in most cases, the individual enjoys property rights because of membership in a particular lineage. Within this arrangement, the principle of reciprocity reigns supreme and determines access to critical resources such as land, capital and machinery. On the other hand, the capitalist mode of production is an advanced form of production characterized by large market economies, modern technology and exchange in monetary values. Here production is beyond family consumption but for the larger external market geared towards profit maximization. The capitalist mode of production ushered in private property ownership and accumulation of wealth.

2.1.21 The Role of Religion in widowhood and Property Inheritance

Reports from the *New York Times* (2008) reveal that “there are six major religions in the world currently”. These include: Christianity (33 percent); Islam (19.6 percent) and Atheism, Gothic, Mormon, Jewish, and other religions with few adherents constituting the remaining 58 percent of the world’s population. It should be noted that widowhood and property inheritance, which is the focus of this study, cuts across religion and race. However, for the purpose of this research, the three commonest and most popular religions Islam, Christianity and African Traditional Religion (ATR) will be examined to ascertain their roles as regard the prevailing widowhood practices and property inheritance.

Emile Durkheim, the French Sociologist was perhaps the first to recognize the critical importance of religion in human societies. He defined religion as a unified system of beliefs and practices, relative

to sacred things. According to Durkheim (1922), religious faiths distinguish between certain transcending events and the every day world. The major elements of religion identified by Durkheim include:

Beliefs –These refer to the principles which members of a particular religion adhere to. Beliefs are based on the existence of a supernatural being that has the power to control events in the real world of human existence. In a nutshell, belief is the basis of all religions.

Rituals –These are the practices required of a member of a religion, to honour the divine power worshipped and a ritual may be performed at regular intervals, or on specific occasions, or at the discretion of individuals or communities. It may be performed by a single individual, by a group, or by the entire community; in arbitrary places, or in places especially reserved for it; either in public, in private, or before specific people. A ritual may be restricted to a certain subset of the community, and may enable or underscore the passage between religious or social states. Among the Egun in the Badagry area of Lagos State, for instance, Simpson (2001) notes that virtually all aspects of life find relevance in ritual observance. She adds that “it is, in fact, not difficult for the visitor in Badagry to realize that daily life in the town is shaped by, and in essence, comprehended in terms of the potency and pervasiveness of ritual.

The purposes of rituals are varied; they include compliance with religious obligations or ideals, satisfaction of spiritual or emotional needs of the practitioners, strengthening of social bonds, and demonstration of respect or submission. Rituals also involve stating one's affiliation, obtaining social acceptance or approval for some event or, sometimes, just for the pleasure of the ritual itself.

Experience – This implies the feeling or perception of being in direct contact with the ultimate reality.

In a similar vein, the *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* defines religion as “a set of shared beliefs and practices often centered upon specific supernatural and moral claims about reality, the cosmos and human nature often codified as prayers, rituals and religious laws”. In addition, religion encompasses ancestral or cultural traditions, writings, history and mythology; as well as personal faith and mystic experience. The term ‘religion’ refers to both the personal practices related to communal faith and to group rituals, stemming from a ‘shared conviction’. Religion, according to Reineke (1995:430), expresses and shapes the ideals, hopes, and needs of humankind. For Mbiti (1969:1), “religion permeates into all the departments of life so fully that it is not easy or always possible to isolate it”.

For instance, Korieh (1996) opines that “African peoples carried substantial elements of their cultural practice including widowhood practices, into the two new religions (Islam and Christianity) which they embraced. The result is that widowhood practices in Africa today are a bewildering and confusing mix of traditional African practices and practices borrowed from Islam and Christianity.

Today, the role of religion in widowhood practices and property inheritance cannot be isolated, while a religion such the African Traditional Religion (ATR) encourages current widowhood practices such as trial by ordeal – a situation in which the widow is made to swear an oath before the village shrine as a proof of her innocence at the death of her spouse, foreign religions such as Christianity and Islam may not necessarily subject the widow to such traditional practice and consequent traumatic experience. However, data from the field will assist in providing more insights into the role(s) of these religions (Christianity, Islam and African Traditional Religion) in widowhood and property inheritance.

2.1.22 Christianity

According to the *World Fact book and Almanac*, Christianity is the second largest religion in Nigeria after Islam. Christians are listed as comprising 40 percent of the population, with Muslims 50 percent and indigenous religions 10 percent. The biblical doctrine of “wives submit to your husbands, as is fit in the Lord” in Ephesians 5:22 encourages total submission of women to their husbands. Observing widowhood rites and property dis-inheritance are often unchallenged and taken as natural by widows. According to Ola-Aluko and Edewor (2002:24), “Christian ethics on gender relations are oiled with traditional patriarchal values, resulting in greater moral demands on wives to keep the rules of marriage, while men easily break or bend the rules as the case may be”. The Christian widow rarely escapes the wrath of widowhood rites and observances. The intensity and procedures may have changed over time, but the practices are still observed today.

In a study carried out among the Uturu society in eastern Nigeria (Afigbo: 1989), Christianity and western education were major factors impacting on tradition. During a field work, a widow was found holding a crucifix instead of a broom or knife recommended by tradition. An informant stated “the Reverend will not be annoyed if she is holding a cross”. This shows the difficulty of breaking with tradition. The Igbo Christian for instance, finds herself in a dilemma of keeping the Christian faith and also keeping traditions and customs (Widow, 1994). However, “traditional habits, fear,

insistence on the maintenance of tribal identity have made it almost impossible to change the status quo” (Lasebikan, 2001:18). Similarly, Aina (1998:15) notes, “apart from the contradictions inherent in African patriarchal social structures and prestige, there is also the influence of exogenous cultures (capitalism, colonialism and foreign religion amongst others) and their impact on African social structures, particularly gender relations”. Also, among the Igbo for instance, Onwuejeogwu (1987:21) states that the Christian religion especially Roman Catholicism has in recent times greatly re-ordered traditional institutions, especially particularly rituals and customs. A common feature of the Christian religion in issues of widowhood and property inheritance from literature is the fact that they have not succeeded in changing the status quo except for slight modifications. The existing traditional practices remain dominant.

2.1.23 Islam

This is one of the dominant religions in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) including Nigeria especially the northern part which accounts for one of the largest Muslim populations in Africa. Islam came to northern Nigeria as early as the eleventh century and was well established in major towns of the northern region by the sixteenth century, spreading into the countryside and towards the middle belt uplands.

Like Christianity, Islam contains an ideology of gender and embodies assumptions about women. The most significant element of the Islamic ideology includes the extension of basic legal rights in marriage, divorce, and property. Under the Islamic law, widows are entitled to inherit at least one-eighth of the dead husband’s property and land. This share is frequently ‘managed’ and then taken by the brother-in-law. In India, the Hindu Succession Act of 1969 made women eligible to inherit equally with men, yet, the inheritance rights of the majority of Indian rural widows is associated with conflicts. In a 1994 study, 30 percent of widows reported serious conflicts over inheritance, land, property, and residence. It was reported that these conflicts often ended in violence. Cases abound in which brother-in-laws harass, persecute, beat, torture, and even arrange the murder of a widow.

2.1.24 Traditional Religion

Before the advent of Christianity and Islam, the Awori had mixed religions. Their forefathers were traditional religious worshippers. Traditional religion is regarded as the oldest of the three religions practiced by most Awori communities today. Among the Yoruba ethnic group generally, traditional religion involves on the worship of Olodunmare (Yoruba) meaning 'god' and its divinities such as *Sango, Oya, Esu, Orisa-Nla, Orunmila, Ogun, Ela* and *Sapona* to mention a few. The religion also has linkages with common Yoruba festivals like *Oro, Egungun, Agemo, Eyo* etc which are celebrated periodically by the followers.

Although statistics are not available on the number of traditional religious adherents among the Awori, due to absence of written records, the religion is acknowledged as comprising of both the educated and non-educated members of the society. There exists evidence on how western civilization has greatly influenced the practice of traditional religion in recent time. For instance, human sacrifice which that was once a common feature of the religion is now gradually eroded and replaced with animal sacrifice. The Awori people are made up of a large number of Traditionalists. It is a common occurrence today to note that the traditionalists use both print and electronic media to advertise their businesses. Common traditional festival such as *Oro, Egungun* are equally given high publicity on both radio and television. It is not however surprising to note that some highly placed individuals, educated elites and top government dignitaries secretly patronize priests and priestesses of traditional religion in our society

African Traditional Religion (ATR) is the fundamental religion of the indigenous African people including the Awori of Ogun State, Nigeria. The belief and practices of ATR are based upon the faith of the ancient indigenous people (Ancestor) handed down from one generation to another. In comparison to other religions (Christianity and Islam) which are considered as foreign since their doctrines and practices came from outside Africa. ATR as a religious belief has been in existence from time immemorial and are being adhered to today by the Aworis inspite of the influx of foreign religions like Christianity and Islam. This is reflected in the firm grip of ATR on common cultural practices such as widowhood and property inheritance modalities among the people. The statistics and geographical distribution of the followers of ATR in Angola, Gambia, Guinea, Lesotho, Niger, Nigeria, Sao-Tome and Sudan is 10-29% (Camboni Missionary Magazine, 2000: 2).

In spite of the declining number of followers, it continues to be the source of meaning, direction, and security of the lives of many Awori of Ogun State, Nigeria including followers of other well established religious traditions. Essentially, ATR represents the common religion and spiritual rooting of persons from the same ethnic group. This is reflected in persons who feel that as long as no harm is intended for the other person, one can go to the a Christian church, pray in a mosque and offer sacrifices in an African Traditional shrine. In the religious world view of ATR practitioners, syncretism does not have a negative connotation. ATR recognizes the supremacy of the Supreme Being, yet it sees the lesser divinities merely as intermediaries between the Supreme Being and man, or agents of God (Opoku, 1978).

The practice of ATR varies widely from one place to another that some people tend to refer to it as Religions; in the plural, rather than one religion. Unlike other organized world religions such as Judaism, Christianity and Islam, ATR has no written scriptures. It is rich in oral literature. Through the traditions of the elders, all creed and functions are carried in the individuals' heart. These are reflected in its traditional philosophy and culture which embraces all aspects of life ranging from religion, custom, folklore, legends, myths, tales, song, lyrics and most importantly, widowhood which this study examines. According to Abe (1993), all these project the tremendous richness of ATR's moral values or ethics. Isizoh (1998) argued that early Christian missionaries from Europe to Africa did not meet pagans, people without religion, but people with a high sense of the sacred and Supreme Being. In Gabon, for example, the earliest missionaries to the country equated traditional religion with fetishism and idol worship. The essence was to wipe away paganism considered as barbaric by the colonizers. Its attendant consequence was the gradual disappearance of ATR as a religious institution. Among the Awori local group which this study is anchored, the practice of satisfying the ancestors, the dead and of protecting the living are important element of widowhood practices supported by the ATR.

The expansion and growth of Christianity and Islam, to some extent, undermine the position of ATR among the Awori communities studied. The greater threat to the traditional institution is viewed in terms of the new set values introduced by the foreign religions as evident in the modifications and changes widowhood practices and property inheritance in recent time. African Traditional believers have a firm believe that only the aged should die, the death of a young man therefore is attributed to some supernatural forces. The commonest cause of premature death in African Traditional societies is believed to be witchcraft, magic, sorcery and a powerful curse (Amposah, 1975). The cause of

death in African Traditional societies are revealed by diviners and medicine men or sometimes through someone (a medium) who might be spiritually possessed.

2.1.25 The Influence of Western Education on Widowhood Practices and Property Inheritance

The development of western education in Nigeria owes much to the activities of the European missionaries who established and ran schools for the greater part of the early period between 1842 and 1882 (Ajayi and Adeniji, 2006). Globally, education has been acknowledged as a great stimulus for sustainable national development. Education has been variously defined as a life-long process of learning which begins shortly after birth and continues throughout the life of human beings. It is through education that relevant skills, knowledge and values are acquired by members of society to enable them maximize their potentials in the ever changing world. Other definitions of education abound in literature. For instance, Bamiro (2006) defines education as “a tool which the society uses to create awareness of the past and the participation of the present for the future of the members. Education inculcates the right knowledge, values and skills into people, empowering them to contribute to the process of improving their quality of life”. Nigeria as a nation was quick to realize the pertinent role of education; hence, the National Policy on Education (2004) categorically spelt out the nation’s belief that “education is an instrument for national development; to this end the formulation of ideas, their integration for national development, and the interaction of persons and ideas are all aspects of education, meaning education fosters the worth and development of a society”.

In spite of the spread of western education and increasing urbanization, obnoxious widowhood practices and other forms of traditional practices that violate the rights of women (child marriage, wife battering, and Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) remain dominant in most Nigerian societies. In a similar vein, other gender based socio-cultural practices which prevent women from the developmental process include all forms of domestic violence: obnoxious widowhood practices, early or forced marriage, wife battering, etc. These restrictions created by socio-cultural practices can be blamed for the poor participation of women in politics and decision making process (Aina, 2007:2). On the other hand, Ahonsi (1997) identifies three interrelated features of the Nigerian society which create conditions that are conducive to the maltreatment of widows.

First is the continuing prominence of the extended family, and by extension, the lineage in social life. For Ahonsi (1997), a Nigerian belongs first to his or her family of orientation to which he or she

owes allegiance. The family of procreation is, therefore, not expected to interfere with this link. One obvious effect of this is the persistent fostering of a very strong sense of agnatic kinship solidarity, which outweighs the sense of obligation to the family of procreation.

Second is the value placed on children by most African families. It follows then that a woman who is not able to conceive is viewed as a failure and her social and economic contributions to the family are undervalued and completely ignored. In a similar vein, Onah (1992) and Ayisi (1979) identifies procreation as the main reason for contracting marriage in Nigeria. Among the Yoruba for instance, children are validators of marriage and childlessness is often a cause of marital instability (Fadipe, 1970 and Bolaji, 1984). Edewor (2001) adds that children confer a special status on women, who may be honoured for their role in perpetuating the lineage.

Third, marriage continues to be viewed as a union between two families than between two individuals. According to Ahonsi (1997), this accounts for why marriage in a patriarchal society is seen as a contract extending beyond the life of the husband.

2.1.26 Support Sources and Coping Mechanisms for Widows

Across the literature there are variations in the amounts and kinds of assistance from various support sources that are available to widows. For instance, Potash (1986) states that “apart from the help given by children and sometimes natal kin, widows generally receive little or no income support, but may receive some labour assistance”.

While some widows especially those who are still of marriageable age have resorted to remarriage as a coping response for widowhood, those who are not too young rely on their older children, family members, relatives, friends and religious organizations (such as churches and mosques) and their employment or vocation for financial support.

The present economic crises, increasing level of unemployment among the populace, and the high rate of inflation in virtually all countries of the world partly account for why most families are unable to extend financial support to widows. However, some notable Private and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) within and outside Nigeria have brought succor and smile to the faces of widows in various capacities even though a lot more still needs to be done. A brief overview of the activities and programmes of the following widow organizations: Widow Care, Tina Sam Ibekwe Foundation, Bounty Food for Hunger Relief Initiative (BFHRI), and Women’s Right Advancement

and Protection Alternatives (WRAPA), INRI foundation provide more insight into the various sources of supports vis-à-vis coping mechanisms for widows.

2.1.27 Widow Care

Widow Care is a Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) established in 1994 in Abakaliki by the former first lady of Ebonyi State, eastern Nigeria, Mrs. Eunice Egwu, primarily to provide advocacy, economic empowerment, protection, healthcare support services, encourage and sustain widows' social, economic and spiritual development. To actualize the targets of the group in full, the founder built a permanent structure for the NGO named-The Widow care Centre otherwise called Widow Care Foundation Headquarters. Emewu (2008) described the Widow Care Foundation as a "dream hatched to fill the void in the life of widows by taking on the role of their reliable friend". Through the Centre, 48 erstwhile homeless widows now have their own homes, modern houses with facilities provided while over 50 widows have been trained and employed by the Centre in various vocational skills: sewing and craft making. It was also reported by Emewu (2008) in *Saturday Sun* of June 21, 2008, page 22 that, "The Widow Care Centre/Foundation handles healthcare matters such as providing succor for people living with HIV/AIDS through confidential counseling and testing and the distribution of anti-retroviral drugs. Over 1000 patients are currently benefitting from the programme". Interestingly, the Centre also has a family law unit for advocacy on widows' complaints, public event facility as well as Information and Communication Technology (ICT) centre. In the words of the founder, Mrs. Egwu, the foundation is already reaping the fruits of its labour as the paints that adorn the centre came from the paint making facility of the foundation, and made by widows and other less privileged people who were trained and employed there.

Suffice to add that, as laudable and commendable as the projects and programmes of the Widow care centre seem, it is the opinion of the author that, a lot more centers impacting the lives of widows need to be established across the country considering the increasing number of widows in recent times especially among the Awori which is the study area. This is because, a Widow Care Centre of this nature will not only empower the widows economically, it will in addition, alleviate their suffering and current poverty status.

Second, the problem of sustainability and continuity of the Widow Care Centre/Foundation programmes must be carefully examined. Past experience has shown that similar laudable projects

die premature deaths after a while, due to gross mismanagement of resources, lack of funding, corruption and change in government policies.

2.1.28 Tina Sam Ibekwe Foundation

This is yet another NGO established to provide succor for widows. Established in Lagos, southwest Nigeria in the year 2006 by Mrs. Tina Ibekwe, the major pre-occupation of the foundation is to provide humanitarian services to widows, especially the needy and less-privileged among them. Quoting the founder through an excerpt from an interview by Adeyi (2009) in *Daily Sun*, Tuesday, February 10, “the centre is concerned with both spiritual (counseling and prayers) and material well-being of women whose joy has been cut short by the cold hands of death visited on their husbands, those whose husbands’ property and wealth were confiscated from them by their husbands’ relations after death and are left in perpetual lack and abject poverty”. To achieve the primary goal of providing succor for widows by the Foundation, Ibekwe (2009) declared that, “apart from her personal efforts in using her funds to provide widows with some basic needs such as food, clothing and accommodation as well as scholarship for their children’s education, the foundation organizes skill acquisition programmes and empowers them with incentives to start their own businesses for self-reliance”. She recalled that so far, not less than 200 widows and indigent people across the nation have benefitted immensely from the foundation.

2.1.29 Bounty Food for Hunger Relief Initiative (BFHRI)

BFHRI is yet another NGO established to bring succor to widows in Northern Nigeria. According to Onche (2008) in a publication titled “Widows Appreciate NGO” published in the cover page of the *Leadership* Newspaper of January 23, 2009, the president of BFHRI, Mr. Bulus Makama presented some widows from Abuja and Nassarawa State with food items, and promised to provide jobs and free training in adult education. Even though the number of beneficiaries of the initiative was not stated in that report, the gesture by BFHRI no doubt indicates that, the level of awareness and social supports given to widows is increasing in that part of the country. However, among the Awori of Ogun State, the author is not aware of any NGO addressing widows’ plights or providing relief and material supports for this disadvantaged group.

2.1.30 Women's Right Advancement and Protection Alternatives (WRAPA)

WRAPA is a registered, non-governmental, non-political, and non-profit charitable organization established in Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja, in 2006 and funded by MacArthur Foundation. As a body charged with the responsibility of advancing women's rights globally, WRAPA is today one of the leading voices in the advocacy and campaign on violence against women. The FCT Coordinator of WRAPA, Mrs. Rabi Abdullahi described the need for legal reforms to support the elimination of all forms of gender violence including: rape, female genital mutilation (FGM) and widowhood rites that erode the dignity of women. Ojoma (2009) reports that, "the secretary general, Hajia Saudatu Mahdi stated the need for support from government, police, legal bodies and the general public to fight against gender based violence. This is because instead of reducing cases of gender based violence was increasing by the day".

In addition to the roles of the NGOs in championing the cause of widows across Nigeria presented above, there exist television programmes and materials from both the print and electronic media that show the plight of African widows and the need for urgent intervention. For instance, indigenous films: "*Till death do us part*", "*The agony of widows*" and "*Widows*" under the umbrella body of home movies producers in Nigeria, Nollywood are few cases in which widows' plights are shown. The popular television programme "*Hands of Love*" anchored by Pastor Gina Harry, also brings viewers at home the ugly situation which range from obnoxious widowhood practices, property disinheritance, psychological, and economic constraints faced by most widows in Nigeria. Data abound on reported cases of widows' maltreatment, denial of financial assistance by spouse's extended family, seizure of property jointly owned with deceased husband, as well as ejection of the widow and her children from family house at the death of the husband, not minding the trauma to which the affected persons are subjected to.

2.1.31 Constitutional Provisions, Widowhood Practices and Property Inheritance

In a study of *Inheritance in Africa and the Rights of the Female Child*, Oke (2001:51) opines that, "although the constitutions of African states do not specifically provide for inheritance, it can be established from the examination of the enactments that men and women are accorded equal status by the law". The constitution guarantees to every citizen basic fundamental human rights among which is freedom from discrimination. Section 3(a) of the 1999 constitution of Nigeria states that "A citizen of Nigeria of a particular community, ethnic group, place of origin, sex, religion or political

opinion shall not, by reason that he is such a person be subjected to law that...other sex are not subjected to". This law guarantees the same treatment to men and women alike. The question therefore is, why does it have to be different in widowhood practices and property inheritance?

Similarly, Section 20 of the 1999 Nigerian constitution states that, the state shall protect, preserve and promote the Nigerian cultures which enhance human dignity and are consistent with the fundamental objectives as provided by the amended constitution. In addition, Section 34 of the 1999 constitution clearly stated its position on the rights to dignity of human person accordingly:

- (a) no person shall be subjected to torture or to inhuman degrading treatment;
- (b) no person shall be held in slavery or servitude; and
- (c) no person shall be required to perform forced or compulsory labour.

The phrase "inhuman treatment" according to Sub-section 34 (a) of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria annotated (1999) means any barbarous or cruel act or acting without feeling for the suffering of the other. "Person" under the opening paragraph of this provision includes not only the physical body but also his/her psyche and other mental attributes. While, "A degrading treatment" has the element of lowering the societal status, character, value or position of a person, it makes the victim to have some form of complex which is not dignifying at all.

In a similar vein, Article 3 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights stipulates that, "Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of persons. And no one shall be subjected to torture, or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment" (Article 5). Existing women abuses such as sexual harassment, child marriage, female genital mutilation (FGM), rape, prostitution and most especially widowhood rites in most Nigerian societies, clearly negate Section 34(a) of the constitution. However, implementation has been a major bottleneck in the 21st century. In spite of constitutional provisions and legal options, the patriarchal nature of Nigerian society has made it an uphill task for aggrieved widows to access legal rights in cases of widowhood and property inheritance.

The paucity of research on widows as victims of weak state patriarchal legislative structures is another problem. Existing legislation is often silent on widows' rights. In spite of global response to women's subordinate position in societies through the United Nations (UN) Women Decades 1975-1985, 1985-1995, 1995-2005 and International Conventions and Declarations, there seems to be no end to widows' plight especially in most parts of sub-Saharan Africa. Similarly, the UN World

Conferences in Mexico in 1975, Copenhagen in 1980, Nairobi in 1985, and Beijing in 1995, and the ratification by many countries of the 1979 UN Conventions on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) have not achieved any significant success. Of major concern is the fact that in Nigeria, response to the international conventions and declarations (especially as they relate to widows) is grossly inadequate and there is no unified national response.

2.2.0 Theoretical Framework

A theory is a system of related ideas that enable one to explain and predict phenomena. The pivotal role of theory in research cannot be overemphasized. According to Ola (1983), “a theory is like a map which guides a research from unknown destination to a known destination”. It is against this premise that relevant sociological theories which sustain and others that alter socio-cultural practices such as widowhood and property inheritance are examined with a view to guiding and providing deeper insights into the subject matter of this inquiry. Thus, Structural Functionalist Theory (SFT) and the Political Economic Theory (PET) serve as the guiding theoretical framework for this study. The Feminist Political Economic Theory (FPET) was adopted to challenge the structural frameworks that sustained patriarchal values in the emerging African political economy.

2.2.1 Structural Functionalist Theory

Structural Functionalist Theory (SFT) has its roots and application to the study of society in the natural sciences (Worsley, 1992). The theory emerged first in Europe in the 19th century as a sharp response to what was perceived as a crisis of social order at that time. The analysis of Structural Functionalist Theory has a long history in Sociology (Haralambos and Holborn, 2000). It is prominent in the works of Auguste Comte (1798-1857) and Herbert Spencer (1820-1903). The development of the theory was credited to Emile Durkheim (1858-1917) while Talcott Parsons (1902-1979) refined the theory (Ogunbameru, 2008).

The Structural Functionalist Theory (SFT), unlike the Conflict perspective, is a value consensus theory which emphasizes the maintenance of the status quo and equilibrium in human societies. The SFT was explored within the web of social network and the sustenance of the cultural practice among the Awori local group. The main thrust of the theory is on how social order is maintained in the society. It uses the analogy of society as an organism, sees the sociologist’s main task as

identifying the various parts/structures of society that function to maintain equilibrium: hence the name 'structural functionalism' (Lee & Newby, 1991).

One of the most popular proponents of the SFT, Parsons (1956:11), an American Sociologist, opines that "every pattern has consequences which contribute to the preservation and survival of the larger system". With the emphasis on equilibrium, structural functionalists are of the viewpoint that in a given society, the best social change is no change. For them, the various social structures and institutions of the society perform certain indispensable roles that are meant for the survival and the stability of the entire system. Hence, a dysfunction and change of any aspect of society would not only lead to chaos and disequilibrium but also, a total collapse of the entire system. Merton (1949/1968:104), another functionalist theorist, states that structural functionalist analysis focuses on groups, organizations, societies and cultures. He developed the idea of *dysfunction*. Just as structures or institutions could contribute to the maintenance of other parts of the social system, they also could have negative consequences for them. He contended that not all structures are indispensable to the workings of the social system. Some parts of our social system can be eliminated. If there are aspects of a people's culture that are injurious to their health or detrimental for societal progress, they can be discarded.

Against this premise, the structural functionalist theory is very relevant in explaining the various socio-cultural factors that sustain widowhood practices in the Awori societies especially in the 21st century. The diverse traditional and socio-cultural practices, they vary from one society to another, subject widows to specific mourning rites and rituals. These practices are products of the society which are considered to perform specific functions both for the widow and the larger society. For instance, the practice of levirate which is practiced in some Nigerian societies in spite of western culture and modern civilization is considered an essential means of ensuring that the wealth/property of the deceased husband is retained within the family.

To the structural functionalists, beliefs, customs, and traditions are non-material cultures that exist as part of societal structures, which are perceived as essential for the survival of such society because of the roles they perform. The subject of this study, widowhood and property inheritance, is considered as performing vital functions for the various groups represented by the society. The modality for the practices of widowhood and property sharing is functional and unique to a people. These are determined by the cultural practices of the people as 'handed down from one generation to another.

In this context, the concept of culture is examined with a view to ascertaining its functions and sustenance of certain cultural practices such as widowhood rites in this study.

According to Mead (1982), “man made for himself a fabric of culture within which human life was dignified by form and meanings”. To Levi-Strauss (1967), culture like language, is essentially a collection of arbitrary symbols. He was concerned with the patterning of elements, the way cultural elements relate to one another to form the overall system. Cultural practices such as widowhood rites represent routine behaviour that carries the norms and values of the society; it is often not easily changed. In other words, culture is a collective pattern of living conveying the norms and values handed down from one generation to another.

To corroborate the debate on the subject of culture, Okeke (2000:6) has argued against viewing gender discrimination inherent in cultural practices as acceptable because it is the ‘tradition’. She shows how patriarchal continuities, even when they contain contradictions, can support claims of the rightness of traditions. This is exemplified in the contradictions between statutory and customary law, and the weaknesses in statutory law which uphold men’s privileges in relation to property rights and inheritance laws. This scenario often results in unequal power relations which promote an inequitable social structure that favours the dominant gender (Okeke, 2000:6). The author shares the views espoused by Okeke (2000:3). For as much as cultural practices in relation to widowhood and property inheritance are functional for a people and the society that promotes them in terms of upholding cultural traditions handed down by past generations, it is not enough justification for a particular group or gender to be discriminated against or given unequal treatment as is the case in most patriarchal societies.

A British Sociologist, Margaret Archer (1988), made significant contributions to the agency-structure literature. This is epitomized in her critique of Giddens’ Structuration theory which provided the backdrop for her ‘*culture and agency theory*’. This theory is very relevant in explaining widowhood and property inheritance as an adjunct of cultural practices. Contrary to Giddens’ Structuration theory which lies in the ideas of structure, system and duality of structure, Archer opines that structure (and culture) and agency are analytically distinct, although they are intertwined in social life. Archer sought to articulate a systems theory alternative to Giddens theory, hence she made a conceptual distinction between structure and agency. While structure is the realm of material phenomena and interests, culture involves non-material phenomena and ideas. Property inheritance

can be likened to structure in terms of material phenomena and interests while widowhood and its underlying practices are non-material cultural phenomena and ideas. Not only is structure and culture substantially different, they also are relatively autonomous. Thus in Archer's view, structure and culture must be dealt with separately. Within the context of Archer's morphogenic theory, the emphasis is on the realm of structure and how structural conditioning affects socio-cultural interaction and, again how this interaction leads to cultural elaboration. Cultural conditioning refers to the parts or component, of cultural systems. Widowhood practices among the Awori local group represent cultural conditioning which forms a component part of the Awori cultural system/tradition. Perhaps, this explains why such cultural practices are held in high esteem and are carried on from one generation to the next.

Another significant aspect of Archer's theory is the phenomenon of socio-cultural interaction which deals with the relationships between cultural agents. Archer (1988) posits that the relationship between cultural conditioning and socio-cultural interaction is, then a variant of the (cultural) structure-agency issue. In terms of agency, the theorist specifies the ways in which the cultural system impinges on socio-cultural action. In addition, the theory seeks to explain the effects of social relationships on agents. Closely associated with this is the issue of the ways in which agents respond to and react upon the cultural system. The cultural system lies precisely in two-fold relationship with human agency. First is the effect upon members of the society and second is the effect of members of the society upon the cultural system. She notes that part of the cultural system may be either contradictory or complementary. This helps to determine whether agents will engage in orderly or complementary relationship with one another. This relationship will assist to determine whether cultural relationships are stable or changing. "Culture is the product of human agency but at the same time any form of social interaction is embedded in it" (Archer, 1988: 77-78). It is precisely for this reason that they cannot be said to be autonomous or treated separately.

Archer's postulation is based on four general positions: First, the cultural system is made up of components that have a logical relationship to one another. Second, the cultural system has a causal impact on the socio-cultural system. Third, there is the causal relationship among the individuals and groups that exists at the socio-cultural level. Finally, changes at the socio-cultural level lead to the elaboration of the cultural system.

Unlike Archer, Ortner (1974) takes a structuralist approach on the question of gender inequality. She suggests that gender relations are patterned by the fact that women, as child bearers, are natural creators while men, because they are unable to bear children, are cultural creators. According to Ortner (1974), even in societies where women may hold high status and powerful positions, one can still find evidence indicating that they are inferior to men. Having rejected biological foundations for the universal subordination of women, Ortner formulates a cultural explanation with an assumption about the universal treatment of women. This can be used to explain certain aspects of widowhood practices and property inheritance among the Awori. According to a key Informant, widowhood practice such as the confinement of widows indoors for a number of days, months or years as the case may be among the Awori is enforced to ascertain whether the widow is pregnant for the deceased husband and also to prevent the widow from committing abortion. Such a cultural practice promotes high value for human life by putting in place a structure such as confinement of widows indoors for a specified period. Certain societal structures that ensure that cultural practices especially widowhood practices and property inheritance modalities are upheld remain dominant in spite of social change and influx of western ideology in most African societies. Due to the value attached to cultural traits and the specific functions they perform both for the various groups represented in the larger society, the performance of widowhood practices as dictated by culture among the Awori is perceived as fulfilling a continuity role in terms of transmitting such cultural traditions from one generation to the next. The intrinsic value attached to widowhood rites by the Awori as a means of paying the last respect to the dead explains why they are still sustained by the people.

Ritzer and Goodman (2004:226) have observed that structural functionalism especially the works of sociologists like Talcott Parsons and Robert Merton were for many years the dominant sociological theory. Similarly, Robert Nisbert argued that structural functionalism is without any doubt, the single most significant body of theory in the social sciences in the present century (cited in Turner and Maryanski, 1979: xi). In spite of the lofty attributes of Structural Functionalist Theory, it has been criticized by a feminist scholar (Lasebikan, 2001) on the ground that, rather than challenge or modify certain obnoxious and debasing widowhood practices such as drinking water used to bath the corpse, swearing by the shrine, eating with unwashed hands and broken pots that some widows are subjected to in certain African societies, SFT by its operating principles has perpetually assisted in the maintenance of the status quo, in addition to the furtherance of cultural norms and societal traditions such as widowhood practices. It is as a result of the inadequacy of a singular sociological theory as

the Structural Functional Theory (SFT) in explaining the dynamics of widowhood and property inheritance, that another radical theory: The feminist political economic theory was adopted.

2.2.2 Political Economic Theory

Essentially, the Political Economic Theory has been found to be very useful in explaining the realities of the specific political, economic and social matrix of colonial and post-colonial Africa. The theory exposes the interaction between indigenous social framework and foreign political and economic institutions which generated many changes within the social structure of African society. The theory of political economy derives its origin from the Marxist hypothesis—“economy determines political attitudes”. Thus, this theory gives primacy to the material conditions, particularly economic factors, in the explanation of social life. It assumes a dialectical relationship between and among different elements of social life including economic, social, political structure and the belief system. Broadly as a macro structural theory of economic, political and social structures, it has successfully provided the conceptual framework for explaining different structures of exploitations and dominations exemplified in gender relations in most parts of sub-Saharan Africa. The theorists argues that, the rise in economic inequality is accompanied by political relations of domination and subordination which are often achieved by the development of institutionalized repression necessary to control the demand of the economically disadvantaged for redistribution (Afonja 1979; Ladipo, 1981).

Adherents of the political economy perspective believe that the inter-connections between and among various elements of the society, must be thoroughly understood for women to be adequately integrated into development (Afonja, 1981). The central argument of the African Political Economic Theory (APET) is premised on the ideology of female subordination which is rooted in economic and political structures of inequality in most African societies. To challenge the ideology of the APET effectively, those economic and political structures must be changed. African Political Economic perspective is a general and macro level theory which gives a broader understanding of the African political and economic situation. This theoretical perspective has its origin in *Capitalism* (an economic ideology that encourages investments and private property ownership popularized by Karl Marx and the classic work of Max Weber, *the Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, which also encourages private property ownership and wealth accumulation. Essentially, APET

offers social, political and economic explanation of the unequal gender power relation prevalent in most African Societies.

The African Political Economic Theory (APET) is a departure from Western ideology. It locates political and economic inequality as responsible for Africa's underdevelopment. Widowhood and property inheritance in the African context is located within the African mode of production, household economy and gender power relations in the capitalist economy which has economic and political undertone. The African political economy can be seen in the light of feminist studies which incorporate both the achievements made by women through history, and ways of overcoming the oppression that developed during the capitalist era. As Mueller (1987) stated, far from liberating women in the Third World, development efforts continue to foster the international capitalist order, thereby contributing to the maintenance of the same oppressive order. To the APE theorists, private property ownership, wealth accumulation, and profit maximization ushered in by the capitalist mode of production are of western origin and these have influenced the cherished household, subsistence mode of production and communal ownership of property in modern societies. Consequently, patriarchy is at the root of social relations in terms of widowhood and property inheritance in the Awori tradition. The APE theorists advocate a radical transformation of society (political and economic) reforms in order to eradicate all forms of inequality and discrimination with a view to realizing gender equality.

2.2.3 Feminist Political Economic Theory

The focus of the theory is primarily on developing a system of ideas about women from the perspective of social, political and economic inequality and discrimination in the society. For instance, Ritzer and Goodman (2004:471) opined that "feminism is developed to better understand, and transform inequalities between women and men in societies". In its broadest sense, feminism constitutes both an ideology and a global political movement that confronts sexism, a social relationship in which men as a collectivity have authority over women as a collectivity (Sheila: 2001). On the other hand, Cherlin (2005) notes that the central concept in feminist discourse, is gender which is usually defined as the social and cultural characteristics which distinguish women and men in the society.

Basically, the feminist theorists argue that, nearly all the gender differences we see in the roles of men and women are of cultural origin and have been socially constructed. The feminist theories have in common a focus on the everyday world of women, work with methods appropriate for understanding the very lives and situation of women and understanding as a means for changing the conditions studied (Kvale, 1996:72). In the words of Barker (2004), “feminism examines the position of women in society and tries to further their interests”.

Feminist Political Economic Theory (FPET) is a variant of the feminist theory which examines a number of social, cultural, economic and political factors that support gender inequality and discrimination against women. The theory is one among several heterodox systems of economics that challenge the reigning orthodox neo-liberal economic model. The model focuses simply on the market economy with growth and accumulation as its primary goals. It focuses on the provisioning of human needs and human well-beings. Within this context, feminist political economy model deals with the concrete realities of women in issues relating to widowhood and property inheritance. It employs gender as a defining category and brings to the fore issues relating to the actual lived experience of women, men and families and what it means to be a human person (InterPares, 2004:4).

Gender is a central theme in feminist political economic analysis. Unlike sex that is biologically based, gender is defined as a set of socially and culturally constructed roles and expectations for women and men in a given society. Gender roles are not fixed, but vary from society to society and can change over time across cultures and generations. Gender roles and expressions are created by and embedded in social institutions. They are found in implicit rules, customs, traditions, culture and practices that operate to achieve social and economic ends in a given society. Widowhood rites rigorously carried out by the widows in most societies are discriminatory practices against women because, men on the loss of their wives (widowers) are expected to observe minimal, harmless and sometimes indulgent rites (HDI, 2005:10). Instances in which widows are subjected to long period of mourning and consequent loss of income renders them economically incapacitated unlike their male counterparts. Some scholars have argued that the basis for the discrimination is rooted in the physiological differences between the male and female sexes which have caused society to assign differential roles to men and women (Giddens, 2001:107). Similarly, male roles are adjudged to be superior and so highly valued by the society, while female roles are generally undervalued (Banmeke, 1999a:298; Oyekanmi, 2005).

The Feminist Political Economic perspective uses a political economic approach, which refers to the “study of society as an integrated whole.” In other words, the theory identifies and analyses “social relations as they relate to the economic system of production” (Drache, 1978 as quoted in Bezanson and Luxton 2006:12). A feminist political economic approach reveals and clarifies how gender determines or influences the social and political relationships and structures of power and the differential economic effects that flow from these relationships and structures (InterPares, 2004:4). The term gender includes several variables. It refers to the socially constructed roles and expectations shaping women’s and men’s lives. “Understanding gender divisions imply looking at both men and women from a feminist perspective and with a special emphasis on women’s subordination and the pursuit of gender equality. With a particular focus on women, FPET is very relevant in explaining the plight of widows as it relates to widowhood and property inheritance issues. It recognizes certain limitations that exist in traditional societies. The theory challenges the status quo of social, economic and political considerations that further the exploitation and marginalization of widows in issues relating to widowhood practices and property inheritance.

Feminist political economic theory traces the origin of widow’s subordination to gender power relations in household economy which favours the widower/male members of the family and not the widow as the case may be. This partly explains why the widower can escape widowhood practices or at most observe short mourning duration compared to her female counterparts. The African widow is not so spared. She is expected to perform varying widowhood rites at the death of her spouse unlike the widower. And if the widower is a polygynist, he takes solace in his other living wives. He can also appropriate the property of his deceased wife without any interrogation from her extended family. This is because the woman herself is viewed as a chattel, a property paid for through bride price at the onset of marriage. She is supposed to be totally dependent on her husband for her needs. This culture of total dependence, though changing in recent time with the entrance of some women into the labour force, tends to aggravate their poverty as is the case with most widows in some African societies.

According to Beneria (2003:47), FPET addresses the social construction and economic basis of women’s subordination, with vital implications for our understanding of the various factors generating the various forms of gender inequality and hierarchical power relations as reflected in the assertion that is unmanly for men to weep openly at the death of their wife. The widow and not the

widower is expected to adhere strictly to all the rules and regulations embedded in widowhood practices and property sharing. Whereas, a widow is evidently pitied and consoled genuinely and encouraged out of her situation as early as possible, while arrangement for a substitute is in high gear, because “*Opo ‘kunrin ki I da sun nitori iyawo orun*” (Yoruba). In other words, “A widow does not sleep alone because of the dead wife’s spirit” (Lasebikan, 2001). Meanwhile, the widow sleeps alone.

The above theoretical perspective is no doubt useful in explaining the situation of women (rural or urban) in cultural issues such as widowhood and property inheritance in most Nigerian societies. In a typical patriarchal society such as that of the Awori, these problems have rendered many widows psychologically and economically incapacitated.

Essentially, the FPET as a variant of the APET, derives its foundation in the global exploitation of women within the capitalist system. The theory addresses the provisioning of human needs and well-being. It analyzes not only economic policy but also social policy such as family policy, welfare policy, health policy and other dimensions of human need and well-being. Feminism is a position that holds that women suffer discrimination because of their sex, that they have specific needs which remain negated and unsatisfied, and that the satisfaction of these needs would require a radical change (some would say a revolution) in the social, economic and political order (Delmar 1986:8).

In other words, women are dominated, neglected, discriminated against and exploited by men in all spheres of human life be it social, economic, and political life. This discrimination and exploitation is reflected among the Awori study group whereby widows and not the widowers are expected to perform widowhood rites such as long confinement indoor lasting up to three to four months or a year as the case may be. During such mourning periods, their businesses or other sources of income are abandoned for cultural practices of widowhood. This experience extends the poverty and absolute dependence of widows that are not well-to-do on other members of the society (extended family, close relatives, friends, neighbours and religious associates) for survival during and after mourning period. Such an affected widow remains economically incapacitated if she suffers denial of access to property of her deceased spouse even in cases of joint property. The widow without children is usually worse-off in certain cultures because she has no part in property inheritance. Even though, in some rare cases, the latter might be considered at the discretion of the extended family.

One crucial point to note is that European biases about Africa are not only informed by racism, they are fuelled by the white man's exploitation of African social institutions. It is therefore the duty of a cultural study like this to change these images and illuminate African institutions from an African perspective.

Finally, cultural institutions in Africa including those revolving around different forms of widowhood practices and property inheritance should therefore be given a fresh interrogation. Rather than dismiss African culture as archaic, we need to conduct more studies using culture as the framework that has the potential of producing action-oriented research capable of transforming society and empowering women.

2.3 Study Hypotheses

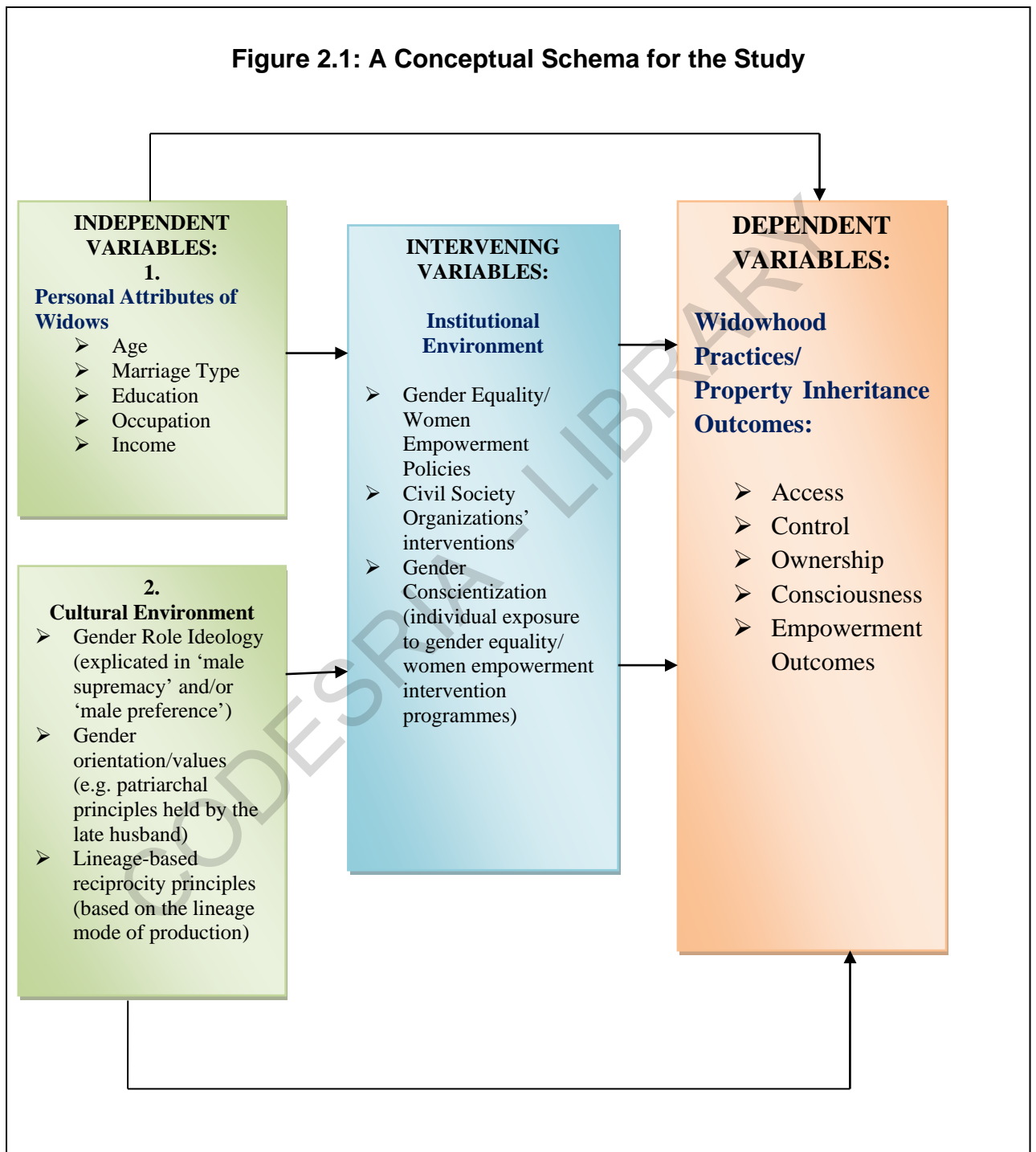
In consonance with the theoretical framework which guides this study, 3 study hypotheses are drawn, which are -

1. There is a significant relationship between the widow's personal attributes (age, education, income, number/sex of children, type of marriage, religion) and widowhood rites performed/property inheritance.
2. There is a significant relationship between the late husband's gender orientation/values and widowhood rites performed/property inheritance.
3. There is a significant relationship between lineage-based reciprocities and widowhood rites performed/property inheritance.

2.4 The Conceptual Model

The conceptual model for the study derives from the stated hypotheses. The schema presented in Figure 2.1 identifies the specific measures/indicators for the independent, dependent, and the intervening variables, and the flow of relationships between/among these variables. For example, the conceptual schema (Fig. 2.1) clearly identifies the dependent variables and the predictive variables. A basic assumption is that at the individual level, the socio-economic status and/or the personal attributes of the widows are active determinants of widowhood experiences, especially in terms of widowhood practices and property inheritance outcomes. Also, at the societal level, the cultural orientations (including husbands' gender values and orientations; and the lineage-based reciprocity values/orientations) are predictors of widowhood practices and property inheritance outcomes.

However, institutional regimes in favour of gender equality and women empowerment agenda such as state policies and/or Civil Society Organizations' feminist activism often act as important change agents and as anchors of gender conscientization and the emancipation of women in line with global democratic principles.



Source: Author's Compilation

A more elaborate description of the conceptual variables is presented according to the various analytical categories.

Independent Variables:

The independent variables are categorized into two major classes, viz. (i). personal attributes of the widows; and (ii). the cultural environment. The indicators for each class of the Independent Variables are enumerated below -

1. Personal Attributes of the Widows:

Five indicators are used to delineate this category of the Independent Variables. They are:

(i) Age – in this study, age refers to the actual age of the widow as at the last birthday. Identifying the minimum and maximum age at widowhood, as well as to ascertaining the mean age of widows, is relevant to explaining the socio-economic status and personal attributes of the widows.

(ii) Type of marriage consummated by the widow:

The study assumes that the type of marriage consummated (Christian, Islam or Traditional) reflects unique ideology and practice which likely influence the mode of widowhood rites and property inheritance. The study therefore expects variations in the experiences of the selected widows based on the types of marriage arrangements. Each marriage type dictates specific ideology, widowhood rites, and modes of property inheritance. The study therefore explores the extent to which each marriage type dictates widowhood rites and/or property inheritance.

(iii) Level of education- Education is a strong variable in determining the quality of life, and a measure of the extent of individual investment in human capital. A basic assumption in this study is that the quality of educational attainment of the respective widows, and the extent to which this is used to build individual capacity for sustained economic status (irrespective of whether or not the husband is alive) may influence individual ability to accept and/or reject obnoxious widowhood practices and/or attainment of self-assertiveness, including positive property inheritance outcomes.

(iv) Occupation is also an important index for measuring sustained quality of life and/or socio-economic status. A widow who is engaged in independent income generating activity with no

recourse to lineage-mode of production (that is, independent of lineage-based resources such as land; housing; or other extended family owned resources) may find it easy to challenge exploitative lineage arrangements relating to her own nuclear family property ownership.

(v) **Income** is described in this study as the total earnings of the widow per month. The income is derived from what the widow earns or receives as proceeds from individual occupation/business, which could include wages or salaries or profit from other businesses. Important measure for this study is the average monthly income per widow, which presents a good indicator of the quality of life of the respective widows in the target area.

2. Cultural Environment

The cultural environment is treated as a predictor of widowhood experience (rites and property inheritance). Culture can be described as the totality of the way of life of a people, explicated in types of gender role ideology, and other patriarchal values such as ‘male supremacy’ and/or ‘male preference’. Specific measures of the cultural environment relevant to this study are identified as -

(a) Gender role ideology

This is expressed in various forms e.g. ‘male supremacy’; ‘male preference’; and the gender value orientation of the late husband. In this study, the gender role ideology is thus measured at three levels, viz.

- (i) The extent to which the number/sex of children of widows impacts on widowhood experience of mothers, especially in the area of property inheritance. Following the value placed on children amongst the Yoruba, the study assumes a relevance of ‘number of children’ for property inheritance amongst the Awori (a Yoruba sub-ethnic group). Also, the patriarchal ideology amongst the Yorubas pre-supposes adherence to ‘male supremacy’, and/or ‘male preference’. The study, therefore, investigates the extent to which ‘having a male child’ (or male children) influences widowhood rites and/or property inheritance amongst the Awori of Yoruba culture.
- (ii) The gender value held by the late husband, and the extent to which this influenced his ability to protect (or otherwise) the interest of family members. This could be expressed through non-discriminatory treatment of children e.g. girls are sent to school just like the male siblings; preparation of ‘WILL’ with clear statements on how properties should be shared amongst family members (e.g. the extent to which the late

husband based property inheritance on gender equity principles amongst the nuclear family members or otherwise).

- (iii) The 'property' status of the late husband can help re-direct basic assumption about the gender role ideology of the husband and/or of the lineage group. Where a man left behind an estate worthy of re-distribution, the gender role ideology of the lineage group and/or of the late husband would come to the fore in patterns of re-distribution and the ensuing relation of 'gender' to property. This is less pronounced under condition of poverty and/or absence of property.

(b) Lineage based reciprocities

This is subsumed within the lineage mode of production model, whereby lineage members have common ownership over critical resources such as land, labour, and capital. The lineage mode of production is a pre-capitalist mode, which emphasized group interest above the individual interest, and in most cases, individual enjoys property rights because of membership in a particular lineage. Within this arrangement, the principle of reciprocity reigns supreme and determines access to critical resources. A basic assumption in this study is that where a family is entrenched within the lineage mode of production, it may become difficult for individuals to lay claim to property ownership (such as the case of widows in this lineage). Where there is no social distance between couples and the extended family, especially in terms of sharing of access to lineage based critical resources (e.g. building on lineage land; farming on lineage land; living in 'extended family house' etc), it may be difficult for widows within these arrangements to lay claim to property inheritance and/or have a voice in widowhood rites.

3. Intervening Variables

The institutional environment is presented in the study as the intervening variable, which is measured by specific activities of change agents, which in this case include:

- (i) The gender specific policies of government (both at the Federal and State levels). This sets the stage for women to challenge obnoxious widowhood practices and gender discriminatory inheritance system either within or outside the court rooms.
- (ii) The role of Civil Society Organizations which are demonstrated via social mobilization for gender equality and women empowerment; and sensitization and awareness creation on same. The assumption is that widows who have participated in such programmes are likely to

embrace more gender empowerment principles, and in reality, are likely to challenge obnoxious widowhood practices, and discriminatory property inheritance principles.

The assumption is that where the intervening variables exist, they are strong enough to influence the outcome variables.

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CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH SETTING, SCOPE AND METHODOLOGICAL PROCEDURES

3.1 Introduction

This chapter describes the research setting, scope and the methodological procedures adopted in the study. The research setting centers on the background to the study area which includes the history of the Awori people and the communities within the research scope. The geographical location, physical setting, residential pattern, human, economic and land use activities, socio-cultural beliefs and the political setting of the research areas are also documented. The section on methodological procedures presents and describes the research design, methodology and model specifications and these include: the study population, sample size and sampling procedure, instruments of data collection, data collection procedure from the field (Key-Informant interview, Focus Group Discussions, personal interview/questionnaire administration (survey) and selected case studies of widows across the research areas. This chapter also highlights the problems encountered during the process of data collection. Finally, it describes the methods of data management and the analytical techniques adopted for the study.

3.2 Research Setting

3.2.0 Geographical Location and Population

The study area is Ado-Odo/Ota Local Government Area (LGA) of Ogun State, Southwest Nigeria. This is one of the twenty LGAs in Ogun State, created in May 1989, under the military administration of General Ibrahim Babangida, as a result of the fusion of some parts of the former Ifo/Ota Local Government and some sections of the then Egbado South Local Government (Ado-Odo Igbesa) areas. The creation of the LGA was an attempt to respond positively to the yearnings of the people in terms of bringing governance closer to the grassroot with its consequential development. This political gesture gave birth to the present Ado-Odo/Ota Local Government popularly referred to as the “Local Government of Distinction”. The Headquarter of Ado-Odo/Ota Local Government is located on Obafemi Awolowo way in the ancient city of Ota.

The Local Government is the second largest in Ogun State. It covers an area of 1,460 square kilometers and shares boundaries with Yewa South and Ifo Local Governments in the West, Obafemi Owode Local Government in the North East and in the South, Lagos State. The Local Government has an estimated population of 526,565 people, 260,021 male and 266,544 females (National Population Census, 2006) with about four hundred and fifty towns, villages and settlements. The area is peopled mainly by the Awori also referred to as (the original owners of the land). In addition to the Awori, the Egun, Yewa (Egbado), and other sub-ethnic groups like Egba settlers are found in certain parts of Iju, Atan, Ijoko and Sango-Ota areas of the Local Government. Interestingly, non-Nigerians and other ethnic groups have equally found the LGA a congenial place for settlement and to making a livelihood.

As a fast expanding and economically developing area, Ado-Odo/Ota has one of the largest concentrations of manufacturing industries in Nigeria and Ogun State in particular. These industrial concerns are located mainly in Agbara and Sango-Ota respectively. The vantage position of the LGA in terms of the large concentration of manufacturing industries among other reasons is traceable to its proximity to Lagos, the commercial nerve centre of Nigeria, coupled with its favourable topography and of course, the friendly nature of the Awori (the original owners of the land). To a large extent, the Local Government is agrarian in nature. It is one of the major producers of cash and food crops such as cocoa, kolanut, oil palm, coffee, timber, cassava, maize and vegetables. Mineral resources such as kaolin, silica sand, gypsum and glass sand are also found in large quantity in the LGA. The people trade in various goods as well as work in industrial establishments located in the area and nearby.

Ado-Odo/Ota LGA also prides itself as being privileged to be in custody of the second oldest storey building in West Africa, the Vicarage of St. James Anglican Church built in 1842 in Ota city. It also houses the largest Church auditorium in the world, the Faith Tabernacle (Canaan land), of the Living Faith Church built and dedicated in September, 1999. From available data, the Local Government is one of the most educationally inclined entities in the federation sponsoring one hundred and ten (110) public schools with forty one thousand (41,000) pupils and about two thousand (2,000) qualified teachers. There are eighteen public secondary schools as well as a good number of private nursery and primary, government approved private secondary schools (Salako, 1998). There is no doubt that with the rapid development and industrialization of Ado-Odo/Ota LGA, the number of public and private (Nursery, Primary and Secondary schools) have increased over the years.

Presently, the LGA prides itself on three (3) private Universities namely: Covenant University, Bells University and Crawford University. Politically, the Local Government has sixteen (16) constitutional wards with a councillor representing each ward at the Local Government Headquarters in Ota. These wards are: Ota I, Ota II, Ota III, Sango, Ijoko, Atan, Iju, Igbesa, Ilogbo, Ado-Odo I and Ado-Odo II. Others are Alapoti, Ketu Adie-Owe, Ilogbo, Agbara I and Agbara II.

Ado-Odo/ Ota LGA Councillors as at June 2008

| Name | Designation | Ward |
|-------------------------------|------------------------|---------------|
| 1. Hon. Kuyebi Jamiu O. | Leader | Ketu Adie-Owe |
| 2. Hon. Sotayo Rasaki O. | Deputy Leader | Iju |
| 3. Hon. Bello Olatunji, I. | Majority Leader | Ijoko |
| 4. Hon Akinde Muyideen B. | Deputy Majority Leader | Ado-Odo II |
| 5. Hon. Oseni Lateef I. | Chief Whip | Alapoti |
| 6. Hon. Sadiku Saheed B. | Deputy Chief Whip | Ilogbo |
| 7. Hon. Erubami Kolawole | Member | Ota I |
| 8. Hon. Ajibose Olanrewaju | -do- | Ota II |
| 9. Hon. Aruna Babatunde O. | -do- | Ado-Odo I |
| 10. Hon. Suuru Peter Dosa | -do- | Ere |
| 11. Hon. Ayamolowo Sanya Issa | -do- | Igbesa |
| 12. Hon. Aina Oluyemi | -do- | Atan |
| 13. Hon. Olanrewaju Isa O. | -do- | Agbara I |
| 14. Hon. Babatunde Taiwo | -do- | Ota III |
| 15. Hon. Akinbo Alao, M. | -do- | Sango |
| 16. Hon. Fatai Kamoru A. | -do- | Agbara |

Source: Ado-Odo/Ota Local Government Area, Ota, June, 2008.

Presently, there exist ten traditional Obaship institutions in the LGA, namely: Olota of Ota, Olofin of Ado-Odo, Oloja Ekun of Igbesa, Onilogbo of Ilogbo, Alagbara of Agbara and Amiro of Ilamiro. Others are Onikoko of Koko Ebiye, Onitele of Itele, Onikogbo of Ikogbo and Onigu of Odan-Abija. Directly next to the Obaship title is another traditional title known as the “Baales”, who are also the custodians of traditions and customs in certain communities such as in Atan, Iju, and Igbile Ajana. They work hand in hand with other chieftains and traditional title holders for the local and traditional administration of their various communities.

In terms of tradition and culture, Ado-Odo/Ota is blessed with rich cultural tradition which she still appreciates. One of the most attractive and crowd-pulling cultural activities is the *Egungun* (masquerade) festival in Ota. The celebration normally attracts natives and non-indigenes including expatriates from various countries across the world. There is also the Oduduwa (Oodu'a) festival in Ado-Odo which is celebrated periodically with fun and pageantry. The existence of Ijamido and Ogbodogi shrines, Koto Otun in Ota as well as River Jordan at Ijoko-Ota provides necessary attraction for tourists. Kellar Arts Gallery, Ota and Odua Temple at Ado-Odo are other tourist attractions in the Local Government. The Awori too derive much joy and delight in "Gelede" culture. The Ota people especially accord this cultural organization a high premium in their traditional activities.

From its inception, the Local Government has been participating actively in the various editions of trade fairs (either singly or joint). For outstanding performance, it was adjudged the 2nd best Local Government at the 8th edition of the Oyo, Ondo, Ogun and Ekiti States Trade Fair held at Ibadan in October, 1997 where well over one hundred Local Governments participated. To say that the Local Government plays a vital role in the economic viability of the nation might not be an overstatement considering what the Federal Government reaps from Value Added Tax (VAT) in the Local Government.

3.2.1 History of the Awori

The Awori constitute the study population in this research; hence, the background history of the people is essential in a research endeavour of this nature in order to provide some background information about the people. The study would ascertain the prevalence of widowhood and property inheritance practices among the people. According to the reigning traditional ruler of Ota popularly referred to as the Head of the Awori Kingdom, the Olota of Ota-Awori, Oba Alani Osanyintola Moshood Oyede (Arolagbade III, Arole Iganmode), "One of the calamities that can befall a nation, society, group of people or even an individual is the absence of records either of the past or on current issues". It is against this background that we give a background history of the Awori in general and that of the study area in particular, in an attempt to provide a deeper insight into certain traditional practices such as widowhood and property inheritance as well as other socio-cultural peculiarities of the people.

The Awori people otherwise known as the ‘**Awori**’, are a distinct sub-ethnic group of the Yoruba race found in two Nigerian States: Lagos and Ogun (respectively). The history of the Awori is traceable to Ile-Ife (Ooye) and Oyo Ile both in Osun State, Southwestern, Nigeria. Documented evidence reveals that Ile-Ife (Ooye) and Oyo Ile were the ancestral abode of the Awori prior to the migration of the people to different areas occupied by the Yoruba race today. As was the practice then with other sons and daughters of ‘**Oduduwa**’ who is generally referred to as the ancestor of the Yoruba race, the quest for a new, peaceful and independent permanent settlement caused the Awori forefathers and their amiable leader Ogunfunminire Olofin to leave Ile-Ife (Ife Ooye) in search of a new abode about three thousand years ago (Circa 1000 B.C). It is generally agreed that the Awori are descendants of **OGUNFUNMINIRE**, son of Olofin. Both oral history and documented write-ups have it that Olofin is the legendary ancestor of the Awori.

The sub-ethnic group under study derived its name ‘Awori’ from a Yoruba word: **AWO-TI-RI** meaning the dish has sunk. The dish referred to here according to historical account was prescribed to the legendary Awori leader, Olofin, by the Ifa oracle. It contained some sacrificial ingredients that were to be placed on the river to float. It was somewhere around Olokemeji in Ogun State that they first saw a big river. There and then, the dish was placed on it as directed and surprisingly, it floated making an on the spot round movement. Olofin and his members decided to make temporary structures at that location (Olokemeji) for probable settlement. On the seventeenth day to be precise, the dish moved. This necessitated the group’s movement with it. The rotating dish made stop over at various locations including Oke-Ata on the outskirts of the present day Abeokuta, and moved on to Aro where the famous psychiatric hospital is located. Next, the dish moved to Iro near Owode-Egba and stopped over. This resulted in the installation of a king at that location before it moved again and made a stopover at Papa near Ifo which also resulted in settlement as well as a royal installation in that community. Indeed, the rotating dish made a stop-over at several locations and communities within Ogun and Lagos States in popular places like, Isheri, Iddo, Idumota and Eko in Lagos Island were notable stop over locations for the historic dish which eventually sank and gave rise to the name Awori as it is popularly known today. Major Awori communities in Ogun State as indicated on the map include but not limited to: Ota, Ado-Odo, Igbesa, Agbara, Isheri-Olofin, Iworo, Ojo Awori, Apa, Atan, Iju, and Ilogbo most of which constitute the study areas.

Figure 3.1: Map of Nigeria Showing Ogun State, the Research Location.

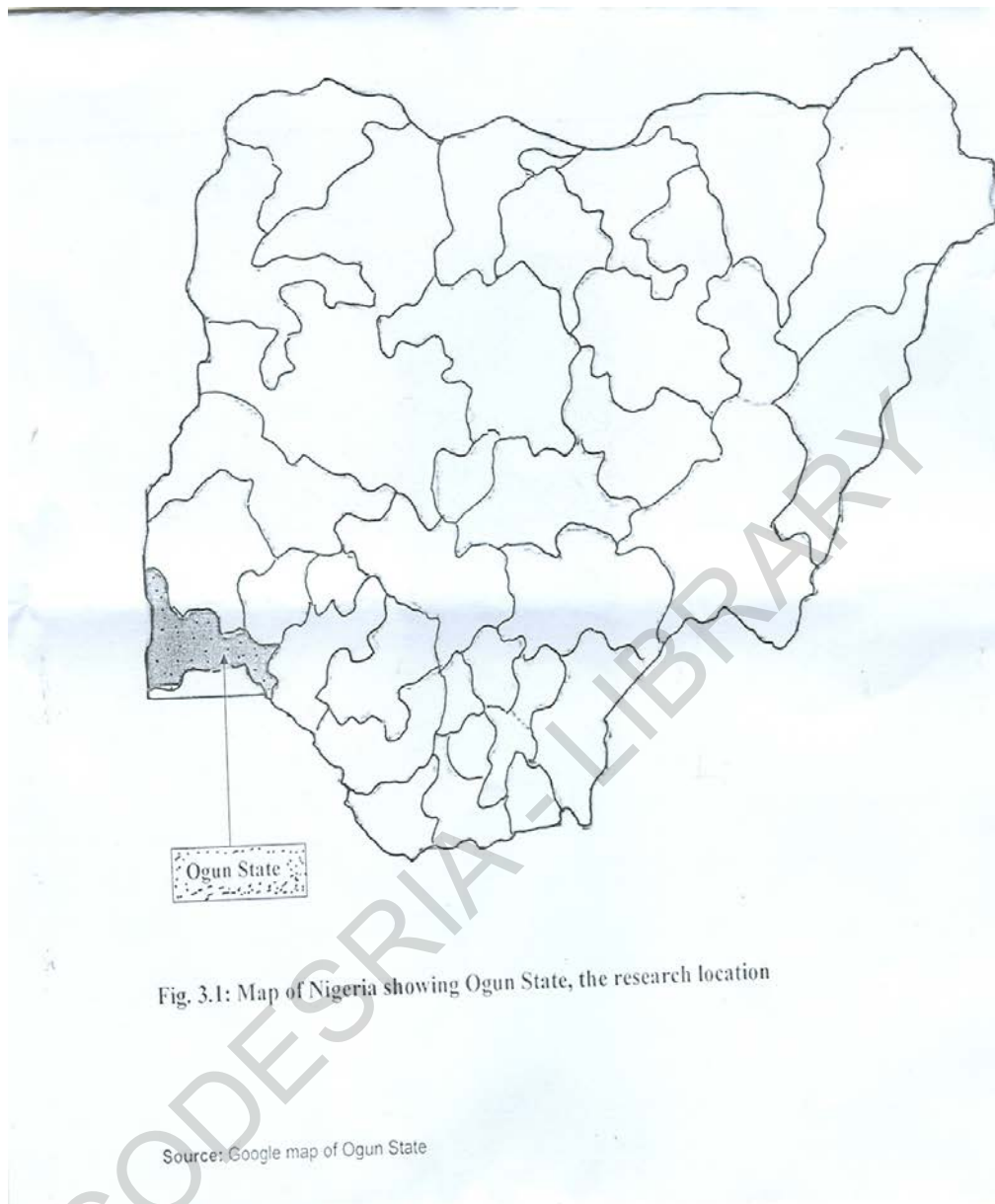


Fig. 3.1: Map of Nigeria showing Ogun State, the research location

Source: Google map of Ogun State

Figure 3.2: Map of Ogun State showing the 20 L.G.As. including Ado-Odo/Ota L.G.A where the study sites are located.

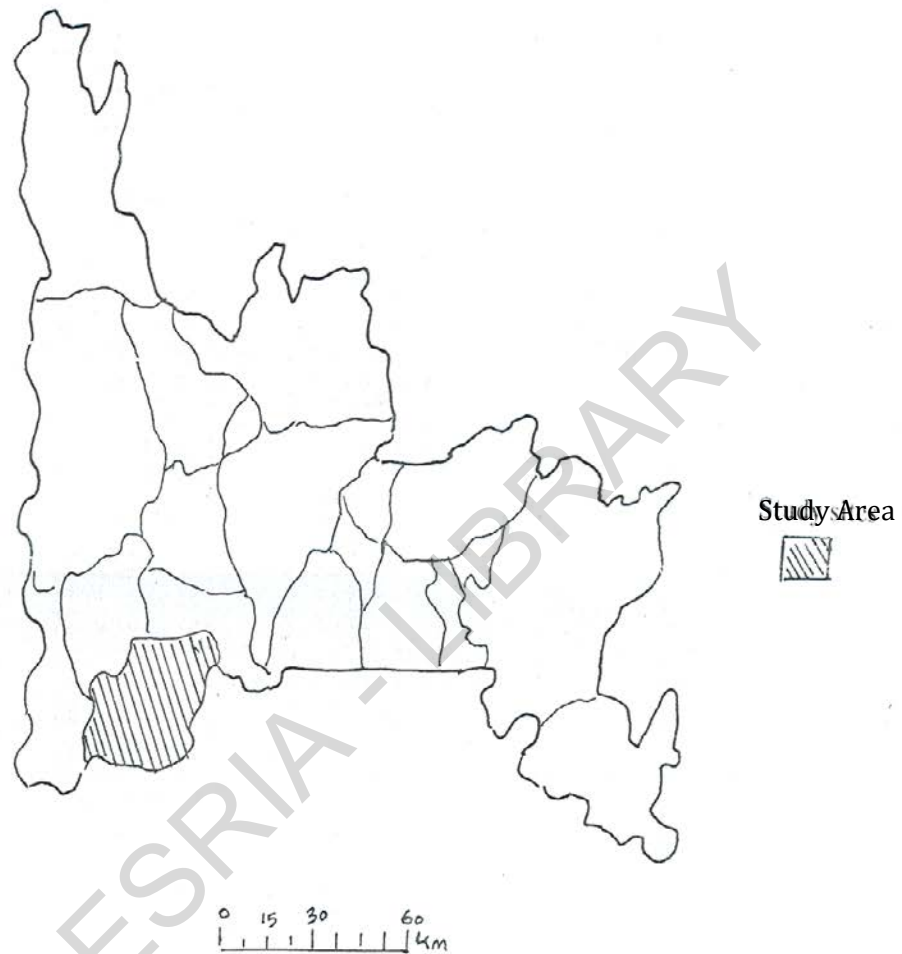
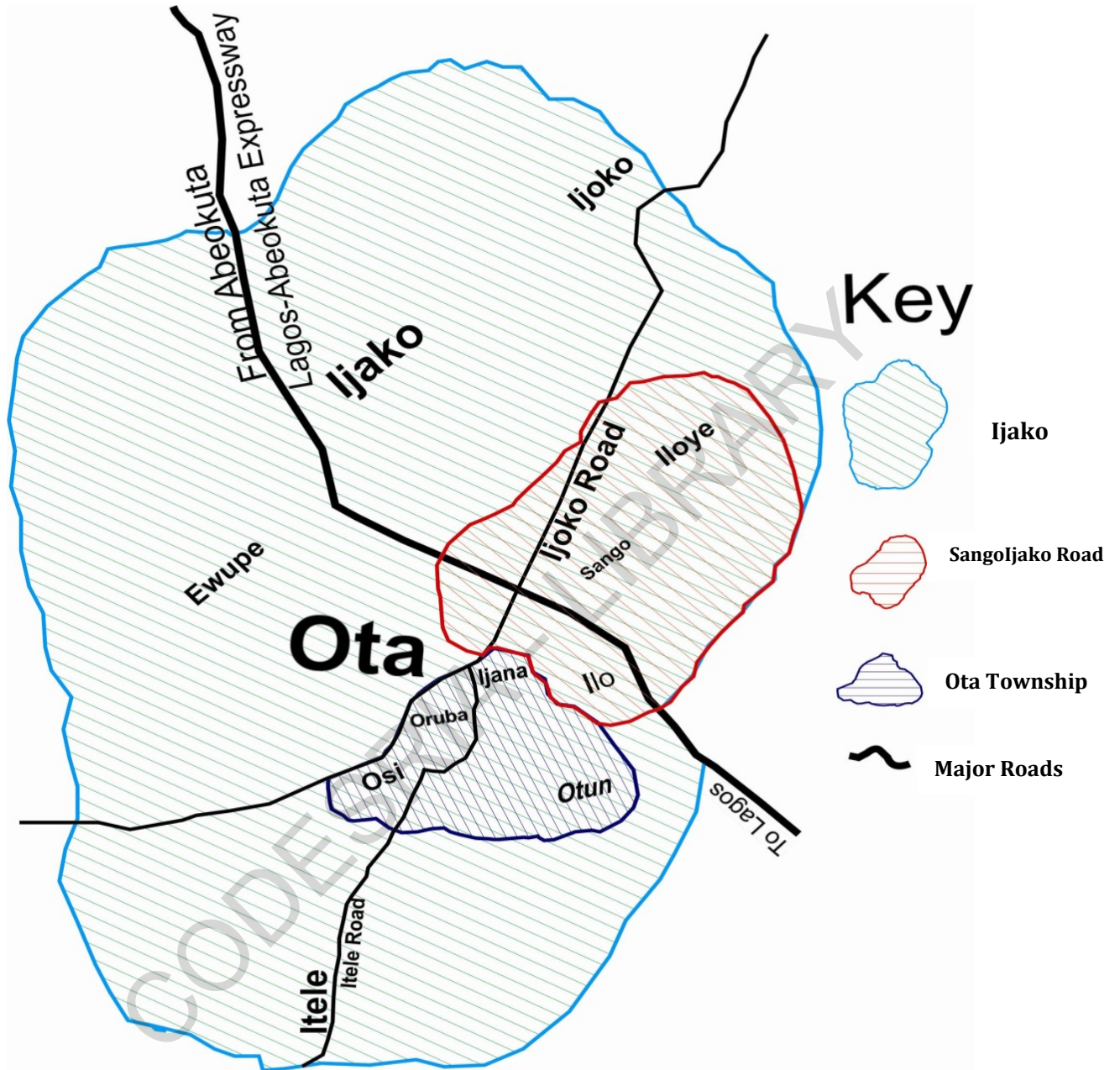


Fig. 3.2: Map of Ogun State showing the 20 Local Government Areas including Ado-Odo/Ota L.G.A where the study sites are located

Source: Google map of Ogun State

Figure 3.3 Map of Ota : The Traditional Home of the Awori in Ogun State



Source: Urban and Regional Planning Office, Ota.

3.2.2 Background Information of Ota Community of Ogun State

The history of the Awori will be incomplete without a brief historical account of Ota, the very ancient kingdom of the “Awori”. In this section also, available information on residential patterns and housing facilities, economic activities, educational facilities, religious, and cultural festivals in Ota is provided as a basis for other Awori communities studied in this research which are without

readily available data. From the historical account by Kosebinu (2000:1). Ota is an ancient city in the Awori area of Ogun State and a foremost Awori settlement. Like most Yoruba towns and cities, Ota has its root traceable to Ife Ooye, the legendary cradle of the Yoruba people. The emergence of Ota dates back to the early 14th century precisely about 800 years ago. Ota town is the administrative and political headquarters of Ado-Odo/Ota Local Government Area. Incidentally, Ota is referred to as the natural capital of the Awori people of Nigeria. The town is strategically located with Lagos to the South, Idiroko to the West and Abeokuta to the North.

Ota district covers an area of approximately 190 square miles in the southwest corner of the Egba south administrative area in the former province of Abeokuta. About one-third of the area lies within a radius of twenty miles from Lagos. The Ota district is bounded on the South-east by Agege and Alagbado areas of Lagos State to the west. There is a boundary with the Egbado (now Yewa) towns of Ilaro, Owode and the Awori village of Egan. Ota has an estimated population of 527,242, a little over half a million, 261,523 (males) and 265, 719 (females) (National Population Commission, 2006). The Projected population (Pn) of Ota by this year 2010 is 612,068. Of this figure, 303,598 are males and 308,469 are females.

Like most ancient cities, Ota has her share of mythology; thus, her popular appellation is the “Land of witches”. “*Oburu ju aje Ota lo*” (Yoruba) meaning “more wicked than the Ota witch” is a common derogatory statement often used to describe Ota people. Historical account by Kosebinu (2000) reveals that “Ota was more dreaded than a serpent in the past”. Today, however, the story seems to have changed for the better, considering the peaceful co-existence and assemblage of various settlements in the community over time. In addition to other worship centres across the city, the Living Faith Church worldwide otherwise known as Winners Chapel, commissioned in 1999 and reported by the *Europa World Year Book* in 2008 as the largest church Auditorium in the world is located in Canaan land, Ota. Among the ethnic groups that have found Ota both as an abode and a home over the years include the Egba, Ebira, Hausa, Igbo, Efik and the Igede who have thronged to the city in large numbers. Other nationals from most West African countries: Ghana, Togo, Republic of Benin and all walks of life live and do their businesses in Ota as a result of the friendly disposition of the indigenes known as the Awori.

Ota is situated near the boundary with Lagos State and has steadily grown to be the largest industrial town in Ogun State, largely as a result of its proximity to Lagos. Oral tradition has it that Ota was

founded in about 1835 by the Aworis who originated from Ile-Ife, the cradle of Yoruba's. The Aworis first settled in Oke-Ata near Abeokuta but were forced by the Egbas to move southwards to the present site of Ota, about 47 kilometers south of Ado-Odo/Ota Local Government has been prominent in the administrative, cultural and economic development of its region for a long time. Ota started off as the seat of a local council as far back as 1908 under the chairmanship of the then Olota of Ota. By 1946, the local council was upgraded to a District Council with Ota as the headquarters of Ifo/Ota Local Government area after the merger of Ifo, Ewekoro and Ota Local Government in 1984, and in 1989, it became the headquarter of a predominantly Awori-inhabited Ado-Odo/Ota Local Government.

The built up area of Ota can be easily categorized into three sections:

- (i) The indigenous town proper which is bounded by the Ota-Idiroko roads beeps to its north and dissected into two by Iganmode road, the main street in the town.
- (ii) The newly developing area to the north and west of the bypass including the Housing Corporation Estate.
- (iii) Sango, which used to be separate settlement, to the west of Ota Town, Sango developed as an area for non-Yoruba community of Ota especially the Hausas and Ebirras.

The common characteristics of the newly developing sections of Ota are the concentration of development along the major highway, namely the Lagos–Abeokuta road. This has resulted in the amalgamation of villages like *Ijako*, *Onipanu*, *Igbala* into one built up area. Like all indigenous settlements that have developed organically the old town shows little sign of conscious planning. Ota is made up of four quarters: *Ijana*, *Otun*, *Osi* and *Oruba* as indicated in figure 3:3 and are administered by traditional heads/title chiefs such as the *Olukotu*, the *Olukosi* and the *Akogun heads* the *Otun*, *Osi* and *Oruba* quarters respectively. The *Olota* is the traditional head of the town.

The other two sections of the town have traces of planning though lack of effective coordination of individual private planning effort is still very evident. While Sango has grown to be the major business centre, taking advantage of its nodal position with numerous retails outlets and all but one of the banks in the town, the core of the old town has lost its commercial prominence. This is brought about by the decline in the importance of agricultural products like cocoa, palm kernel and coffee as the nation's economic base. Ota used to be a flourishing collection centre for these products attracting farmers from its surrounding rural hinterland. All the warehouses used for this business are either dilapidated or converted into smaller shops. The decline of the commercial importance of 'Ota

proper' has also been accentuated by the removal of the main market to the west of the town along Idiroko road.

3.2.3 Residential Patterns and Housing Facilities

Among the Awori, the commonest residential pattern is patrilocal - a system whereby couples reside in the groom's father's family house even when they can afford a decent and independent accommodation elsewhere. According to an informant "*the indigene enjoys some social security while residing in the family house. Burglary cases are almost non-existent which is not guaranteed in rented apartments outside the family house*". For instance, in Ota, the foremost Awori community, a number of brick houses abound in the industrial areas namely: The Bells, High court, and Ogun State Property and Investment Corporation (OPIC) Estate to mention just a few. These houses come in different shapes: one room apartment, self-contained i.e. (bed room, sitting room, toilet and kitchen) Bungalows, one, two and three storey-building also abound. While some are for residential purposes, others house major banks, schools, hospitals and office complexes. At the Oruba quarters close to Iganmode road where Zion Methodist Church is situated in Ota, some mud houses in dilapidated conditions are common sights. Surprisingly, these dilapidated buildings house a number of families without any option of a decent accommodation. According to some residents, lack of potable water is a major challenge. It was noted that the problem has a spillover effect on the toilet types and the sanitary condition which has health implication for the people.

3.2.4 Economic Activities

Land is a principal economic resource among the Awori. As a result of the fertile and arable soil consisting of varying depths of alluvial deposits, there are no outcropping igneous rocks but rich land that is very attractive and good for farming. Predominantly, the Awori people of Ogun State are engaged in agriculture, hunting and trading in terms of occupation. According to an informant: "*Land is to the Awori as Oil is to the Niger Deltans* . Perhaps this informs why land is a common property usually inherited in the area. Also, land sale by the indigenes popularly called *Omo onile* Yoruba (The child of the owner of the land) is a booming economic activity among most of the indigenes. However, land sale has resulted in conflict of interests among some family members according to an Awori indigene The strong attachment to land has been acclaimed to be partly responsible for the low enrollment in schools and the consequent level of poverty in the community which is rather worrisome in this 21st century era of industrialization, global economic crises and recession.

Presently, Ota has the third largest concentration of industries beside Ikeja and Apapa in the whole of Nigeria. Besides the Industrial Estates situated on the popular Idiroko road, there are other industries spread all over the town. The umbrella body under which the industries operate –The Manufacturers Association of Nigeria (MAN), Ogun State Branch, according to Salako (1998:15), recently commissioned its ultra-modern office complex where the captains of industry in and around Ota gather occasionally. Suffice to note that the industrial development of Ota which provides employment opportunities for the increasing population of job seekers have attracted high rate of human traffic and consequent hike in prices of residential accommodation and general cost of living. On the other hand, increasing economic activities in Ota have resulted in rapid development of the city in terms of availability of basic infrastructure (pipe borne water, electricity and good roads). The major challenge of the people is the increasing demand for housing which is being attended to by the establishment of Government Housing Estates in addition to the effort of private developers. As at date, residential houses, offices and shopping complexes continue to spring up in all the corners of the city.

3.2.5 Educational Opportunities

In 1842, the Missionaries settled in Ota after their exploit at Badagry. Some missionary schools were established giving the people the first opportunity for formal education and conversion of some indigenes into Christianity. In addition, the second storey building in Nigeria (Vicarage of St. James Anglican Church) presently located in Ota was established during that period. As a result of the dominance of Christian/Missionary schools at that time, the Ansar-Ud-Deen society of the Islamic religion was forced to establish its own school and employ the services of its own teachers when Muslim pupils were being compelled to change their names to Christian names before they could secure admission into the existing Christian schools (Salako, 1998).

The Development of Ota over the years has brought about rapid changes in her educational structure. Today, a host of public and private owned schools/higher institutions of learning exist. Among them include: Iganmode Grammar school the first to be established, Ansar-Ud-Deen Comprehensive College and Anglican Grammar School, to mention but a few. Covenant University, the Bells University of Technology and several other tertiary centre of learning spread across the length and breadth of the community which give the community ample opportunity for formal education. Comparatively, the community has not had its fair share in terms of education if the literacy level is

anything to go by. The population figure for Ogun State as given by the National Population Commission (NPC) in 2006 is 2,356,256 in which males consist of 1,218,209 and females were 1,138,043 respectively. Poverty, traditional heritage and other socio-political factors tend to take its toll on the people.

3.2.6 Religious Beliefs

Among the Awori, three (3) major religious practices are common: Traditional religion, Islam and Christianity. In spite of the influx and practice of foreign religions of Islam and Christianity by the people, they still very much cherish the religion of their forefathers—traditional religion which accounts for why masquerade otherwise referred to as *egungun* (Yoruba) festival is both a household and a community event. This also accounts for why Ota the ancestral home of the Awori is popularly referred to as the *Mecca of masquerade* - meaning the traditional home of masquerades. A common Yoruba song among Ota people and the Awori in general is: *Igbagbo o pe kawa ma soro ile wa* – meaning Christianity or Islam as the case may be does not prevent us from our traditional worship/religion.

3.2.7 Festivals

The existence of two originated foreign religions (Islam and Christianity), and the traditional religion of the Awori notwithstanding, *Egungun* (masquerade) festival is the most important festival in Ota, though there are other festivals such as *Efe*, *Gelede* and *Oro*. The *Egugun* festival comes up whenever the ‘*Apaje*’ makes an announcement which is usually seventeen days before the ‘*Igbagan*’ day and lasts for about three months before the grand finale. The *Apaje* announces the date of *Igbagan* which marks the commencement of the *Egungun* festival. From historical account, on the eve of the festival, a dreaded mystery animal called - *Agan* appears and goes round the community to salute the people. This animal which is accompanied on the trail by its disciples is heard by Ota indigenes keeping vigil indoors as it calls ‘*Omo eriwo! Omo eriwo! Omo eriwo!*’ And its disciples reply *A a gan o!* No single person in Ota no matter how highly placed is found outside during this period which occurs mainly in the night. On the completion of the trail, the *Agan* bids a retreat saying ‘*Egbe mi kerere e fa mi kerere*’ and at this point, thousands of people who had been keeping vigil listening all night pour into the streets feasting, drumming and dancing as the *Oloponda*, the chief priest of *Egugun*, with relatives from the *Itimoko* compound leads the way in the frenzied celebration notwithstanding

their religious affiliation. On festival day, all *Egugun* masquerades led by *Ege* their leader, dress gaily to pay homage at the Oba's palace and other important spots in the town.

Some important sectional heads of *egungun* masquerades beside *Ege* include *Alagbada*, *Laboro Idire*, *Ayoka Ibile*, *Ajolodo*, *Obalolaiye*, *Lebe Oke*, *Lebe Itimoko*, *Oya*, *Laboro Falola*, *Owolafe*, *Ayoka Ese*, *Eyeba* and *Ajofoyinbo*. There are others called *Eegun Oloogun* (Medicinal/juju Masquerade) and clowns and playboys such as *Akobaitete*, *Opalemo*, *Tarzan* and *Koledowo*. The common masquerades are the *Egungun Alagbada* which has a weekly roster of appearance to entertain the public during the festival at the city mark of the beginning of *Egungun* festival.

3.3 Research Scope

This study was limited to six (6) Awori communities: Agbara, Atan, Igbesa, Iju, Ilogbo and Ota. These communities are located within Ado-Odo/Ota Local Government Area, one of the twenty LGAs of Ogun State. They constitute both urban and rural Awori communities. The selection of these communities is premised on the fact that they constitute both urban and rural Awori communities with unique socio-cultural, political and economic history. In addition, they are major ancient and historical Awori communities and most Awori indigenes of Ogun State reside in these communities. It is pertinent to note that the Awori are also found in some parts of Lagos State (Badagry, Egbeda, Iddo, Idumota, Ojo and Okokomaiko). Although there are several Awori groups, they all share a common tradition of origin though with several variants. The similarity in the traditions of the various communities is a testimony to cultural homogeneity which in itself is the outcome of intense interactions over the years (Akindele, 2003).

Essentially, widows of all categories (young, middle-aged and elderly) in the selected communities constituted over ninety (90) percent of the total respondents. Widowers, selected men and women, specifically, traditional title holders, religious leaders, senior citizens, opinion leaders, and others knowledgeable of the historical background and the various socio-cultural peculiarities with regard to widowhood and property inheritance of the selected communities, constituted the remaining ten (10) percent of the study population. The rationale for having widows constitute the bulk of the study population in this research is premised on the following:

First, the primary focus of this research is on the plight of widows and their coping strategies within the context of widowhood practices and property inheritance among the Awori. Second, widows are of a prime interest in this research because the social problem that accompanies widowhood practices and property disinheritance is usually that of the widows and not of the widowers or any other group in most Nigerian societies. Lastly, the researcher is of the opinion that, the widows themselves are in a position to tell their story better than anyone else hence, the need for them to constitute majority of the respondents for this research.

Also, the researcher engaged one key informant per community. The selection was based on the following considerations:

- (i) The informants were indigenes of the study area and who resided in the communities
- (ii) They possessed vast knowledge about the people's culture, beliefs, customs and traditions as well as the geographical terrain of the community. This became essential in order to have free access to key research respondents and most importantly to facilitate the ease of data collection in the respective research communities.

3.4 Methodological Procedures

This study adopted the use of both primary and secondary sources of data. A triangulation of methods consisting of survey research, in-depth interviews and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) was engaged in this investigation to get primary data. A combination of both quantitative and qualitative methods provided data on the demographic characteristics of respondents, the socio-cultural context of widowhood and property inheritance examined in this study.

The secondary sources of data relied mainly on reports from relevant articles, journals, magazines, newspapers, pictures, documentary evidence, text books and materials from electronic sources specifically, on-line libraries and websites via the internet.

3.4.1 The Study Population

The population surveyed was exclusively widows of Awori origin but of different age categories, religious affiliations, educational backgrounds, occupations and widowhood experiences. It was difficult identifying the actual size of each Awori community and the exact number of widows in the various communities due to non-availability of records to that effect. However, the researcher enjoyed the co-operation of the traditional rulers, religious leaders and other key opinion leaders who

not only granted the researcher audience for the Key Informant Interview (KII) conducted, but also assisted to mobilize widows in their various communities to actively participate in the study.

3.4.2 Sample Size and Sampling Procedures

The sample size for this study was nine hundred and ninety seven (997). Primarily, the purposive sampling and snow ball techniques were adopted. Awori widows of all age categories, religious and socio-cultural background were administered questionnaires in the selected communities to ensure a wide coverage and also to elicit their opinions and responses on the research topic. Besides, personal visits and familiarization of the researcher to the study areas, letters notifying the opinion leaders of the purpose of the research and request for widows' participation in the study areas were dispatched well ahead of the field work. The researcher was able to gain entry into the research communities through the co-operation and assistance of both the traditional rulers and religious leaders. Similarly, through interaction and networking, the researcher was able to identify widows who provided useful information that assisted in locating other widows who participated in the study across the various communities.

For ease of questionnaire administration, the widows were assembled at designated places such as the palace of the traditional rulers and the community town halls where the researcher and the trained research assistants administered the instrument one after another based on face to face personal interview of the widows in each of the six communities. This method guaranteed minimal errors and a high response rate because the widows were able to clarify grey areas from the interviewers in the course of filling the instrument especially for the non-educated widows.

In all, a total of 997 copies of the questionnaire were administered out of which 982 were duly completed and returned representing a 98.5 percent completion rate. Of this number, a total of 942 were adjudged usable for analysis. The distribution is presented in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1: Frequency distribution of respondents by community

| S/N | Awori Community | No of respondent |
|--------------|-----------------|------------------|
| 1. | **Agbara | 110 |
| 2. | *Atan | 161 |
| 3. | *Iju | 105 |
| 4. | *Igbesa | 238 |
| 5. | *Ilogbo | 86 |
| 6. | **Ota | 242 |
| Total | | 942 |

Key: *Rural community **Urban community

Evidently, the communities are of different sizes. Thus, the size of each community and the level of awareness provided by the opinion leaders on the essence of the research influenced the high response rates received from the respective communities. It is to be noted that the study areas comprised both rural and urban Awori communities each having its own unique peculiarities and socio-cultural beliefs. The population estimates for Ota is 527,242 (NPC, 2006). This comprises 261,523 (males) and 265,719 (females). The estimates for the remaining study communities could not be ascertained due to the non-availability of the data at the National Population Commission.

3.4.3 Instruments of Data Collection

This study utilized both quantitative and qualitative instruments for data collection. For the quantitative instrument, it employed the use of the survey method (A structured questionnaire). Given the high number of respondents without any form of schooling, seven field assistants were recruited and trained for effective questionnaire administration. Both purposive and the snowball sampling techniques were adopted for study (mainly) because the study focused principally on widows. Thus, identified widows were very instrumental in assisting the researcher to locate other widows within the study areas. In-depth interview guide and focus group discussion guide constituted the qualitative instruments employed for this research. Data from other sources, namely: journals, textbooks, newspapers and internet sources.

3.4.4 Structured Questionnaire

A 65-item structured questionnaire containing both open and close ended questions was designed for this research. This was sub-divided into four sections. Section A comprised of questions relating to the socio-demographic characteristics of respondents. Section B focused on respondent's perceptions of widowhood and its practices in the selected Awori communities. Section C examined questions on property inheritance while the last section (Section D) presented questions that focused on widows' coping mechanisms.

3.4.5 In-depth interview Guide

The in-depth interview guide designed for the study comprised three sections namely A, B, and C. The questions contained in section A were mainly general questions which bordered on name, age, religion, and place of origin of the respondents who comprise both male and female religious and traditional title holders, senior citizens, widowers and widows. The second section comprised specific questions on widowhood practices and property inheritance among the study population, while the last section consisted mainly probing questions to seek further clarifications on grey areas from respondents on the research topic. In all, a total of twenty five questions were contained in this qualitative instrument. The selection of these respondents was hinged on their wealth of experience which puts them in a position to provide useful information on the subject.

3.4.6 Focus Group Discussion (FGD) Guide

A focus group discussion guide was another principal qualitative research instrument employed in this study. It contained twenty one questions in all. The questions which began with the general bio-data of respondents were followed by relevant questions on widowhood practices and property inheritance as they relate to the Awori. The researcher who doubled as the moderator/facilitator was ably assisted by a recruited and trained note taker who took down the minutest detail of the face to face personal interaction of the researcher with the widows. This became imperative in order to elicit more useful data from respondents which audio tape recorder and other research instruments were unable to elicit. Three FGD sessions per community were conducted primarily for homogeneous respondents comprising widows, married men and women. Each FGD session contained between eight and twelve respondents. Across the six research areas, a total of eighteen FGD sessions were held

3.5 Data Collection

Data collection is discussed under the following sub-titles: recruitment and training of research assistants (interviewers and supervisors), pilot testing, interviews, focus group discussions and, finally, case studies of selected widows across the research communities.

3.5.1 Recruitment and Training of Field Workers

Five interviewers (four males and one female) and two supervisors were recruited and trained for the data collection exercise. The interviewers included four students of Nigerian Polytechnics all of whom were holders of National Diploma (ND) certificates currently pursuing their Higher National Diploma (HND) but were available for the exercise due to a prolonged strike by the staff of their institution. The last interviewer had just completed her West African Examinations Council (WAEC) and was awaiting results. Of the two supervisors, one was a former primary school headmaster and a holder of the National Certificate of Education (NCE) while the other supervisor is currently self-employed and a village chief who had a university degree. The selection of these field workers most of whom are indigenes of Awori (the study area) was premised on the fact that they speak Yoruba, the common language of the Awori, and are also fluent in English language. Besides, these field workers were familiar with the people and culture of the communities. This made their training less difficult than if outsiders without these qualities had been recruited. The training of the field workers which took place on two consecutive Saturdays, precisely, the third and fourth Saturday in the month of July, 2008 held at Atan Primary School, Atan, one of the study sites.

Due to the heterogeneous composition of the sampled population in terms of age, sex, religion, level of education and the geographical location of the selected Awori communities, seven research assistants fluent in both English and the local language of the Awori (Yoruba) were recruited and trained by the researcher for two weeks to enhance ease of questionnaire administration. At the end of the training, the research assistants were asked to interpret the instrument in both English and Yoruba languages to ensure accuracy. This is because most of the sampled population (widows) could neither read nor write in English but speak Yoruba language.

The training was carried out by the researcher and it centered mainly on how to elicit responses and vital information from the targeted population using the research tool (questionnaire). The aim of the study and the significance of each question contained in the questionnaire were explained to the field workers. The researcher and the interviewers went through the questions one after the other in both

English and Yoruba languages. To ensure uniformity in the way questions were understood, the interviewers made presentations in both languages as well. This was necessary in order to make useful corrections which could assist in achieving high response rate from the study population which composed of both literate and non-literate respondents.

The two supervisors, both of whom were elderly and experienced men, assisted the researcher tremendously. They not only assisted in supervising the other recruited field workers during the field work, but also participated actively during the interview process owing to the large number of non-literate respondents encountered in the field.

3.5.2 Pilot Survey

The researcher along with the trained interviewers did a test run of the set of items contained in a draft questionnaire on Saturday 2nd August, 2008. The instrument was administered at Ajibawo and Igbele-Ajana communities in Atan ward of Ado-Odo/Ota LGA of Ogun State. The aim was to test the relevance, validity, comprehension and cultural acceptability of the questions. In addition, the pilot test assisted us in assessing the skill of the interviewers as well as detecting problems with certain questions in the instrument. This enabled us make some corrections as some difficult questions identified were rephrased while some new questions were added. Others considered irrelevant and unclear were deleted accordingly. At the end of the exercise, we arrived at a 65-item survey questionnaire administered in the main research.

3.5.3 The Survey

After effecting corrections on the questionnaire administered during the pilot test, final copies were printed and administered to the study population (Awori widows). The survey proper commenced on Saturday the 8th of August, 2008 and lasted till 29th November, 2008 (three and a half months). The survey started at Iju, the neighbouring community to Ota, where the researcher's place of work and abode is located. The proximity of Iju and the early response from the community leader (*Baale* of Iju) to commence the study assisted tremendously. The researcher herself in company of the five trained field assistants and two supervisors administered the questionnaire one after the other to the respondents, elicited their responses using the face to face interview method for the illiterate widows, while the few literate respondents completed the instrument themselves and returned same on the spot.

In all, a total of 997 copies of the questionnaire were administered out of which 982 were duly completed and returned representing 98.5 percent completion rate. Of this number, a total of 942 were adjudged usable for analysis. The distribution is as follows: Agbara (110), Atan (161), Iju (105), Igbesa (238), Ilogbo (86), and Ota (242). The high response rate recorded is attributable to several factors: the collaborative efforts of the research assistants with the lead researcher, and much more, the support of both the traditional and religious leaders and some widows within the community especially those who doubled as title holders and women leaders (mother of outing–Yoruba (*Iyalode*), mother of market -*Iyaloja* and mother of good luck – *Iyalaje*, etc) and other widows in the various communities led the researcher and her team to identify other widows spread across the communities earmarked for this study.

3.5.4 Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)

Focus Group Discussion (FGD) formed a vital aspect of primary data collection in this study. Three FGD sessions were conducted in each of the communities. Each session was composed of between eight and twelve participants. In all, a total of eighteen FGD sessions was held with different groups comprising: widows, married men as well as married women. At the initial stage of this study, the researcher proposed to include at least one FGD session for the widowers to complement the study but, it was extremely difficult to identify and gather between eight and twelve widowers per time unlike widows, married men and married women who were readily available and willing to participate in the research exercise. Also, given the socio-cultural settings within which widowhood occurs in a patriarchal society like the Awori communities studied, there are social differences between men who lose their wife/wives and women who lose their husbands. While women are not expected to marry more than one husband, because of the socio-cultural machinery that is there to support widower and not widows, we have a situation in which “partial widowers” exist. This, among other reasons, posed difficulty in carrying out FGD sessions for the widowers. Hence, this motivated the researcher to interview two widowers per community with a view to hearing their story and experiences of widowhood practices and property inheritance in the study areas.

The overall aim of the FGD sessions conducted in this research was to elicit vital data from key members of the communities in order to make some comparisons. While the researcher moderated all the FGD sessions, a trained note taker assisted in note taking in addition to a tape recorder and other research materials that were used during the exercise. The sitting arrangement adopted for the FGD sessions was the same as shown in the appendix. While the moderator and the note taker sat in

the middle of participants to ensure proper eye contact and equal participation of all participants. Also, some of the photographs of participants taken during the FGD sessions are equally found in Appendix XI (see page 188) of the thesis.

3.5.5 Key Informant Interviews (KIIs)

Key Informant interviews of selected men and women across the research areas was engaged in this study to provide detailed and robust information, which questionnaire and other methods are unable to elicit. This, the researcher achieved through a structured interview guide containing a total of twenty one questions relevant to the research topic. A total of twenty four respondents, specifically, twelve widowers, six widows and six elders (male and female) who are members of the community especially the custodians of tradition, were interviewed in the course of this study. Suffice to state that, the widowers interviewed had a separate interview guide from the other participants even though similar questions were asked. The reason was to give the widowers an opportunity to express their views freely on the research topic for ease of comparisons and perhaps to draw some conclusions. However, the choice of all the participants was informed by their wealth of wisdom, knowledge and experience which puts them in a vantage position to contribute significantly to the research topic. Tape recorder, video camera, photographs and note taking were utilized in recording respondent's views and opinions in the process of the face to face personal interview. Owing to the fact that the common language of the Awori people is Yoruba, the researcher had no difficulty in communicating with the non-English speaking interviewees during the interview process as she speaks both Yoruba and English languages fluently. The data elicited from the key informant interview were sorted, coded, transcribed and analyzed accordingly in line with the research objectives.

3.5.6 Case Studies of Widows

In addition to the survey, in-depth interviews and focus group discussions, case studies of selected widows were embarked upon with a view to making some comparisons on their coping mechanisms especially those who were heads of households and also to identify areas of differences and similarities. These studies captured only the ones that were identified during the field work. Two cases were taken in each of the six research areas. In all, a total of twelve cases were taken. A major strength of this qualitative method was the fact that, the widows were able to tell their stories the way they were and undiluted.

3.6 Categorization of widows

In this segment, women whose husband's have died and are not planning to remarry (widows) are categorized with a view to appreciating the various age groups to which they belong. In this context, widows are classified into: young, middle aged and elderly. The young widows are primarily those within child bearing age of 18 to 40 years. The middle aged widows fall within the age bracket (41-60 years). They are principally widows with grown up children who have no plans of bearing children any more. The aged widows refer to retired women and senior citizens aged 61 years and above. In most cases, the latter are frail, and physically challenged, may be with or without children and are heavily dependent on others for daily survival. In spite of giant strides and scientific breakthrough in medicine and technology, it has not been possible to eradicate death and this makes us to assert that no society exists without widows. Untimely deaths resulting from both known and unknown causes abound in our societies; hence, different widows of varying age groups exist.

3.7 Problems Encountered During Data Collection

Several problems were encountered during the course of data collection. The first problem was the uphill task of obtaining a comprehensive map of the study area. Due to its non-availability at the Local Government secretariat in Ota—the LGA administrative headquarters, the Urban and Regional Planning office where it was available demanded for cash payment of two thousand five hundred (N2,500) per copy of the map before it could be made available to the researcher. Meanwhile, the researcher requested for a total of six (6) maps: Ado-Odo/Ota LGA, Ota community and the remaining Awori communities earmarked for the study. After much bureaucracies, and administrative rigours, only two of the requested maps were made available. On receipt of the maps, the researcher had difficulty in obtaining appropriate scanner to reduce its size to A4 since the soft copy was at the state headquarters in Abeokuta – the State capital. The researcher had no choice but, to travel to Abeokuta to obtain the soft copy which proved very useful afterwards.

Similarly, the researcher had difficulty in obtaining documented cases and evidence on issues of widowhood and property inheritance among the Awori. Several visits to the customary court in Ota, the Local Government headquarters did not yield any positive result as the court officials could not lay hands on any documented cases/evidences relating to the research topic. Another effort at the Ota High court, however, made available only a few documents on property inheritance cases among

other sub-ethnic groups: Egba and Ijebu. Again, no single record of the Awori was found which gives an impression that, cases of property dis-inheritance are hardly ever reported in the law court among the study population.

The second problem centered on heavy vehicular traffic often encountered to and from the research sites in Ota which is attributable to bad roads. The continuous road construction work along Idi-Iroko road which links the other parts of Ota - a major study area did not help matters as vehicular traffic remained unresolved, thus making transportation along that axis a herculean task. Also, the remaining research areas: Iju, Atan, Ilogbo, Igbesa and Agbara are several kilometers apart. Accessing the nooks and crannies of these communities most of which are rural settings coupled with bad road conditions posed a serious challenge during the data collection exercise.

Except for Ota and Agbara that are largely industrial areas, the remaining research communities were agrarian in nature and farming is the major occupation. It was extremely difficult getting the respondents for Key Informant Interview and Focus Group Discussions together in groups as they leave for their farm and places of business very early in the morning to return late in the evening. However, with the cooperation and kind assistance of the traditional and religious leaders in these communities, tracking down the respondents became resolved. We sought their consent and they gave specific time of their availability for the research.

Third, the timing for data collection was a major constraint. Often times, it was not convenient for the researcher and her team who had to travel several kilometers to and from the research sites especially very early in the morning before the traders and the farmers left their homes. In several instances, the researcher and her team had to travel back late in the evening on completion of the data collection for the day. Weekends and public holidays were no exceptions. The respondents simply dictated the pace and time for data collection which was not favourable to the researcher, who performed multiple roles of a wife, mother and a lecturer with enormous tasks and responsibilities.

Fourth, the cost of printing research instruments, fuel and transportation of interviewers and research materials as well as feeding and payment of field workers was very enormous. On every trip to the field, a photographer was engaged in addition to video coverage that was done for record purposes. These hired professionals were paid per trip. The cost of refreshment and in some cases

transportation for participants in the FGDs was equally borne by the researcher besides other miscellaneous expenses incurred during data collection.

Fifth, access to the research communities and much more the open demand for cash and material resources by the respondents in the course of data collection was another major problem. Even though the researcher understands and speaks Yoruba, the common language of the Awori, it was not guaranty for easy access into the communities. At first, we were duly informed that the Awori tradition demands that visitors to the community must first get to the palace to pay homage to the king or traditional ruler as the case may be. Specified gift items (alcoholic drinks) and in some cases cash were demanded as part of entry into the community. Most of the community leaders did not mince words about asking what we brought for their people. Also, some of the respondents, specifically the widows, openly demanded for cash and gift items from us. However, the quick intervention of their community leaders, who explained the purpose of the research to them made them put a stop to their demands.

The researcher was fortunate in two of the research communities: Ota and Igbesa as the data collection exercise coincided with key festivals in those communities: Ota Women's Day and Imale Day at Igbesa, which afforded the researcher a great opportunity to harvest a large number of respondents.

Sixth, most of the non-literate population sampled almost frustrated the data collection effort. At first, they were very reluctant to discuss the research topic, perhaps because of their ignorance and past experience on the topic under focus. Not until the researcher herself addressed them on the objectives of the research were they co-operative. It was noticed, however, that when some eventually opened up, they became very emotional. Some wept, others complained bitterly about poverty and the need for government and well-meaning citizens to come to their rescue. It was also observed that some of the non-literate respondents could not remember their age. However, with the aid of historical calendar and major events in their community, we were able to estimate their age. In addition, since most of the widows sampled had no form of schooling, it was a herculean task completing the questionnaire written in English language by respondents. The trained interviewers, however, engaged the face to face interview method to elicit responses which took an average of 45 minutes to 1 hour thus accounting for the duration of time spent on data collection per respondent. In

spite of all the odds and challenges encountered, the study recorded very high response from the various respondents contacted in the course of data collection.

3.8 Data preparation and Data Entry

Completed and returned copies of the questionnaire from the field were carefully edited by the researcher to ensure clarity, legibility, completeness and consistency in the responses provided. Of the 997 copies of the questionnaire administered, a total of 942, representing 94 percent, were adjudged usable for analysis. These were numbered serially in order to give an identification number to every case. A codebook was designed with the approval of the main supervisor with the aid of which coding was done. The information contained in the coded copies of the questionnaire was then imputed into the computer using the latest version of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) 15.0 windows software application, for data programming and analysis.

3.9 Methods of Data Analysis

A combination of quantitative and qualitative methods of data analysis was performed. The quantitative methods include: frequency distribution, percentages, cross tabulations, and linear regression. Data from the returned questionnaires were sorted, coded and analyzed using descriptive statistics (frequency distribution and percentages which complemented the qualitative data in this study.

The frequency distribution and percentages were utilized essentially for the socio-demographic characteristics of respondents contained in section A of the questionnaire and other relevant questions raised in sections B, C, and D of the questionnaire.

3.10 Test of Hypotheses

The study hypotheses are:

1. There is a significant relationship between the widow's personal attributes (age, education, income, number/sex of children, type of marriage, religion) and widowhood rites performed/property inheritance.
2. There is a significant relationship between the late husband's gender orientation/values and widowhood rites performed/property inheritance.
3. There is a significant relationship between lineage-based reciprocities and widowhood rites performed/property inheritance.

Using a triangulatory process, both quantitative and qualitative data sources were used for the test of the various hypotheses. The critical variables in Hypothesis 1 are the 5 indices which helped to measure the personal attributes of the widows. The indices are: age, type of marriage, educational level, occupation, and income level. To determine the extent of relationship between these predictive variables and widowhood rites and/or property inheritance, the linear regression was used. This is to determine which of these indicators had the most effect on the widowhood practices outcomes.

In the same vein, the linear regression was used for Hypothesis 2 to determine the relationships between the critical factors of gender orientation/values, and widowhood practices/property inheritance. For Hypothesis 3, descriptive statistics was used to present the relationships between lineage based reciprocities and widowhood practices/property inheritance. This was supported with qualitative data generated using content analysis.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

4.0 Introduction

This chapter is devoted to the presentation and analysis of field data. Quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS computer software while these data are presented at three levels, viz. i. Univariate analysis using frequency tables; ii. Bi-variate analysis using cross-tabulation tables; iii. Multi-variate analysis using linear regression/coefficient of correlation tables.

4.1 Distribution of Widows by Demographic Characteristics

Table 4.1 shows the distribution of widows by demographic characteristics: research location, place of origin, number of years lived in Awori, age of respondents, number of children, number of male and female children, and sex of children preferred.

Of the six (6) Awori communities (Agbara, Atan, Igbesa, Iju, Ilogbo and Ota) studied, Ota had the highest number of respondents with 242 widows representing 25.7 percent of the sampled population. This was closely followed by Igbesa a rural community with 238 widows representing a quarter while Ilogbo community another rural settlement had the least number of respondents of less than 10 percent of the sampled population representing only 86 widows out of the total 942 that responded.

This study was originally intended to be on the Awori people of Ogun State, southwest, Nigeria. As Table 4.1 (Panel 2) reveals, almost all the respondents sampled were indigenes. Ninety four percent of the widows are of Awori origin and descent. The few who are non Awori may have been inadvertently included by the interviewers in the course of data collection. Nevertheless, the findings in this study could safely be said to represent findings among the Awori people.

From Table 4.1 (Panel 3), 11 percent had lived in Awori between one and ten years, 13 percent had lived between eleven and twenty years while, less than a quarter had lived in Awori for twenty one to forty years. Most of the respondents had lived in Awori for between forty one and sixty years. Those who had lived for sixty one years and above were about twenty percent of the sample.

As shown in Table 4.1 (Panel 4), 17.8 percent of the widows sampled in this study were within the age bracket of 70 years and above. Those below 40 years represent less than 10 percent of the sampled population. A closer look at the various age brackets in Table 4.1 (Panel 4) clearly shows that widows of different age brackets are found in the sample. The median age of the respondents was 54.5 years and the modal age was 55.0 years.

From Table 4.1 (Panel 5), a large number of the widows had between four and five children representing 40 percent of the total population. This is closely followed by respondents with six children and above representing 30 percent. Widows with less than four children represent less than 30 percent. The average number of male and female children ever born by the sampled population is 4.5. Virtually all the respondents had at least one child. The maximum number of children by the respondents sampled is eleven.

Table 4.1 (Panel 6) reveals that, over 60 percent of the widows had less than three male children. The remaining less than 40 percent had three male children and above. The average number of male children from the distribution is 2.2 with the highest number of male children put at 8. Although majority of the respondents had below three male children, there are others with as many as eight male children.

From Table 4.1 (Panel 7), 561 respondents representing 60 percent of the total sample had between one and two female children, while the remaining 40 percent had three female children and above. The average number of female children by the respondents is 2.3 which is slightly higher than the figure for male children, indicated in Table 4.1 (Panel 7). In spite of this difference, the maximum number of female children by the sampled population is also eight. Over two-thirds of the respondents preferred both male and female children. To majority of the respondents, children are of high premium irrespective of sex. According to them, what a male child can do, a female child can also do. Thus, it is immaterial whether the children produced from a given marital union are male or female. However, about 21 percent of the respondents prefer male children while only about 8 percent prefer female children.

Table 4.1: Distribution of Widows by Demographic Characteristics

| Variable | Frequency | Percent (%) |
|---|--------------|---------------|
| 1.Research location | | |
| Agbara | 110 | 11.67 |
| Atan | 161 | 17.09 |
| Igbesa | 238 | 25.27 |
| Iju | 105 | 11.15 |
| Ilogbo | 86 | 9.13 |
| Ota | 242 | 25.69 |
| Total | 942 | 100.0 |
| 2.Whether respondent was Awori | | |
| Yes | 881 | 93.5 |
| No | 6 | .6 |
| Partly | 55 | 5.8 |
| Total | 942 | 100.00 |
| 3.Number of years lived in Awori (Years) | | |
| 1-10 | 99 | 10.5 |
| 11-20 | 123 | 13.1 |
| 21-40 | 214 | 22.7 |
| 41-60 | 314 | 33.3 |
| 61+ | 192 | 20.4 |
| Total | 942 | 100.0 |
| 4. Age of respondents (Years) | | |
| < 40 | 91 | 9.7 |
| 40-44 | 98 | 10.4 |
| 45-49 | 101 | 10.7 |
| 50-54 | 156 | 16.6 |
| 55-59 | 80 | 8.5 |
| 60-64 | 162 | 17.3 |
| 65-69 | 83 | 8.7 |
| 70+ | 171 | 17.8 |
| Total | 942 | 100.0 |
| Mean | 55.65 | |
| 5. Number of Children | | |
| < 4 | 273 | 29.0 |
| 4-5 | 383 | 40.6 |
| 6+ | 286 | 30.4 |
| Total | 942 | 100.0 |
| Mean | 4.49 | |
| 6.Number of Male Children | | |
| < 3 | 581 | 61.6 |
| 3 and above | 361 | 38.3 |
| Total | 942 | 99.9 |
| Mean | 2.23 | |
| 7.Number of Female Children | | |
| < 3 | 561 | 59.6 |
| 3 and above | 381 | 40.6 |
| Total | 942 | 100.0 |
| Mean | 2.30 | |

Source: Field survey, 2008

4.2 Distribution of Widows by Socio-economic Characteristics

Table 4.2 covers the frequency and percentage distribution of widows by socio-economic characteristics. The data displayed in Table 4.2 (Panel 1) reveals that respondents without any form of schooling constitute 60 percent of the sampled population which is rather high in this 21st century, the age of technological advancement. A quarter of the respondents had primary education otherwise referred to as first school leaving certificate. The remaining less than 16 percent of the respondents had secondary and tertiary education which ranges from National Certificate of Education (NCE), National Diploma (ND), Higher National Diploma (HND), first, second and third degrees as well as other professional certification in their chosen fields.

Of those who stated that they were not subjected to widowhood rites, 56 percent had no schooling, 23 percent had primary education, 14 percent had secondary education, while less than 10 percent had tertiary education. However, of the few widows who claimed that they were exempted from performing widowhood rites essentially because of old age, child birth and other disclosed reasons, those without schooling constituted the highest proportion (47 percent), while the least proportion (only 7 percent) constituted those with tertiary education. The researcher is of the view that if widows acquired requisite skills through formal or informal education as the case may be, they will be empowered to cope with the challenges associated with widowhood and property inheritance, especially when unforeseen circumstances such as untimely death of spouse occur.

As revealed in Table 4.2 (Panel 2), the main occupation of the widows surveyed is trading which represents 67.5 percent of the sample. Respondents involved in farming as a source of livelihood were 18 percent, while the remaining less than 15 percent were artisans, transporters and those engaged in other vocations. The large proportion of respondents without any form of schooling may account for why majority of the widows took to trading which requires little or no form of schooling. With the agrarian nature of most parts of the research areas, it is expected that the number of farmers among the study population should be higher. Instead, the proportion of those engaged in trading was far higher than all other occupations. This is another pointer to the fact that farming is gradually losing its place of prominence even in the rural areas studied.

Table 4.2 (Panel 3) reveals that 52 percent of the respondents earn less or ₦10,000 monthly. Twenty two percent earn between ₦10,001 and ₦20,000. Twelve percent earn between ₦20,001 and ₦30,000. Six percent earn between ₦30,001 and ₦40,000. Just 4 percent earn between ₦40,001 and ₦50,000, while only 2 percent, earn ₦50,001 and above monthly. The remaining 7 percent were unable to determine their monthly income perhaps due to old age and lack of records to that effect. The mean income is ₦13.572, while the mean income group is ₦10,001- ₦ 20,000.

From Table 4.2 (Panel 4), 62.4 percent of the respondents had their business/career completely closed down during the time they were undergoing widowhood rites, as a mark of respect and honour to the deceased irrespective of its economic implications. Fourteen percent said they had skeletal services and about 17.6 percent stated that they experienced huge financial loss at the demise of their husbands. For majority of the respondents who had their business/career closed down completely throughout the mourning period, this will no doubt aggravate their suffering and poverty since their main source of livelihood is abandoned for widowhood rites.

Table 4.2: Distribution of Widows by Socio-economic Characteristics

| Variable | Frequency | Percent (%) |
|---|------------|---------------|
| 1.Highest level of education completed | | |
| No schooling | 565 | 60.0 |
| Primary | 232 | 24.6 |
| Secondary | 110 | 11.7 |
| Tertiary | 33 | 3.5 |
| Other | 2 | 0.2 |
| Total | 942 | 100.0 |
| 2.Occupation | | |
| Farming | 172 | 18.3 |
| Trading | 636 | 67.5 |
| Other | 134 | 14.2 |
| Total | 942 | 100.00 |
| 3. Monthly Income (₦) | | |
| Less than 10,000 | 491 | 52.1 |
| 10,001-20,000 | 207 | 21.9 |
| 20,001-30,000 | 108 | 11.5 |
| 30,001-40,000 | 56 | 5.9 |
| 40,001-50,000 | 33 | 3.5 |
| 50,001+ | 21 | 2.2 |
| Unable to determine | 64 | 6.8 |
| Total | 942 | 100.0 |
| Mean income: ₦13.570 | | |
| 4. Status of Business/Career during widowhood rites? | | |
| Closed down completely | 588 | 62.4 |
| Skeletal services | 133 | 14.1 |
| Huge financial loss | 166 | 17.6 |
| Other | 55 | 5.8 |
| Total | 942 | 100.0 |

Source: Field survey, 2008

4.3 Distribution of Widows by Religion, Type of marriage and Number of wives including Widow

As shown in Table 4.3 (Panel 1), majority of the respondents (60 percent) practiced Islam, while 34.6 percent practiced Christianity. Only 5 percent were engaged in traditional worship. Oke (1984) remarked that religious beliefs are evident throughout the history of mankind. Religion is a cultural universal trait phenomenon found in all known human societies including the Awori communities.

Marriage, which is commonly referred to as a union between two adults of opposite sex is very crucial in the formation of families, widowhood and property inheritance. Fifty percent of the respondents had traditional marriage. This implies the high premium placed on traditional marriage in spite of western influence. Those who had religious marriage, precisely the Christian and Islamic marriage, accounted for less than 30 percent. It must be noted that those who had Muslim marriage were about 24 percent. There were more Muslims in our sample as revealed by Table 4.3 (Panel 2). Only 17 percent of the widows did not have their marriages formalized.

On the number of wives including widows, responses from this sub-section are divided into two: first, are those involved in monogamous marriage i.e. marital union of one man to only one wife and second, is polygynous marriage of one man to more than one wife. The first part of Table 4.3 (Panel 3) reveals that respondents whose husbands had only one wife represent 36 percent of the population sampled, the remaining over 64 percent had two wives and above.

The mean number of wives by the Awori from this finding was 2.3. This figure clearly shows that polygynous marriage is rampant among the people irrespective of modern civilization and current trend in global economic crisis which is expected to necessitate small family size in most developing societies. Otite and Ogionwo (2006) assert that “the practice of polygyny may have other explanations which may have to do with a people’s culture and values, such as the value attached to a large number of children in Africa in terms of prestige, reputation, labour force, defense and leadership”. This finding among the Awori negates Oke’s (1984) assertion that “Today in Nigeria, the value orientation of the people is changing gradually. A large number of wives/or children are no longer viewed as a mark of high social status by the young and the educated: the important thing is the quality of life of the members of a family, and so polygyny is declining”.

Table 4.3: Distribution of Widows by Religion, Type of marriage and Number of wives including Widow

| Variable | Frequency | Percent (%) |
|---|------------|--------------|
| 1. Religion | | |
| Christianity | 326 | 34.6 |
| Islam | 561 | 59.6 |
| Traditional Religion | 47 | 5.0 |
| Other | 8 | .8 |
| Total | 942 | 100.0 |
| 2. Type of marriage consummated | | |
| Christian | 53 | 5.6 |
| Islamic | 224 | 23.8 |
| Traditional | 455 | 48.3 |
| Other | 54 | 5.7 |
| None | 156 | 16.6 |
| Total | 942 | 100.0 |
| 3. Number of wives including widow | | |
| One | 335 | 35.6 |
| Two | 297 | 31.5 |
| Three and above | 310 | 32.9 |
| Total | 942 | 100.0 |
| Mean = 2.3 | | |

Source: Field survey, 2008

4.4: Distribution of Widows by Religion and by Property Inheritance

Table 4.4 shows the distribution of widows by religion and by property inheritance. Thirty two percent of respondents with Christian faith were of the view that both the deceased children and the extended family inherit property. This is followed by about 24 percent who stated that the eldest son inherits property. The Christian respondents who stated that the eldest daughter inherits property account for a meager 1.5 percent. Among the Muslim respondents, 36.8 percent felt that, the deceased's children are entitled to property inheritance. This is followed by another 32 percent who believe that the extended family inherits property. The Muslims who believe that the eldest son inherits property constitute 25 percent. Less than 1 percent affirmed that the eldest daughter inherits property. On the whole, it can be seen that the deceased's children, followed by his extended family

members, mainly inherit property among the Awori. The large difference between Christians and Moslems is with respect to the percent that were of the view that the widow should inherit (About 11% versus 6%).

Table 4. 4: Distribution of Widows by Religion and by Property Inheritance

| Persons entitled to property inheritance | | | | | | |
|--|----------|------------|-----------------|-----------------|---------------------|------------|
| Religion | Widow | Eldest son | Eldest daughter | Extended family | Deceased's children | Total |
| Christianity | 35(10.6) | 80(24.2) | 5(1.5) | 105(31.8) | 105(31.8) | 330(100.0) |
| Islam | 34(6.1) | 137(24.5) | 5(.9) | 178(31.8) | 206(36.8) | 560(100.0) |
| Trad. Rel. | 3(6.4) | 10(21.3) | 1(2.1) | 16(34.0) | 17(36.2) | 47(100.0) |
| Total | 72(7.6) | 227(24.1) | 12(1.3) | 303(32.2) | 328(34.8) | 942(100.0) |

Here are the views shared by some Muslim and Christian widows aged 30-70 years with primary or less education on property inheritance in the study area in the course of the focus group discussions:

Mrs. A: I have been a widow for 21 years. Since I was the only one without any helper, I had to fend for my children. Now that the children are old enough, they took over the property he left. For me, widows have no business with property inheritance because whatever is given to the widows' children belongs to the widow.

Mrs. B: After 40 days, whatever is left is shared especially if the man is young; the property is shared equally among the children depending on the number of wives. If the children are still young, the property is shared among the wives for the upkeep of the children.

Mrs. C: In my own case, my husband married 7 wives. After 40 days, the property was shared equally among the children by our husband's family and we were released to go our various ways. Levirate did not come up at all.

Mrs. D: In the past, property inheritance was by the male children but these days both male and female children now inherit property. If there are three wives with children, the property is shared equally into three parts and is distributed among the children.

The view shared by some male respondents which comprises Christians, Moslems and adherents of Traditional religion in another focus group discussion session is as captured below:

Mr. A: If the man has only one wife, his property belongs to the children and widow. In some cases, it extends to the next of kin of the deceased such as the sisters and brothers. If it is a place where the man has many wives, his property is

shared equally among the children to avoid quarrel. It depends. In some places they don't give the female as much as the male.

Mr. B: Whatever belongs to a man belongs to his children. Wives are not expected to share in their husband's property. If the man has two wives, like me, the property is shared equally into two. This is known as "*Idi igi*" (Yoruba), stalk or "*Ori oju ori*" (Yoruba,) head is not superior to head, which implies equality between the sexes. This type of property inheritance among the Yoruba is recognized by the English law. If on the other hand, the man has a will, he may instruct before he dies.

Mr. C: In Aworiland, all the children of the deceased inherit his property irrespective of age or sex because a child is a child. However, if it is a farm land that is involved, the male child may be given a greater share.

4.5 Distribution of Widows by Level of Education and by Property Inheritance

Table 4.5 indicates widows' level of education and persons entitled to property inheritance. According to 36 percent of the respondents without schooling, the deceased children inherit property. For 32 percent of the same category of respondents, the extended family inherits property. Precisely, 26.4 percent of the respondents without schooling shared the view that the eldest son inherits property. Only 6 percent constitute those who stated that property inheritance is by the widow or the eldest daughter in some cases.

Of the widows with primary education, 32 percent opined that both the children of the deceased and the extended family inherit property respectively. Those who were of the view that the eldest son inherits property constitute 12.1 percent, while those who stated that the eldest daughter inherits property were a meager 1.3 percent.

The widows with secondary education had a slightly different view as about 37 percent of them stated that the extended family inherits property among the Awori. This is followed by about 33 percent who were of the view that the deceased's children inherit property. Of those with tertiary education, about 35 percent indicated that property inheritance is by the deceased's children, while 32 percent were of the view that the extended family inherits property. Twenty four percent think that the eldest son inherits property, while the remaining 7.6 percent represent the view of respondents who stated that the widow inherits property.

As revealed in Table 4.5, it is obvious that the deceased's children are first when it comes to the issue of property inheritance among the Awori. Thirty five percent stated that the deceased's children inherit property. This is closely followed by 32 percent who were of the opinion that the extended family inherits property.

Table 4.5: Distribution of widows by level of education and by property inheritance

| Persons entitled to property inheritance | | | | | | |
|--|----------|------------|-----------------|-----------------|---------------------|------------|
| Highest level of education | Widow | Eldest son | Eldest daughter | Extended family | Deceased's children | Total |
| No schooling | 30(5.3) | 149(26.4) | 4(.7) | 178(31.5) | 204(36.1) | 565(100.0) |
| Primary | 28(12.1) | 51(22.0) | 3(1.3) | 75(32.30) | 75(32.3) | 232(100.0) |
| Secondary | 8(7.3) | 19(17.3) | 5(4.5) | 41(37.3) | 37(33.6) | 110(100.0) |
| Tertiary | 6(17.1) | 8(22.9) | 0(.0) | 9(25.7) | 12(34.3) | 359(100.0) |
| Total | 72(7.6) | 227(24.1) | 129(1.3) | 303(32.2) | 328(34.8) | 942(100.0) |

4.6: Distribution of Widows by Occupation and by Property inheritance

Table 4.6 shows occupations of widows and their views on property inheritance among the study population. Forty percent of the farmers who constitute the study population opined that property inheritance is by the deceased children, while 30 percent stated that property is inherited by the extended family. Twenty four percent of farmers were of the view that the eldest son inherits property among the Awori. Widows who indicated that property is inherited by the widow account for just 6 percent while those who stated that the eldest daughter inherits property were less than 1 percent.

The traders who stated that the widow and the eldest daughter inherit property account for less than 10 percent of the sample. Unlike the farmers, 34 percent of the traders stated that, the extended family comes first in property inheritance followed by the deceased children which account for 32 percent. Twenty six percent of the traders were of the view that, property belongs to the eldest son.

From the data presented in Table 4.6, majority of the widows were traders who engaged in small scale retail trading, largely distribution of farm products for domestic consumption. This was earlier shown on Table 4.2 (Panel 2) which revealed that 67.5 percent of the total sample is into trading.

Table 4.6: Distribution of Widows by Occupation and by Property Inheritance

| Persons entitled to property inheritance | | | | | | |
|--|----------|------------|-----------------|-----------------|---------------------|------------|
| Occupation | Widow | Eldest son | Eldest daughter | Extended family | Deceased's children | Total |
| Farming | 10(5.8) | 41(23.8) | 1(.6) | 51(29.7) | 69(40.1) | 172(100.0) |
| Trading | 42(6.6) | 162(25.5) | 9(1.4) | 218(34.3) | 205(32.2) | 636(100.0) |
| Other | 20(11.6) | 24(14.0) | 2(2.6) | 34(25.0) | 54(39.5) | 134(100.0) |
| Total | 72(7.6) | 227(24.1) | 12(1.3) | 303(32.2) | 328(34.8) | 942(100.0) |

4.7: Distribution of Widows by Opinion on whether Income level influence Property Inheritance

Table 4.7 presents the widows' view on whether income influences property inheritance. Forty eight percent of those who answered in the affirmative were of the view that the eldest son inherits property followed by 33 percent who stated that the extended family inherits property. Forty percent of the widows who claimed that the level of income does not influence property inheritance felt that the deceased children inherit property. This is followed by 32 percent who indicated that the extended family inherits property. Less than 20 percent were of the view that the eldest son inherits property. The remaining less than 10 percent accounted for those who indicated that the widow and the eldest daughter inherit property.

In summary, 34.8 percent shared the view that, the deceased's children inherit property, followed by 32.2 percent who stated that the extended family inherits property. Only 1.9 percent felt that the eldest daughter inherits property. We can conclude from this finding that, income is not a strong factor in property inheritance. In other words, whether or not a widow has income is inconsequential in property inheritance.

Table 4.7: Distribution of Widows by Opinion on whether Income level influence Property Inheritance

| Opinion | Persons entitled to property inheritance | | | | | |
|--------------|--|------------|-----------------|-----------------|-------------------|------------|
| | Widow | Eldest son | Eldest daughter | Extended family | Deceased children | Total |
| Yes | 10(6.3) | 77(48.1) | 3(1.9) | 53(33.1) | 17(10.6) | 160(100.0) |
| No | 62(8.0) | 150(19.3) | 9(1.2) | 249(32.0) | 308(39.6) | 778(100.0) |
| Total | 72(7.6) | 227(24.1) | 12(1.3) | 303(32.2) | 328(38.8) | 942(100.0) |

4.8: Distribution of Widows by Opinion on whether Widows were subjected to Widowhood rites in spite of level of education attained

As Table 4.8 shows, 59.3 percent of widows without schooling were subjected to certain widowhood rites at the death of their husbands. Fifty-nine percent of those with primary education were subjected to widowhood rites, while just 10 percent of those with secondary education were subjected to widowhood rites during mourning. Less than 15 percent of the respondents with tertiary education were subjected to such rites.

Widows without any schooling, which accounted for the highest proportion (59.3 percent), were subjected to widowhood rites among the study population. This simply suggests that, there is a significant relationship between the level of education attained by widows and the performance of widowhood rites. This implies that, the level of respondents' education will determine the type of widowhood rites they will perform. As revealed by this study, widows without schooling are more than those with one form of schooling or the other in terms of widowhood rites practices. Perhaps, their lack of formal education or schooling makes them vulnerable to the dictates of traditional widowhood rites.

It is observed also, from this finding, that the highest level of education attained such as tertiary education influenced widowhood rites performed. As shown in Table 4.8, widows with tertiary education accounted for the least of those subjected to widowhood rites, while those without schooling were far more in terms of subjection to widowhood rites.

Table 4.8: Distribution of Widows by Opinion on whether Widows were subjected to Widowhood rites in spite of level of education attained.

| Opinion | Highest level of education attained | | | | |
|----------------|--|----------------|------------------|-----------------|--------------|
| | No schooling | Primary | Secondary | Tertiary | Total |
| Yes | 335(59.3) | 137(59.1) | 51(46.4) | 5(14.3) | 528(100.0) |
| No | 230(40.7) | 95(40.9) | 59(53.6) | 30(85.7) | 414(100.0) |
| Total | 565(100.0) | 232(100.0) | 110(100.0) | 35(100.0) | 942(100.0) |

4.9: Distribution of Widows by Type of Marriage Consummated and by Property inheritance

As shown in Table 4.9, 30.2 percent of respondents who had Christian marriage claimed that the deceased's children and extended family inherits property. This is followed by about 26 percent who

indicated that the eldest son inherit property. To 11 percent, the widow inherits property. Only 2 percent indicated that the eldest daughter inherits property.

Forty two percent of the respondents who had Muslim marriage were of the view that the deceased children inherit property. This is followed by 29 percent who felt that the eldest son inherit property. Only a quarter claimed that the extended family inherits property. For 38 percent of the widows who had traditional marriage, property inheritance is by the extended family. This is followed by 28 percent who claimed that property inheritance is by the deceased's children. For 26 percent of the widows who had traditional marriage, the eldest son inherits property while only 1.5 percent said the eldest daughter inherits property.

Contrary to the common view shared by majority of the widows who had Christian, Muslim and traditional marriages that the deceased's children inherit property, it was observed from Table 4.8 that 35 percent of the widows who had other types of marriage indicated that property belongs to the extended family. This is followed by 33 percent who stated that the widow inherits property.

Surprisingly, only 20 percent claimed that the deceased's children inherit property.

It is clear from Table 4.9 that, majority of the widows irrespective of the type of marriage consummated agreed that property inheritance is by the deceased's children, followed by the extended family, the eldest son, the widow and lastly, the eldest daughter as the case may be.

Table 4.9: Distribution of Widows by Type of Marriage Consummated and by Property Inheritance

| Type of Marriage Consummated | Persons entitled to property inheritance | | | | | Total |
|------------------------------|--|------------|-----------------|-----------------|---------------------|------------|
| | Widow | Eldest Son | Eldest Daughter | Extended Family | Deceased's Children | |
| Christian | 6(11.3) | 14(26.4) | 1(1.9) | 16(30.2) | 16(30.2) | 53(100.0) |
| Muslim | 8(3.6) | 64(28.6) | 2(.9) | 57(25.4) | 93(41.5) | 224(100.0) |
| Traditional | 32(7.0) | 120(26.4) | 7(1.5) | 170(37.4) | 126(27.7) | 455(100.0) |
| Other | 18(33.3) | 5(9.3) | 1(1.9) | 19(35.2) | 11(20.4) | 54(100.0) |
| Total | 64(6.8) | 227(24.1) | 12(1.3) | 303(32.2) | 328(34.8) | 942(100.0) |

4.10 Cultural and Religious factors in Widowhood practices

Table 4.10 examines the cultural and religious factors influencing widowhood practices among the Awori. Primarily, it focuses on respondents' distribution in terms of widowhood experiences and practices. The Table covers cause of husband's death, the reaction by husband's family, whether or not widow was accused and confined during mourning. If confined, what was the duration? If subjected to widowhood practices, the list of such widowhood practices. We also explored the widowhood practices detested by widows and the reason(s). The general opinion of the respondents on widowhood experience and practices was also elicited. Respondents were asked if they were subjected to trial by ordeal and if yes, what their experiences were like. Other questions raised include: the role and influence of religion on widowhood practices observed and noticeable changes in widowhood practices and property inheritance as well as person(s) responsible for enforcing such widowhood practices among the study population.

Table 4.10: Cultural and Religious factors in Widowhood practices

| Variable | Frequency | Percent (%) |
|---|------------|--------------|
| 1. Cause of husband's death | | |
| Sickness | 707 | 75.1 |
| Old age | 85 | 9.0 |
| Unknown causes | 92 | 9.2 |
| Other | 58 | 6.1 |
| Total | 942 | 100.0 |
| 2. Reaction towards widow by husband's family | | |
| Normal | 331 | 35.1 |
| Sympathetic | 489 | 51.9 |
| Harsh | 122 | 13.0 |
| Total | 942 | 100.0 |
| 3. Duration of confinement (months) | | |
| <3 | 225 | 42.5 |
| 3-6 | 241 | 45.7 |
| 7-10 | 27 | 5.1 |
| 11+ | 34 | 6.5 |
| Total | 527 | 99.8 |
| Mean = 4.07 | | |
| 4. Opinion of respondents on widowhood practices | | |
| Traumatic | 205 | 21.8 |
| Bearable | 131 | 13.9 |
| One of those things | 97 | 10.3 |
| Cultural dictates | 336 | 35.7 |
| Total | 942 | 100.0 |
| 5. Exact role played by religion | | |
| Cash and kind support | 427 | 45.3 |
| Consolation, counseling and emotional support | 145 | 15.4 |
| Prayers and faith in God | 103 | 10.9 |
| Supported widowhood practices | 111 | 11.8 |
| No Response (N/R) | 156 | 16.6 |
| Total | 942 | 99.96 |
| 6. Person(s) responsible for enforcing widowhood practices | | |
| Male members of spouse's family | 168 | 17.8 |
| Female members of spouse's family | 108 | 11.5 |
| Both male and female members | 269 | 28.6 |
| Other | 397 | 42.1 |
| Total | 942 | 100.0 |

Source: Field survey, 2008

As Panel 1 of the Table 4.10 shows, three-quarters of those sampled said their husband died as a result of sickness. Among the types of sicknesses mentioned are malaria which accounted for most deaths, followed by typhoid fever, stroke, hypertension and diabetes. For 9.0 percent of the population, old age was responsible for their husband's death, while 9.8 percent mentioned unknown causes which they attributed to witchcraft and other unnatural causes. Other causes of death identified by the respondents include accident, food poisoning, slept and never woke up, etc. (6 percent).

The news of death is never a palatable one in most African societies especially when such death is considered unnatural. It is usually trailed by suspicions and accusations of the immediate family members such as the (wife/wives, relatives and neighbours) or other external sources. African traditional believers have a firm belief that only the aged should die. The death of a young man is attributed to some supernatural forces (Amposah, 1975). It is against this premise that we raised a question on the reaction by the deceased husband's family towards the widow(s) when death occurred. As indicated in Table 4.10 (Panel 2), 35.1 percent stated that, the reaction by their spouse family was normal, more than half said their husband's family was sympathetic, while 13 percent said the family members were harsh on them at the time of their painful loss. However, the reaction and treatment received by the widows varied from one family to another. While some had it so well, others were not too lucky.

Ninety-two percent of the widows were not accused of being responsible for their husband's death hence the sympathy extended to them by their husband's relative. Also, ninety-three percent of the sample claimed that they were not subjected to trial by ordeal (swearing by a shrine to prove innocence on the death of their spouse) . Only a few widows (3.9 percent) experienced trial by ordeal. The remaining 2.8 percent only experienced partial trial by ordeal. Those who experienced trial by ordeal stated that they were subjected to questioning, restricted movement, accusations, denial of assistance and to the punishment of mourning the dead for another one year as revealed.

Even though it can be largely deduced from this finding that widows are hardly accused as responsible for their spouse's death among the Awori, instances in which an accusing finger is pointed at the widows at the death of their husbands cannot, however, be completely ruled out. This

finding also buttresses Erinoshó's (2000:1) assertion that, "the general belief is that someone must necessarily cause the death of a man in Africa and that person is likely to be his wife or wives".

The majority of the widows representing 88.9 percent were confined indoors, the remaining, 11.1 percent responded otherwise. This finding shows that, to a large extent, the Awori widows are confined indoors at the death of their husbands.

4.10.1 Duration of Widows' Confinement

The duration of widows' confinement varies as indicated in Table 4.10 (Panel 3). For instance, some religious and traditional rulers aged 52-76 years interviewed in Ota community have this to say on confinement of widows:

Religious leader A: Confinement of widows is at most 40 days traditionally. But these days, it could be as few as 8 days due to religion and work. For the widower, at most 8 days but he must shave his head and perform some rituals as a sign of separation from the dead.

Religious leader B: Widows are confined everywhere not only in Awori land. Among our people, the widow is restricted and not allowed to go out carelessly to ascertain if she is pregnant. She is expected to alert her husband's family who will know the necessary steps to take. But, if the widow is above child bearing age, she is free to leave after the 8 days or 41 days. These days, however, a widow who is a government official dare not stay indoor for too long else she will lose her job.

Traditional ruler A: When a man dies in our place, the widow is to remain indoor for at least forty days or a maximum of three months. During this confinement period, the widow is closely monitored to know if she is pregnant or not. While indoor, she is usually catered for by the husband's family. The Awori believes that if a widow goes out during the mourning period especially on a sunny day and someone marches her shadow, she will go and join her husband (die). Secondly, on the eve of the 8th day after the deceased must have been buried, the widow must keep awake. She must not sleep. Family members, friends and well-wishers will keep her company for that night through series of activities such as playing music, dancing, and storytelling. It is the belief among the Awori that, should the widow fall asleep on the eve of the 8th day, she will join her husband.

Traditional ruler B: The practice in Awori is that a widow is expected to remain indoor for a minimum of forty days and a maximum of three months. This is done essentially to know if she's carrying a baby and to discourage abortion. The confinement of widows must be in an accessible/open place such as the sitting

room of the main house where friends, family members and other well-wishers can visit her with gifts in form of cash or kind during that period.

In this study, widows confined for less than three months represent 42.5 percent as revealed by Table 4.10 (Panel 5). On the other hand, 45.7 percent were confined for between three and six months. Five percent were confined for as long as seven to ten months. Those confined for eleven months and above accounted for a meager 6.5 percent. The Awori widows were confined for an average period of four months while the maximum period of confinement lasted for twenty four months. There are observed differences in the duration of confinement for the widower in the study area. Here is the view expressed by a widower during an interview session held with him at Atan one of the study sites during the field work:

I spent only eight days to mourn my wife because it is our tradition. Confinement period varies for men. We have to spend less time for confinement so as to be able to look for food and work to support other members of the family.

Fifty-six percent of the respondents said they were subjected to widowhood practices such as confinement indoor, sitting on a mat, observance of vigil on the eve of the 8th day, taking of special bath and rituals, wearing of few dark coloured clothes and accessories, eating of food cooked only by fellow widows, using of separate utensils from other family members, and disposal of all items used to fellow widows. Widowhood practices vary from one society to another. Among the study population, the common widowhood practices are briefly described in the preceding section. However, 44.1 percent of the respondents were not subjected to widowhood rites. Since half of the widows sampled (56 percent) were subjected to various widowhood practices, the finding corroborates Kantiyok's (2000:61) assertion that, "no widow is completely free from the plight of widowhood rites (and its effects)".

4.10.2 Widowhood practices detested most by Widows

On the widowhood practice detested most by widows, over three-quarters stated that none of the widowhood practices carried out by them was a problem. Some others (15 percent) lamented that they were confined indoor throughout the mourning duration. Only 3 percent detested all the widowhood practices. The remaining less than 10 percent detested wearing of few (one or two) dark clothing and accessories throughout mourning, using of separate utensils from other family members, and observance of night vigil on the eve of 8th day. The reasons for detesting the mentioned

widowhood practices as given by some of the widows across various religions during an FGD session at Ilogbo community include:

Mrs A: Confinement indoor was very boring. It made me to be lonely. I am not used to sitting down in one place. I like to hussle. But, because they said it is our custom to honour our late husband, I just had to do it.

Mrs B: I hated the idea of using separate utensils and items from my children not to talk of cooking and eating my own separate food. It made me feel they wanted to disunite me and my family. In some cases, I had to hide to eat my food in order to avoid the temptation of my children eating with me.

Mrs C: Whether it is complete or partial closure of our business/career during confinement, it aggravates our poverty status. We rely only on what the family is able to provide without any input from us. Besides, we lose most if not all our customers and business partners during the long period of confinement in the name of tradition.

Mrs D: I used only two clothes throughout. The cloth I had on when the news of my husband's death was broken to me and another dark set of clothing. I did not find it easy because, I wash in the evenings when the sun must have gone down to enable me change to the second clothing. I was severely warned not to allow rain or sun to touch my clothing during this period because of the consequences.

4.10.3 Widows' opinion on Widowhood practices observed

Twenty-two percent of the respondents were of the view that the widowhood practices they underwent were traumatic owing to the hardship and other forms of suffering they encountered. For 13.9 percent of the respondents, widowhood practices are bearable, while 10.3 percent perceived widowhood practices as one of those things. For 35.7 percent of the widows, it is a cultural dictate handed over by the older generations to the younger ones. However, 18.4 percent declined to comment on the question as shown in Table 4.10 (Panel 7). The opinion that widowhood practice is a cultural dictate corroborates the findings from in-depth interviews. A male Awori senior citizen and traditionalist at Ota community had this to say:

Religion apart, widowhood practice must be observed. It does not matter whether the widow concerned is a Christian, Muslim or practices any other religion. Our culture still has a very strong hold on widowhood practices especially among the elderly widows. Nowadays, social change seems to have taken some aspects of the culture away. A young widow engaged in the formal sector may find it difficult to adhere totally to widowhood rites.

4.10.4 Influence of Religion on Widowhood Practices

Panel 5 of Table 4.10 shows that, religion played positive roles during widowhood. Some of the specific roles of religion for the widow include the provision of the following:

- (i) Cash and kind support,
- (ii) Consolation, counseling and emotional support
- (iii) Visitation and encouragement by God's Word
- (iv) Prayers and faith in God and
- (v) Adherence to widowhood practices

Thirty one percent of the respondents claimed that their religions played no specific role during and after widowhood. In fact, they lamented that they were abandoned to their plight in their time of need. However, a 72 year old religious leader interviewed at Igbesa in the course of the field work had this to say:

Widowhood is recognized by virtually all religions whether Christianity or Islam. It is clearly stated in the holy books that widows should be catered for and not maltreated. Any widow who claims she was abandoned in her time of bereavement is either not a committed member of the religious body or there is a communication gap. No matter how small, brethren do share with widows in their time of need.

From Table 4.10 (Panel 6), 55.4 percent confirmed the influence of religion on widowhood practices observed while the remaining 44.6 percent could not figure out any influence their religion had on the widowhood practices carried out by them. This finding corroborates Korieh's (1996) assertion that:

African peoples carried substantial elements of their cultural practice including widowhood practices, into the two new religions (Islam and Christianity) which they embraced. The result is that widowhood practices in Africa today are a bewildering and confusing mix of traditional African practices and practices borrowed from Islam and Christianity.

As noted by a religious leader during the course of qualitative data collection at Iju community, "*Igbagbo O pe ki ama soro ile wa*" (Yoruba) meaning "*Christianity does not stop us from observing our tradition*". Today, the role of religion in widowhood practices and property inheritance cannot be isolated. While a religion such as the African Traditional Religion (ATR) encourages current

widowhood practices such as trial by ordeal – a situation in which the widow is made to swear an oath before the village shrine as a proof of her innocence at the death of her spouse, foreign religions such as Christianity and Islam may not necessarily subject the widow to such traditional practice and consequent traumatic experience.

4.10.5 Custodian of Widowhood rites and Changes in Widowhood practices

With regard to the persons responsible for enforcing the widowhood practices carried out by the widows, Table 4.10 Panel 7 shows that male members of the spouse's family were 17.8 percent while female members accounted for 11.5 percent. Both male and female members constituted 28.6 percent. A large proportion (42.1 percent) indicated that other persons including their mothers, aunts, older widows, grand parents, friends, other relatives as well as religious and cultural demands motivated them to observe the widowhood practices carried out by them. For majority of the respondents (74.1 percent), no noticeable changes in widowhood practices over the years have occurred. The remaining one-quarter added that, compared to the past, some of the obvious changes include: reduction in confinement period due to the involvement of women in paid employment outside the home, lack of strict adherence to the rules and regulations governing widowhood practices by the younger generation and widow inheritance which has become unpopular in recent time.

4.10.6 Common Widowhood Practices among the Awori

During confinement occasioned by mourning and observance of widowhood rites, widows are forbidden from engaging in certain acts and practices which are considered detrimental. This section examines common widowhood practices among the Awori with a view to bringing to the fore, areas of differences and similarities in this aspect of African reality.

4.10.7 Confinement Indoor

Essentially, confinement in this research refers to total restriction of the widow's movement within a particular place throughout the mourning period. This implies that the widow is denied freedom of movement except around the compound and sometimes within the four walls of a room in which she is confined. Confinement of the widow was found to be the commonest widowhood practice among the Awori. The practice among this sub-ethnic group is such that, on receipt of the news confirming the husband's death, staying indoor within the confines of the family house or the matrimonial home depending on the residential pattern in place, is mandatory for the widow in question. This is

regarded as the greatest honour and mark of respect accorded to the dead. All forms of outings, business or social engagements are automatically suspended, outlawed and forbidden for as long as the mourning period lasts. For the Awori, confinement of a widow indoor has several socio-cultural implications, as in-depth interviews and focus group discussions revealed. Among the Awori, widows are confined to a room for specified periods to ascertain if the widow is pregnant and to discourage abortion. If the widow is confirmed pregnant within the period, arrangements are made for her up keep and that of the unborn baby by the deceased family. Another explanation given for a widow's confinement is to ensure proper guidance, monitoring and supervision throughout the mourning duration in order to avoid the negative consequences such as the abortion of the unborn baby and eventual death often associated with non-strict adherence to widowhood rites. For instance, among the Awori, it is believed that refusal of the widow to remain indoor during widowhood and exposure to sunlight or rainfall will amount to her untimely death.

4.10. 8 Sitting on a Mat

This is another common widowhood practice among the Awori. On receipt of the news of spouse death, the widow is expected to replace chairs and foams in the living room with a mat, where she is expected to sit to receive visitors and well-wishers that come to condole with her. At night she is expected to sleep on the same mat to further express her mourning. Experience shows that sitting or sleeping on mats is a practice that is common among Muslims all over the world. As observed Focus Group Discussions and In-depth interviews, non-widows are not expected to sit on the mat used by the Awori widow. Only fellow widows are permitted to sit on such mats. The dominance of Islamic religion and the low literacy level prevalent in the sample may partly account for this finding. However, the remaining 10 percent who did not sit on mat stated their preference for stools, cushion chairs and foams. A widow in the study area had this to say:

Me, to sit on mat when I am not a Muslim! No way! It will not be comfortable; I prefer a cushion chair or foam. Moreover, I am not responsible for his death. So! Whether I sit on a mat or bare floor it will not bring back my husband”.

The photograph of a mat, stool, cooking, drinking and frying pots and other items used by a widow in the research area are found in the appendix XI of the thesis. Also included are photographs of a

mud house in which a widow was confined as well as a bathroom made from local materials used by a widow during the widowhood rites.

4.10.9 Observance of Vigil

On the eve of the 8th day after the dead has been buried, the widow is forbidden to sleep. She is expected to keep vigil as a sign of honour to the spouse. Family members, friends, fellow widows, preferably old and experienced ones, and other well wishers make it a point of duty to keep her company with songs, story telling, games and jokes. The night is programmed with these activities to ensure that no dull moment is experienced by the widow or widows as the case may be. If on the other hand, the widow refuses to co-operate and gives herself to sleep, it is believed that she may not live to tell the story. According to a key informant, “*should the widow fall asleep on this occasion, she will join her ancestors*”. By implication, the consequence of the violation of this widowhood rite (vigil on the eve of 8th day) by the widow is death.

4.10.10 Taking of Special Bath

This is another unique and symbolic widowhood rite performed by the Awori widows. Taking of special baths in designated places such as in a river or at a particular place in the family house is carried out by the widow with the assistance of older and experienced widows. This practice marks the end of confinement and widowhood rites. Taking of special bath seems not to be prevalent among the widows sampled as 60 percent failed to include special bath as part of widowhood rites performed by them. The remaining 40 percent who took special bath stated that it serves as a means of total separation of the dead from the living wife or wives in the Awori tradition. In addition, special bath is accompanied by some rituals which mark the end of the mourning period and these include: exchange of mourning clothes with new sets of bright clothing or materials, disposal of all items used, preparation of special meals for the widow and well-wishers, prayers are offered for protection of the widow, the children and other family members of the deceased.

4.10.11 Wearing of Dark Clothing and Accessories

There is no consensus on the exact number of clothing the Awori widow wears during the mourning period. While some of the widows sampled stated that they wore just two sets of clothing, some others stated otherwise. One of the first signs of mourning, beyond weeping, wailing, staying indoor for a specified period and disengagement from all forms of social activities/gatherings is reflected in the dress pattern of the bereaved. The widow is expected to openly display her sorrow by the wearing of dark coloured clothing material or apparel. Among the study population, it was found that there is

no hard and fast rule as to the exact colour of clothing to be worn by widows during the mourning period. One thing that is paramount is that, the clothing, apparels and accessories worn by the widows are usually dark coloured across the three major religions: Christianity, Islam and Traditional religion. The description of widowhood as is of a state of loss, bereavement and mourning of a spouse with whom the widow or widower is assumed to have shared the most memorable part of her life is largely reflected in the widow's sense of dressing as revealed by this finding. This view is corroborated by Ore and Akin (1998) in their assertion that widowhood is not a thing of joy, yet nature has made it a necessary evil consequent upon the death of a spouse. Indeed, the state of widowhood can be considered as one of personal loss, encompassing everything from the immediate psychological impact of the loss of a partner to the material deprivation of an income, a home or of contributions to domestic economy (Olapegba and Chovwen, 2007:835-836).

4.10.12 Usage of Separate Utensils and Items

In the Awori tradition, it was also noted from the qualitative data that, the period of widowhood is one that involves a total separation of the widow from other members of the family. Besides confinement in a secluded place while mourning lasts, all utensils utilized including cutleries, plates, mats, and clothes are not to be shared with anyone except her fellow widows. This separation is extended to her food which must be prepared by fellow widows and is not to be shared with other family members including her children. Should the need arise for the widow to plait her hair or beautify herself within this period, only her fellow widows are permitted to perform these assignments. Anything contrary will attract the wrath of the land. The enforcement of these widowhood rites are by women against fellow women. This finding brings to the fore, the fact that women are the custodians of widowhood rites among the study population. They not only dictate expected widowhood practices to fellow women, they also ensure that the practices are carried out religiously. Usage of separate utensils is perceived to perform some significant roles for widows. For instance, among the study group, widowhood is considered as a period of total separation of the living from the dead physically. Thus, all items used by the widows must of necessity not be shared with anyone including the widows' children except fellow widows who have experienced widowhood practices. The pictures of some items used by an Awori widow during the confinement period are presented in Appendix XII. These pictures were taken in the course of data collection at the research sites.

4.10.13 Disposal of all Items used

This is carried out at the expiration of the mourning period. All material items used throughout the confinement period are neatly packaged and distributed to older widows specifically relatives within or outside the community. Majority of the Muslim widows sampled stated their preference to dispose the materials to the less privileged (beggars) in their community according to their Islamic injunctions. There seems to be no consensus among the study population on the beneficiary of the material items disposed by widows. While some widows, on religious grounds, prefer the less privileged, others from the traditional point of view consider their fellow widows. But one thing that stands out clearly among the Awori is the fact that all material items used by the widows (cooking and drinking pots, cutlery and plates, clothing, mat and stool etc) from the beginning to the expiration of widowhood rites must be disposed of. These items are considered contaminated and are not to be used by non-widows. Conclusively, a key informant had this to say in Agbara community:

If a widow refuses to mourn her husband by not performing the stated widowhood rites, she will be perceived as the killer of her husband. To avoid name-calling and stigmatization, a widow has to mourn either genuinely or pretentiously.

Table 4.11: Key issues in Property inheritance

| Variables | Frequency | Percent (%) |
|---|------------|--------------|
| 1. Relationship between widow and spouse while alive | | |
| Very cordial | 751 | 79.7 |
| Cordial | 135 | 14.3 |
| Somewhat cordial | 12 | 1.3 |
| Not cordial | 44 | 4.7 |
| Total | 942 | 100.0 |
| 2. Person(s) entitled to inherit property | | |
| Widow | 72 | 7.6 |
| Eldest son | 227 | 24.1 |
| Eldest daughter | 12 | 1.3 |
| Extended family | 303 | 32.3 |
| Deceased children | 328 | 34.8 |
| Total | 942 | 100.0 |
| 3. Who makes decision on property inheritance | | |
| Widow | 30 | 3.2 |
| Eldest son | 167 | 17.7 |
| Eldest daughter | 13 | 1.4 |
| Extended family | 568 | 60.4 |
| Other | 164 | 17.4 |
| Total | 942 | 100.0 |

Source: Field survey, 2008

4.11: Key Issues in Property Inheritance

Table 4.11 presents some key issues in property inheritance among the Awori. Questions asked in this section range from relationship between widow and spouse while alive, whether widow were still together with spouse, whether the deceased left a will, whether the will was respected at his death and in the absence of a will, who inherits property, and the type of property usually inherited.

Other questions asked centered on whether widow's family size determines the type and portion of property inherited, who takes decision on property inheritance, whether type of marriage contracted, income, and sex of first child are considered in property inheritance. The remaining questions asked were on whether women without children are considered in property inheritance, whether widow jointly owned property with husband (respondents were asked to list such joint property) whether widows were denied access to the joint property and if so, whether they bothered to seek redress from the law court? What was the role played by the husband's family in property inheritance.

Table 4.11 (Panel 1) shows that 80 percent of the sampled population had very cordial relationship with their spouse before death occurred. This figure depicts that respondents had very stable families and enjoyed peaceful co-existence with spouses. However, only 5 percent of the respondents responded in the negation. Ninety-three percent of the widows were still living together with spouse, while the remaining 7 percent were divorced. This finding attests to the high level of marital stability and the low divorce rate among the study population. On whether husband of widows left a will, only 12 percent responded in the affirmative. The remaining 88 percent answered otherwise. In spite of increasing awareness on the relevance of a will, the majority of the respondents' husbands had no will before their death. In the words of most respondents, "Will" which means "*Akosile*" (Yoruba) is of western origin. However, considering the low level of education of majority of the widows, one might not expect too much from their spouse in terms of formal education, let alone writing a will. Of the respondents whose husbands left a will, 68.8 percent said the will was respected while 31.2 percent indicated that the will was not respected. This finding supports the fact that when there is will, its content are usually respected by the Awori.

Table 4.11 (Panel 2) reveals that, 35 percent of the respondents said property is shared equally among the deceased's children irrespective of their age or sex. This is closely followed by 32 percent who said the extended family inherits the property left by widow's husband. Twenty- four percent said the eldest son is entitled to property inheritance, while the remaining 7.6 percent said the widow

or the eldest daughter inherits property in cases where the deceased died intestate without a will. If, on the other hand, the deceased died leaving a will, the conditions stated in the will not expected to be strictly adhered to. This finding also supports Karibi-Whyte (1993) who remarked that, in all patrilineal societies, a wife has no right of succession of her husband's estate, her contributions to the acquisition of the estate notwithstanding. As much as most widows are not entitled to property inheritance among the Awori, it is also forbidden for the widower to inherit the property of his deceased wife. A widower interviewed in the course of the field work at Iju community had this to say:

The children own property. It is a taboo for the widower to inherit his wife's property. In the absence of children, the woman's younger sister inherits the property she left behind.

Table 4.11.2: Inheritable Property

| S/N | Inheritable Property | Type/Description |
|-----|----------------------|---|
| 1. | Moveable Property | Cash, Cars, Clothes Furniture, Household items/Utensils, Personal effects, Animals etc. |
| 2. | Immovable Property | Houses, Farmland, Farm, Land etc. |

Source: Field Survey, 2008.

Inheritable property in the Awori culture ranges from moveable and immovable objects, living and non-living things including houses, cars, farmland, farms, household utensils, clothing, personal effects, domestic animals etc.

Property inheritance is considered the exclusive right of all the deceased's children irrespective of age, sex and level of education attained among the study population. The unit of measurement and the quantity/portion of property inherited by the deceased's children in the Awori culture were however not covered by this study.

Virtually all the respondents confirmed that the type of property that is usually inherited among the Awori include but not limited to: cash (liquid or otherwise), car/cars, clothes, house/houses, landed property/properties, farm land, home appliances, personal effects, etc. Eighty-one percent of the

respondents stated that family size was not a determinant of the type and portion of property inherited. This implies that the number of children from each wife is inconsequential in property sharing in the Awori tradition. Property is shared equally among the children from each wife irrespective of the number of children they have. However, the remaining (less than 20 percent) held a contrary opinion. As regard person(s) responsible for taking decision on property inheritance, for 60 percent of the respondents, the extended family takes decision, while for 20 percent, the eldest son takes decision. For 17 percent of the respondents, other persons take decision on property inheritance. The remaining less than 5 percent stated that the widow and in some cases, the eldest daughter takes decision on property inheritance.

To a large extent, the type of marriage contracted by a widow does not determine access to property inheritance. Two-thirds of the respondents shared this view. For 20 percent, property inheritance is determined by type of marriage contracted. For 13 percent of the respondents, marriage is a determinant of property inheritance to some extent. For the question relating to whether income is a determinant for property inheritance, 82.5 percent said income is not a determinant in property inheritance. In other words, a widow's level of income does not influence property inheritance. Only 5 percent said other factors beyond income determine and property inheritance.

The sex of the first child was not a determinant of property inheritance among the Awori as stated by 70 percent of the respondents. For the remaining 30 percent, sex of the first child determines property inheritance. This view is corroborated by the assertion that what obtains differs from one family to another. Thus, the popular adage, "*different strokes for different folks*". Women without children were not considered in property inheritance. Seventy-nine percent of the respondents said, no consideration is given to barren widows when it comes to property inheritance. This finding corroborates the common opinion shared by both male and female interviewees during field work: "*Among the Awori, no child, no property*". This again brings to the fore the value of children among the study population. However, only 20 percent said widows without children are considered on three conditions:

- (1) At the discretion of the extended family in order to discourage envy and avert calamities for the deceased's children.
- (2) If the widow has good character, and
- (3) If the husband had given out specific property to her before his death and there are living witnesses to testify to such claim by the widow.

The above findings are further buttressed by the views expressed by some opinion leaders which comprise selected married men of ages 46-85 in the Ota community as represented by the following comments:

Mr. A: First and foremost, if a woman is childless, she must possess good character. When a man dies, the family remains and the woman's character will determine the care she will receive especially if the man died intestate, without a will. It is left for the family to use their discretion on whether to consider the childless widow or not.

Mr. B: Some women forget that death will come one day. While the man was alive, they shielded his extended family members from coming close for assistance. Now that the man is dead, who will defend their cause? If she's a widow without children, her case is worst because she is not entitled to anything. At the expiration of her mourning period, she does not need to be reminded to leave for her family house.

Mr. C: Among our people, a woman without a child is considered as a girlfriend and not a wife. No matter how long she's been married or even lived in the family house. We see her as a stranger. But, if she's good and took care of her husband while alive and the children of her co-wives, the family will compensate her to avoid calamities for the deceased children.

Mr. D: No child, no property except on the condition that the property has already been given to the widow by the husband when he was alive. If there is a witness as to the late husband's wish or there is a will stating so, such a widow will be considered.

Most of the respondents (88.5 percent) did not own joint property with their husband while alive. The remaining 11.5 percent of the respondents said they had joint property with their husbands. Among the property jointly owned are money, cars, plots of land, farmland, houses, church building, joint account, business ventures, household equipment and children produced from marital union. Of the respondents (108) who claimed they had joint property with their spouse, 31.5 percent were denied access to such joint property, while 57.4 percent were not. Suffice it to note that, of the respondents denied access to joint property, over two-thirds did not seek redress from the law court, while only 15 percent took their cases to court. A major explanation for not seeking redress from the law court was beyond their little or no schooling. Moreover, traditional societies are not usually seekers of redress on matters relating to culture and tradition.

According to an informant:

There are hardly disputes on property inheritance among the Awori. But whenever it happens, such cases are taken to the traditional ruler who mediates, and the matter is settled among the parties. I am not aware of any matter settled at the palace that is taken to the court again.

This revelation brings to the fore the high reverence accorded the traditional institution among the Awori.

Table 4.12: Widows' Coping Devices and Strategies

| Variables | Frequency | Percent (%) |
|--|------------|--------------|
| 1.Extent of coping by widows | | |
| Very well | 137 | 14.5 |
| Not too well | 558 | 59.2 |
| Very bad | 237 | 25.2 |
| Other | 10 | 1.1 |
| Total | 942 | 100.0 |
| 2. Type of support received | | |
| Cash and kind | 135 | 14.3 |
| Visitation and goodwill | 6 | 0.6 |
| Prayers and emotional support | 55 | 5.8 |
| No form of support | 746 | 79.1 |
| Total | 942 | 100.0 |
| 3. Whether economic empowerment will alleviate widows' sufferings | | |
| Yes | 777 | 82.5 |
| No | 165 | 17.5 |
| Total | 942 | 100.0 |
| 4. Reason(s) for not remarrying | | |
| Old age | 534 | 56.7 |
| Children's responsibility/related issues | 231 | 24.5 |
| Health challenge | 102 | 10.8 |
| Spiritual reasons | 54 | 5.7 |
| Other | 21 | 2.2 |
| Total | 942 | 99.2 |
| 5. Whether levirate was old fashion | | |
| Yes | 519 | 55.1 |
| No | 423 | 44.9 |
| Total | 942 | 100.0 |
| 6. Whether widowhood was a woman's problem | | |
| Yes | 790 | 83.9 |
| No | 127 | 13.5 |
| N/R | 25 | 2.6 |
| Total | 942 | 100.0 |

Source: Field survey, 2008

4.12 Coping Devices and Strategies

Table 4.12 (Panel 1) shows the distribution of widows by their extent of coping with widowhood and property inheritance. Sixty percent of the widows stated that they are not coping very well. For a quarter of the respondents, the situation is very bad. Just 15 percent are coping very well. From Table 4.12 (Panel 2), 70 percent of the widows had cordial relationship with their spouse's extended family such as relatives, brothers/sisters, uncles/aunts, etc, while he was alive. Of this percentage, majority of them still maintained peaceful and harmonious relationships, while the remaining 30 percent had no cordial relationship with their spouse's family both before and after the spouse's death.

In spite of the fact that 70 percent of the respondents maintained cordial relationship with their husband's extended family before and after spouse's death as shown in the preceding section, Table 4.12 (Panel 3) indicated that four-fifths of the respondents did not receive any form of support be it in form of cash or kind from their spouse's extended family. Only one fifth received one form of support or the other from spouse's extended family. The supports received as claimed by the respondents include but not limited to: emotional, financial, material, and moral supports which include: accommodation, cash and kind gifts, prayers, and visitation and words of encouragement.

The non-receipt of support from spouse's extended family members largely unveiled in this study may attract several reasons and explanations because despite good rapport, lack of resources and poverty may handicap kind hearted extended family members with genuine intention of giving support to the widows. Apart from the spouse's extended family, the respondents mentioned other sources of support received which include: cash and kind supports received from widow's children, relatives, friends, neighbours, brethren and other sources such as money earned from their vocation/businesses.

Eighty-three percent, as shown in Table 4.12 (Panel 3), emphasized the pivotal role of economic empowerment for widows. The remaining 17.5 percent responded otherwise. The general views expressed by respondents especially widows, traditional and religious leaders as well as other opinion leaders across the research areas support the urgent need for economic empowerment for the teeming population of widows particularly among the Awori and other parts of the larger Nigerian societies. Another discussant during the in-depth interview at Ilogbo community remarked that:

The death of my husband was like when a house crashes on a person and the person is struggling to get out of the crashed building. I have too many burdens on

me and even now that I am constantly falling sick. I cannot go to the farm to cultivate any longer because I don't have the strength. I know that there are many widows like myself who are not finding things easy for themselves and their children. I can only suggest that the government and NGOs should design a programme for widows to assist them earn a living and send their children to school as that is the only legacy they can offer to them.

As a coping strategy, opinion of widows with or without children was sought with a view to ascertaining their plans of remarrying. Ninety-two percent do not have plans of remarrying. 8.6 percent are thinking of remarrying. Most of them said they are still young and are of the view that they can still fulfill their marital destiny, have children and be relieved of heavy financial burden currently their lot. This finding brings to the fore the essence of marriage among the Awori. Among and the functions marriage performs for the couple includes: procreation, economic, social and psychological functions. It appears from this result that marriage is consummated mainly for procreation and economic gains considering the multitudes of widows who do not intend to remarry in the study area. From findings in this study, it is obvious that the widows have not achieved these gains considering the increasing level of poverty currently experienced by majority of them. In spite of old age as indicated by majority of the respondents, the researcher is of the opinion that the psychological and social functions of marriage as a coping strategy during and after widowhood should be probed with further research.

Eleven percent stated that the option of marrying their husband's brother was suggested to them. For 89.2 percent of the respondents, the option of remarrying their husband's brother was never suggested to them at any point in time. Contrary to the opinion of the few widows with plans of remarrying, the vast majority without plans of remarrying gave their reasons. Over half of the widows stated that due to old age they were not willing to remarry. About a quarter claimed that due to children related reasons such as many surviving children, child care/burden, existing children will not allow for remarriage, and have older children currently assisting to lift financial burdens, marriage is the last option while, 11 percent stated health reasons which could prevent them from rearing children. The remaining gave various reasons ranging from spiritual to love for their husband, inability to love another man, lack of interest in remarrying, its unnecessary/unthinkable, and other reasons. A widower interviewed at Igbesa on reasons for not remarrying has this to say:

At the age of 75 years, I cannot remarry again. Which young woman will marry me? Even if I get a wife, she will want to have her own children and if I

suddenly die, the children will suffer. They will be accused and victimized as my killer together with their mother.

On levirate, 55.1 percent of the sample stated that it has become unpopular in their respective communities, while the remaining gave a contrary opinion. This finding on the non-popularity of levirate among the Awori is supported by Table 4.12 (Panel 2) where majority of the respondents (89.2 percent) confessed that the option of remarrying their husband's brother was never at any time suggested to them. A group of women aged 31-60 years of both Christian and Islamic religions at Ota had this to say during the focus group discussion:

Mrs. A: In rare cases, levirate is found in some families. These days, foreign religions especially Christianity and Islam have discouraged the practice. It also depends on the widow's character and beauty. She may be retained within the family.

Mrs. B: No! levirate is not common these days. In this community, it has become obsolete. May be, one out of fifty. Western civilization has taken over that.

Mrs. C: Which man will add to his problem by inheriting his brother's wife? These days with poverty everywhere, most men cannot cope with their immediate family, much less carrying the extra burden of their brother's widow and children. It may be common in very remote villages, but at present it has become old fashioned in most cities.

Majority of the respondents (83.9 percent) said widowhood is a woman's problem, while 13.5 percent gave a contrary opinion. Just a meager 2.6 percent did not respond to the question at all. According to a 52 year old Muslim widow at Atan, interviewed in the course of this research:

A widower does not stay up till 41 days. The maximum number of day he stays indoor is 8 days with his head shaved as a sign of mourning. If he had one wife, a woman will be arranged to sleep with him, but if he had more than one wife, others will console him".

In a similar vein, a widower at Ota had this to say:

Widows suffer more in widowhood practices. I spent just 8 days. I did not observe any vigil because its not part of Ahmadiya Muslim belief. My first wife mourned her second for 41 days. The man is not expected to go out for the first 8 days otherwise; there will be gossip that he killed his late wife. Even if they are divorced and are without children, observing widowhood rites for the first 8 days is mandatory.

This finding is also supported by Lasebikan (2001:19), who stated that “a widower is evidently pitied and consoled genuinely and encouraged out of his situation as early as possible while arrangement for a substitute is in high gear, because “*Opo’kunrin ki da sun nitori iyawo orun*” (Yoruba). In other words, “A widower does not sleep alone because of the dead wife’s spirit”. Though the widower experiences emotional trauma at the loss of a wife, he is usually given more social support to cope, and to eventually re-adjust to a new life. In a polygynous setting, other living co-wives become a source of succour.

4.13 Hypotheses Testing and Interpretation

This section presents test of hypotheses and the key findings from the test of hypotheses.

Hypothesis One:

H₁ (Alternate Hypothesis)

“There is a significant relationship between widow’s personal attributes (age, education, occupation, income, and type of marriage) and widowhood practice/property inheritance”.

H₀ (Null Hypothesis)

“There is no significant relationship between widow’s personal attributes (age, education, occupation, income, and type of marriage) and widowhood practice/property inheritance”.

Table 4.13 shows the coefficient of widow’s personal attributes and widowhood rites in the target population -

Where:

i. Age refers to the actual age of widow which can be categorized as either young, middle-age or aged widows depending on the age bracket;

ii. Education, in this context, is categorized as follows:

- No schooling;
- Primary
- Secondary
- Tertiary

iii. Occupation implies what the widow does for a living. In what sector of the economy does she earn her living?

iv. Income: This is the total earnings of the widow from her occupation or other sources within a specified period of time. The theoretical assumption is that there is higher independence and possibility for higher control on the widowhood circumstances for widows with higher income.

v. Type of marriage consummated by the widow: Traditional, Christian or Islamic marriage. It is

assumed that the different ideologies assumed by each marriage type would likely influence widowhood rites and property inheritance.

Table 4.13: Coefficient of widows’ personal attributes and widowhood rites

| Mode | | Unstandardized Coefficients | | Standardized Coefficients | T | Sig. |
|------|------------------------------|-----------------------------|------------|---------------------------|--------|------------|
| | | B | Std. Error | Beta | B | Std. Error |
| 1 | (Constant) | .625 | .145 | | 4.307 | .000 |
| | Age | .17E-005 | .002 | -.002 | -.025 | .980 |
| | Education | -.101 | .020 | -.169 | -5.074 | .000 |
| | Occupation | .022 | .016 | .043 | 1.329 | .184 |
| | Income | -.013 | .028 | -.034 | -.479 | .632 |
| | Type of marriage consummated | .049 | .015 | .106 | 3.285 | .001 |

Dependent Variable: Widowhood rites

Table 4.13 shows that age of widow is negatively related to widowhood rites performed. In other words, the older a widow becomes, the less the tendency to perform/observe widowhood rites. One reason that better explains this result is the fact that, when persons are aging, they are susceptible to diseases and health challenges which may reduce the stamina to observe very rigorous widowhood rites. However, this relationship is not significant. The regression analysis also reveals that the education of widow is significantly and negatively related to widowhood rites (p value of 0.000). Also, the income of the widow is negatively related (even though not significant) related to widowhood rites. Irrespective of a widow’s income, widowhood rites is accepted as the norm as evidenced in the high level of conformity among the studied population without any form of schooling. This finding negates the assertion that widows with high income may pay their way through to escape widowhood rites. In our sample, only 2 percent of the widows earn ₦50,001 and above monthly. It will be extremely difficult for most of the widows with meager income to pay their way through in attempt to evade widowhood rites. Education and type of marriage are the only

predictors that are significantly related to widowhood rites among the study population. Thus, the higher the level of formal education (the possession of tertiary education for example) the less the likelihood that such widows will observe widowhood rites. In the words of a 55 year old widow at Ilogbo: “In the past, widowhood practice was observed religiously. These days, widowhood is not fully observed by the young ones, especially those working in the formal sector” who are most likely to possess tertiary education.

Table 4.14: Coefficient of widows’ personal attributes and property inheritance

| | | Unstandardized | | Standardized | | |
|---------------------|------------------------------|----------------|------------|--------------|-------|------------|
| | | Coefficients | | Coefficients | T | Sig. |
| Personal Attributes | | B | Std. Error | Beta | B | Std. Error |
| 1 | (Constant) | .025 | .073 | - | .349 | .727 |
| | Age | -.001 | .001 | -.068 | -.973 | .331 |
| | Education | .029 | .011 | .090 | 2.689 | .007 |
| | Occupation | .029 | .009 | .107 | 3.291 | .001 |
| | Income | .025 | .015 | .114 | 1.632 | .103 |
| | Type of marriage consummated | .007 | .008 | .028 | .861 | .389 |

Dependent Variable: Property inheritance

Table 4.14 describes the relationship between widows’ personal attributes and property inheritance in Aworiland with a view to determining the strength of relationships and their level of significance. Age of widow is negatively related to property inheritance but is not significant. The higher the age of widow, the less the tendency for property inheritance. Both education and occupation of widow are positively related to property inheritance and significant at p value of 0.007 and 0.001 respectively. From Table 4.14, it is clear that widows’ education and occupation are both positively related to property inheritance and statistically significant.

Hypothesis 2:

H₁: There is a significant relationship between the husband’s gender orientation/values and widowhood rites performed/property inheritance. Husband’s gender orientation/values implies his

sensitivity and predisposition to favourable gender sensitive decisions such as writing of will, education of the girl child, etc.

H₀: There is no significant relationship between the husband’s gender orientation/values and widowhood rites performed/property inheritance.

Table 4.15: Coefficient of husband’s gender orientation/values by widowhood rites

| Mode 1 | Unstandardized Coefficients | | Standardized Coefficients | T | Sig. |
|---|--------------------------------|---------------|------------------------------|--------|---------------|
| | B | Std. Error | Beta | B | Std. Error |
| (Constant) | .851 | .407 | | 2.091 | .039 |
| Husband left a will | .078 | .109 | .077 | .717 | .475 |
| Sex of children preferred | -.073 | .063 | -.124 | -1.165 | .247 |
| Women without children | -.005 | .113 | -.005 | -.048 | .962 |
| Joint property ownership with husband | .071 | .293 | .025 | .242 | .809 |
| Denied access to inherit joint property | -.165 | .111 | -.161 | -1.493 | .139 |

Dependent Variable: Widowhood rites

Table 4.15 shows a positive relationship between leaving ‘Will’ by widow’s husband and observance of widowhood rites by widow even though this will was not statistically significant. Preference for a particular sex of children was negatively related to observance of widowhood rites. Again, this was not significant. The variable ‘widows without children’ was a negative predictor of observance of widowhood rites unlike joint ownership of property by widow with deceased husband which had a positive relationship to widowhood rites. However, both are not significant. It appears there are

other variables that influence observance of widowhood rites among the study population. The fact that a widow has joint property with husband does not change anything. In cases where there is denial of access to such joint property by the widow, a negative relationship exists. Suffice to note that all the independent variables tested in this hypothesis are not statistically significant to observance of widowhood rites by widows in the study area.

Table 4.16: Coefficient of husbands’ gender orientation/values by Property inheritance

| Mode 1 | Unstandardized Coefficients | | Standardized Coefficients | T | Sig. |
|---|--------------------------------|---------------|------------------------------|-------|---------------|
| | B | Std. Error | Beta | B | Std. Error |
| (Constant) | .425 | .314 | | 1.353 | .179 |
| Husband left a will | -.033 | .084 | -.043 | -.396 | .693 |
| Sex of children preferred | -.003 | .048 | -.007 | -.068 | .946 |
| Women without children | .048 | .087 | .058 | .550 | .584 |
| Joint property ownership with husband | -.184 | .225 | -.086 | -.817 | .416 |
| Denied access to inherit joint property | -.053 | .085 | -.069 | -.627 | .532 |

Dependent Variable: Property inheritance

Table 4.16 shows the relationship between husbands’ gender orientation/values and property inheritance. The gender orientation/values is captured by the following independent variables: Presence of a will by widows’ husband, preference for male/female children, joint ownership of property with wife while he was alive and most importantly, the respect for the will (in terms of adherence to or denial of the content of the will). From Table 4.16, availability of a legal document known as will by widow’s husband shows a negative relationship with property inheritance but it is not significantly related. Several reasons could be adduced for this result: Only two (Agbara and Ota)

out of the six studied communities have urban characteristics. The remaining four communities (Atan, Iju, Igbesa and Ilogbo) are rural and agrarian communities in which tradition and low literacy that discourage will writing are predominant. Traditional societies bound by traditions, customs and beliefs may not encourage positive gender values much less girl-child education and empowerment. Thus, absence/presence of a will by a widow's husband may not influence property inheritance. Consequently, non availability of a will leading to property inheritance implies negative gender values. Similarly, sex of children preferred by widows' husband is negatively related to property inheritance but not significant. This result corroborates findings from qualitative data (KII and FGD) in which most respondents stated: 'Child is child in Aworiland', implying that every child is important and partakes in property sharing, irrespective of age, sex and educational status.

The result in Table 4.16 also shows that being widows without children is positively related to property inheritance in the Awori culture but not significant. In some cases, widows without children may inherit property based on existing cordial relationship with late husband and members of his family. This may inform the discretion of the extended family to compensate the barren widow for her faithfulness to her late husband and the extended family perhaps to avert seeming danger for husbands' family and children from other co-wives. On the other hand, findings from the qualitative data reveals that "if a property in question was in the name of a barren widow before the death of her husband, the extended family members will have no choice than to release the property to the widow". Whether widow has a joint property with husband or is denied access to such joint property is not significantly related to property inheritance. The presence or absence of a will is not significantly related to property inheritance in the study population. However, findings presented in Table 4.17 reveal that the deceased's children, irrespective of sex, inherit property. This shows a positive gender orientation/values in the study population. The fact that no form of discrimination exists in property inheritance between the male and female children of the deceased implies that negative gender orientation/values does not exist.

Table 4.17: Sex of children preferred by property inheritance

| Sex of children preferred | Property inheritance | | |
|---------------------------|----------------------|-----------|------------|
| | Deceased children | Widow | Total |
| Male | 168(19.5) | 29(39.2) | 197(20.9) |
| Female | 69(7.9) | 8(10.8) | 77(8.2) |
| Both | 631(72.7) | 37(50.0) | 668(70.9) |
| Total | 868(100.0) | 74(100.0) | 942(100.0) |

Source: Field Survey, 2008.

Table 4.17 shows the distribution of sex of children preferred by property inheritance in Aworiland. The essence of Table 4.17 is to further buttress the results in hypothesis 2. Cross tabulating the sex of children preferred by property inheritance assists us to determine in detail the extent of existing gender orientation/values by the widow's husband. If the husband has preference for a particular sex of children (perhaps male children), this will influence his training of the male children to the neglect of the female children. He might also write a will the content of which might favour the preferred sex. From Table 4.17, a total of 72.7 percent of the respondents stated their preference for both male and female children. This implies that sex preference is almost non-existence among the Awori local group. The finding corroborates what obtains among the Ondo, a Yoruba ethnic group in Southwestern Nigeria where property belongs to the children of the deceased. It is shared on the basis of *Ori o ju ori*, (Yoruba phrase meaning 'equality among children', including girls), or on the basis of *Idi'igi* (i.e. equality among the wives) in a situation where the man is polygynous, though the eventual beneficiaries are the children. Specifically, all the deceased's children inherit property among the Awori. This result shows that sex preference (male or female) is not common in property inheritance.

Hypothesis 3:

H₁: There is a significant relationship between lineage-based family reciprocity and widowhood rite/property inheritance.

H₀: There is no significant relationship between lineage-based family reciprocity and widowhood rite/property inheritance.

In testing hypothesis 3, data from qualitative sources were used. Majority of the widows sampled confessed that their family was not a recipient of extended family's favour while their husband was alive much less now that he is dead. In very few cases, the widow's husband farmed on family land but was never involved in family business. According to over fifty percent of the widows sampled in this study no supports came from their husband's family before, during his death and after husband's death. The quotation below captures the views of most respondents:

Due to the economic problems these days, most families with genuine intentions to assist are unable to cater for the widow. Women should double their effort rather than wait to receive supports or inherit property. There are women that are breadwinners today. The idea of complete house wife should be discouraged because no one knows when death will come.

According to another respondent during the key informant interview:

If any, the extent of assistance and supports given to the widow during and after widowhood depends on her character. Good character is key. If the widow has a good character, she will not suffer. The extended family will go the extra mile to ensure that the widow and her children do not suffer lack.

Suffice to note that if the widow's family was a recipient of extended family's favours while husband was alive--- this will definitely play a role after the demise of the man including the control of his property and his wife or wives.

The test of hypothesis 3 is based on key summary findings from the description of the lineage-based reciprocities.

Lineage-based reciprocities were demonstrated in various forms, including the following -

- a. Inheritance from the extended family:** The culture of patriarchy amongst the Awori (like other Yoruba ethnic groups) encourages inheritance of family property through the male line. This is premised on the assumption that unlike female members of the society who are eventually married off, drop the family name and inherit property from both their family of procreation and orientation, male members of the society, inherit mainly from their family of procreation. Male children carry on the family's name and lineage and are thus accorded more property rights than their female counterparts. If the widow's husband inherited property from the extended family (especially from other male family members other than his

own immediate father), he has enjoyed lineage-based family reciprocity. It is not unlikely that other members of the lineage (other than his own children) are likely to inherit from him. On the contrary, if the widow's husband does not inherit property from his extended family, it may result in their handing off his property, if any, to his children and wives in death. This implies that the widow's husband has not enjoyed lineage-based family reciprocity.

b. **Various supports received from extended family:** In this study, the various supports received by the widow's husband from his extended family, if any, are considered. This is premised on the fact that in most traditional societies like the Awori, a man belongs to two families: the family of orientation and the family of procreation. In some instances, a man is the property of the entire community/village as in the popular saying "*Our son*". In other words, beyond being a son to his immediate nuclear and extended families, the widow's husband is a son of the community who may be referred to as the "*son of the soil*". In this case, the community has a responsibility towards his welfare, upbringing and education as the case may be. Supports received from extended family may be in form of payment of school fees/apprenticeship training, food, marrying a wife for their brother (widow's husband and provision of accommodation for the newly-wed either in man's fathers' compound (patrilocal), mothers compound/house (matrilocal) or an uncles' residence (avunculocal). Other supports received can be classified as health support (supply of local herbs or orthodox medical services, as well as off-setting medical bills for widow's husband during health challenge. If the widow's husband in question received part or all of the listed supports from his extended family members, it implies that he enjoyed lineage-based family reciprocity. Thus at the death of the widow's husband some level of reciprocity is expected by the extended family be it in terms of widowhood rite dictates or access to the property of the deceased.

c. **Supports¹ received by the widow during and after husband's death:** The support received by widow varies from one family and community to another. While a liberal family may shoulder the burden of the widow in such trying moments of widowhood, others who are not well to do may simply shy away from such responsibility especially in the current

¹ Supports received by widow could come in various forms (cash or kind) for herself, children and husband while he was alive and after his death.

dispensation of global financial melt-down. Here are the views expressed by a widow during the field work:

Our husband's relatives have their own problems especially with the present economic situation in the country. Nobody will leave his own load to carry your own. All I can say is that we have family but no helper.

The picture painted in the above scenario confirms that widows in the study area have not enjoyed supports from husband's extended family members. Non-receipt of supports from husband's extended family implies that the Awori widow has not enjoyed lineage-based reciprocity, thus denial of access to property and subjection of widow to harrowing widowhood rites was practically absent. This finding buttresses the results on Table 4.10

- d. **Payment of medical/burial bills:** Here, we examined the intervention of husband's extended family in settling medical and burial bills particularly if the widow in question is not well-to-do or possibly unemployed, payment of the husband's medical bills could have been provided by extended family member(s) or possibly from other sources (friends/associates, religious brethren, husbands colleagues or widows family that are well-to-do and offer to assist. Similarly, the burial bills might have been paid by his extended family as their own way of paying last respect to their son. If the above scenario is the case, the widow can be said to have enjoyed lineage based reciprocity but if otherwise, the widow that has not enjoyed lineage-based reciprocity may not be denied access to husband's property nor subjected to harrowing widowhood rites.
- e. **Payment of children's school fees:** If the couple are not well-to-do, with dependent children, there are cases in which well-to-do members of husband's extended family take up the responsibility of training the children of their brother as a way of providing support and being their brothers keeper. This can happen while the man is alive and in death. This category of widow can be said to have enjoyed lineage-based reciprocity but if otherwise they have not enjoyed lineage-based family reciprocity especially in clear cases where neither the widow nor her husband or children received any support from extended family. These days, the biting economic situation across most societies have discouraged interested members from assisting desiring extended family members.

On the basis of findings we therefore conclude from the third hypothesis that there exists a significant relationship between lineage-based family reciprocity and widowhood rite/property inheritance in the study area

4.14.0 Case Studies

In this study, twelve cases were conducted across the six research areas. Two cases were taken in each community but these have been subsumed under four categories below. The first category is made up of middle aged widows, specifically heads of households and breadwinners, and their coping strategies. The second category includes young widows who enjoyed little social, emotional and financial supports from their spouse's family at one time and have resorted to remarriage to ease their financial burdens. The third category comprises middle aged widows with children and who do not have plans of remarrying but instead have resorted to hardwork and personal commitment to make ends meet. The last category comprises fairly old widows that can be considered as well-to-do because of the supports received from their older children and other sources: religious brethren, friends and relatives. Suffice to state that, while the first two categories are in the majority among the group studied, the last group, the so called well-to-do widows, account for the least proportion.

4.14.1 Case Study (1)

Mrs. Taiwo Atobaba was a 40 year old Awori indigene. She resided at Atan, one of the research communities located in Ado-Odo/Ota Local Government Area of Ogun State, South-west, Nigeria. She got married at the age of eighteen. At that time, there was no formal marriage consummated between her and the husband; only exchange of gifts between the two families. The marital union was blessed with six children: four girls and two boys. On May 17, 2008, her husband went to the farm and was rushed home and he died mysteriously after a few hours. She suspected that the husband was killed because of his late father's property which he inherited. He died at the prime age of 45 years leaving behind six children for her to cater for, 6 rooms and a farmland. While alive, the spouse was a motor mechanic and could hardly make ends meet. Mrs. Atobaba was the bread winner using the proceeds from her *fufu* business to feed the family. They could not send any of their six children to school because they were very poor. Their first born is a lady now 23 years old and married with two children. She managed to learn hair dressing before getting married. Now that she is married, she does not have the resources to buy her equipment nor rent a shop to start her life. Mrs. Atobaba has her immediate problem of catering for her remaining five children and cannot afford any distraction from her eldest daughter now married. Recently, the daughter's husband managed to provide some funds for her to begin petty trading which is a lot of relief for Mrs. Atobaba. With the proceeds from her petty trading, she has managed to enroll her other four children in public schools

since she cannot afford the fees of private institutions. Due to the heavy financial burden, her remaining child is learning fashion designing since she cannot afford to send her to school together with her other siblings. She missed their father who was assisting to lift her financial burdens before now. Since he died, she has been left alone.

4.14.2 Case Study (2)

Bose Amusu was a 21-year old Awori widow. She lived at Igbesa, a rural Awori settlement located in Ado-Odo/Ota LGA of Ogun State. Her husband died on the 4th of February, 2008 at an unripe age of 27 years after a brief illness. He was a Senior Secondary School (SSS 3) student of Imale Comprehensive High School in Igbesa and also an apprentice barber. Bose had just finished primary six when she got pregnant and had her first baby, now three years old. Bose was heavily pregnant with her second baby when her husband died. She was delivered of a baby boy on the 27th of February, 2008, barely 23 days after her husband's death. As a widow and a nursing mother, she was confined indoors by her late husband's relatives for three (3) months. Throughout the mourning period, her movement was restricted, not even to the neighbour's house. She was told by the in-laws that, widowhood is a mandatory tradition and a means of paying the last respect to her late husband. Throughout this confinement period she observed all the stipulated widowhood rites: wearing of a few dark clothes, sitting on a mat, observance of vigil on the eve of the 8th day, usage of separate utensils and disposal of all items used at the expiration of mourning period. Bose was well catered for by her husband's family and her own relatives. Feeding was not a problem as food flowed in from every corner. At the expiration of her three months widowhood period, Bose was asked to return to her family house since her late husband had no younger brother to inherit her. Besides, she is very young and believes she can find marital fulfillment elsewhere. Because the late husband's family members could no longer afford her upkeep after the expiration of the widowhood period and they were not willing to retain her in the husband's family she was released with the promise that periodic financial assistance would be rendered to her two young children. The husband's family is not financially buoyant as they claimed. However, they are trying their best but the burden is too heavy for Bose to bear since she had no schooling or any vocational training skill with which to generate income. Bose's mother, a petty trader is now solely responsible for her upkeep and that of her two children. Bose is soliciting for financial assistance to enable her complete her apprenticeship in photography, buy necessary equipment to set up self-studio in order to live a good life and raise her children. Bose intends to re-marry and perhaps find marital fulfillment once terminated by the

untimely death of her first love. Bose is particularly unhappy that her late husband had nothing. He left no single property for her children to inherit, or sell to start off her life again. She now lives at the mercy of people, good Samaritans, friends and neighbours to survive.

4.14.3 Case Study (3)

Mrs. Ronke Ogunbiyi hails from Ilogbo-Asowo in Ado-Odo/Ota LGA. According to historical accounts, Ilogbo is an older Awori settlement. She was a 35 year old widow with six children, 2 boys and 4 girls. Her oldest child was 18 years old. Mrs. Ogunbiyi got pregnant at barely 18 years after her first school leaving certificate. Her husband died in the year 2004 at the age of 40. Before his death, he had two wives but, Ronke was the first wife. The late husband was a farmer also from Ilogbo. He died after a brief illness. According to Ronke, his family stood by her briefly. After the mourning period, she stopped receiving any form of financial support from them. Her mother-in-law, also a farmer, had no financial capability to assist her and her grandchildren. Ronke had to struggle all alone to feed and train her children in school. Presently, Ronke hawks pap in the early hours of the day and weaves mat in the evenings. Her first child is a girl of 18 years and had just finished secondary school. Ronke does not have the financial means for her daughter to further her education. She resolved that she should go and learn sewing and possibly get a husband with the assurance that such a decision will relieve her burden of catering for the daughter. In addition, it will enable her to concentrate on the remaining five children. Ronke has no plans of remarrying after six children. For her, remarrying is a distraction, she loved her late husband very much and does not wish to have more children than she presently has. Besides, she exclaimed thus! “Who will marry me with six children?” She said she now knows the value of good education which she missed due to lack of foresight. However, she promised to ensure that her remaining children go to school at all cost.

4.14.4 Case study (4)

Mrs. Adijat Ashafa was a 72 year old widow born and bred in Ota community. She was a Muslim and a farmer. Due to old age and protracted illness, she no longer goes to the farm. She had no formal education and speaks only local languages, Awori dialect and Yoruba fluently. Mrs. Ashafa became a widow about twenty five years ago. Her marital union was blessed with four children: one male and three females now grown up and happily married. Her husband died due to a protracted illness. After the three months of mourning, his property was shared equally among all the children. Even though the wives did not partake of his property, what was given to their children was enough

for them. Mrs. Ashafa's husband's family supported her in cash and kind during and after the widowhood period. According to her, she does not lack anything. Her older children, especially her daughters, now married, take good care of her by ensuring that she lacks nothing. Periodically, they visit and buy things for her. From her experience, she does not think that widows are disinherited and marginalized in issues of their deceased husband's property. In spite of Mrs. Ashafa's old age and health challenge, she stated that she was coping very well because she has grown up children who support her financially.

4.14.5 Discussion of Case Studies

The above four cases summarize the plight of most Awori widows. The stories provided in these case studies further assist us to buttress the reality of the problems associated with widowhood and property inheritance in the study area. In case study one, Mrs. Atobaba is a petty trader with heavy financial burden. Perhaps she falls within the category of widows whose income is below USD1.00 per day. She complained of poverty, lack of financial resources and her inability to give quality education to her six children. The burden borne by two people is now left for her to shoulder alone. This revelation calls for timely intervention and assistance to widows especially those of them that are heads of households like Mrs. Atobaba. As much as empowerment could bring relief to the widows through vocational trainings, seminars and workshops, there are possibly other widows in the same predicament as Mrs. Atobaba. Thus, a data centre in which valuable information about widows can be accessed becomes crucial. From case study two, some pertinent questions are: for how long will Bose a young widow in her early twenties live from hand to mouth? What future awaits those two innocent children? Unlike Mrs. Ashafa in case study four, who has grown up children that assist her financially, Bose is considering re-marriage as the best solution out of her predicament. Due to Bose's relatively young age, she could remarry for several reasons: to bear more children, to enjoy financial and emotional support from her new husband, etc. In case study four, Ronke's plight of non-receipt of financial support from her late husband's family is similar to that of Mrs. Atobaba in case study one. With hard work, Ronke has decided to face the challenges of being a widow with hawking pap in the early hours of the day while she resorts to mat weaving in the evening just to make ends meet. She vowed to give her children quality education having known the benefits of education which she was never opportune to have. With such an investment in quality education of her children, the future looks very bright for Ronke, unlike Mrs. Atobaba in case study one who did not provide formal education for her children and does not have such plans

in the nearest future. In the preceding section are the twelve case studies of widows studied in Awori land presented in a tabular form.

Table 4.18: Ethnographic Table showing the Twelve Case studies of widows in Aworiland

| Descriptive Categories | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 |
|---|----|----|---|-----|---|-----|-----|----|-----|----|----|----|
| Level of Socio-economic status (L/M/H) | L | M | H | L | L | L | M | M | L | L | H | L |
| Having young children to care for | + | - | + | + | + | - | ++ | - | +++ | - | - | - |
| Experienced obnoxious widowhood practices | ++ | - | - | ++ | - | - | +++ | - | - | - | + | - |
| Received support from husband's family | - | - | + | +++ | - | - | ++ | - | - | ++ | + | - |
| Had problems with property Inheritance | + | - | - | ++ | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Support from institutional environment | - | - | + | - | - | +++ | - | ++ | - | + | + | + |
| Low self esteem | + | - | - | + | - | ++ | ++ | - | + | - | - | + |
| Support from own family | - | ++ | + | - | + | - | - | + | - | - | - | ++ |
| Access to landed property | - | + | - | - | + | + | - | + | - | + | + | - |

Key

H: High

M: Medium

L: Low

+++ : High positive opinion expressed

++ : Medium positive opinion expressed

+ : low positive opinion expressed

- : means no opinion expressed

Table 4.18 summarizes 12 case studies of widows using various descriptive categories. Seven out of the twelve cases had low Socio-Economic Status (SES). Three of the widows sampled had medium SES while only two of the cases had high SES. This finding is a pointer to the need for intervention and empowerment for the widows. About 50 percent of the cases had young children to cater for. The rest of the widows have older children and are advanced in age. It must be reiterated that the mean age of widows sampled in this study is 55.65 years as revealed by Table 4.1 (Panel 4). Only 4 out of the 12 cases stated that they experienced obnoxious widowhood practices during their mourning period. The remaining 8 did not express any opinion. On receipt of support from husband's family, 5 widows gave positive response while the remaining 8 cases did not give any response to the question. Not expressing any opinion may imply that no support was received from their husband's extended family. On whether widow had problem with property inheritance, only 2 cases responded positively. The remaining 8 cases did not express any opinion which implies either of the following: (No property to be inherited, where there was property, no denial or disinheritance or there were cases of disinheritance and because widow is not conscious of her right decided to give up on husbands' property). These are mere assumptions that may be disproved by further research. About half of the cases received support from the institutional environment especially religious organizations (Church and Mosque). Membership and the level of commitment of the widow in their religious circle was a major determinant for the kind and quality of supports received. Similarly, fifty percent of the cases had low esteem while, the remaining fifty percent did not express any opinion on the matter. Just 5 cases stated that they received support from their own family. No opinion was expressed by the remaining 7 widows. Finally, half of the widows stated that they had access to landed property.

Table 4.19: Ethnographic Table showing the Twelve Case studies of Awori widows sampled and types of widowhood practices performed

| Descriptive Categories (Widowhood Rites) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 |
|---|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Confinement indoors | + | + | + | + | + | + | + | + | + | + | + | + |
| Sat on a mat | + | - | + | + | + | - | + | - | + | + | + | - |
| Restricted to only 2 clothes | + | + | + | + | + | + | + | + | - | + | + | + |
| Wearing of black coloured clothes | + | + | + | + | + | + | + | + | + | + | + | + |
| Usage of separate items/utensils | + | + | + | + | + | + | + | + | + | + | + | + |
| Vigil on eve of eight day | + | + | - | + | + | + | + | + | + | + | + | + |
| Special Bath on expiration of mourning | - | + | + | + | + | - | + | + | + | + | - | - |
| Disposal of all items used | + | + | + | + | + | + | + | + | + | + | + | + |

Key

+ means where opinion is expressed

- means opinion does not exist.

Table 4.19 presents the summary of the 12 case studies of widows sampled with regard to the widowhood rites performed. From the list of widowhood rites in Table 4.17, all the cases observed confinement indoor, wearing of black coloured clothes and disposal of all items used during widowhood period as indicated by the positive opinion expressed. Only one widow did not observe wearing of 2 clothes and vigil on the 8th day of mourning. Four widows declined sitting on the mat and taking of special bath to mark the end of the mourning period. Several reasons may be adduced to this finding. Refusal to sit on a mat and taking of special bath may be by widows with tertiary education who are assertive of their right and may not want to compromise their comfort for tradition. These days, however, there is no hard and fast rule on sitting on a mat. Cushion chairs,

mattress or stool are usually substituted for mat by some widows depending on the widow, the extended family and the community.

Overall, Table 4.19 corroborates earlier finding on the high level of conformity to widowhood rites by the Awori widows as revealed by the number of positive opinion expressed. All but one of the twelve widows were restricted to wearing only two clothes throughout the mourning period. What all the widows have in common was wearing of dark coloured clothings to project mourning, usage of separate utensils from other members of the family and disposal of all such items used by the widow. Only one widow did not observe vigil on the 8th day. However, 4 out of the 12 widows did not take special bath in the river at the end of widowhood rites. Western education and social change might have influenced the non-adherence to some of the traditional widowhood rites listed in Table 4.19. Further research may assist to shed more light on this grey area.

Table 4.20: Ethnographic Table showing the Twelve Case studies and items inherited

| Descriptive Categories (Items inherited) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 |
|---|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| House | - | + | - | - | + | - | + | - | - | - | - | - |
| Land | - | - | + | - | - | - | + | - | + | - | - | - |
| Farmland | - | + | - | + | - | - | - | + | - | - | + | + |
| Money | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Farm crops | - | + | - | - | + | + | + | - | + | - | + | - |
| Car/motorcycle/bicycle | + | - | - | - | - | + | - | + | - | - | - | + |
| Household utensils | - | + | - | + | + | + | - | + | - | + | + | - |
| Clothings | + | + | + | + | + | + | + | + | + | + | + | + |

Key

+ means where opinion is expressed

- means opinion does not exist.

Table 4.20 describes the items inherited by the 12 case studies examined in this study. It is important to note that items inherited in this context are not directly by the widows but by their beneficiaries, mainly the deceased children. Just 3 of the widows stated that their children inherited rooms from the property the late husband left behind. While some of the widows presently live in the room allocated to their children others live in a rented apartment. Also, 3 widows stated that their children benefited from the land left by late husband, while 5 benefited from farmland inherited by their children. No

cash or money was inherited. We assume that widows' husband's did not leave any cash or savings. The level of husband's education will influence his savings culture which from this result can be taken as non-existent or very low. About 50 percent of the widows benefited from farm crops inherited by their children. Only 4 stated that car/motorcycle/bicycle of deceased husband was inherited by his children to alleviate their suffering to some extent. Over 50 percent of the cases mentioned that they benefited from household utensils especially furniture left by their husband. It was, however, noted that most of the furniture items (bed, mattress, chairs, etc) were in bad shape thus cannot fetch much resources when they contemplated selling off. Virtually all the widows stated that their husbands left clothing items which was shared among the children. Again, the quality and kind of clothing left by the deceased is another issue outside the scope of this research. Overall, the entire 12 cases did not claim property disinheritance in cases where property existed. It evident from Table 4.20 that instances in which opinion does not exist far out number where opinion on property was expressed. An explanation for this trend could be as a result of the non-existence of property by widows' husband. This implies that a situation in which the widow's husbands is propertiless, obviously there will be nothing to inherit. On other hand, it may be a situation in which widows' husband had property but the benefactors lacked the consciousness to take what belongs to them. Either of these two situations may not be completely ruled out among the Awori.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Summary of Study Findings

This research was carried out in six Awori communities, namely Agbara, Atan, Igbesa, Iju, Ilogbo and Ota located within Ado-Odo/Ota Local Government Area of Ogun State. The study focused on widowhood and property inheritance among the Awori people of Ogun state, Nigeria. The primary aim of the study was to investigate and explain the challenges of widowhood practices and property inheritance within the context of the Awori traditional family structure. Widows aged 20-101 years together with widowers aged 45-82 years, married men and women aged 30 years and above in the study area constituted the study population. The study was anchored on two theoretical platforms: Structural Functionalist Theory (SFT), and the Feminist Political Economic Theory (FPET). It has a conceptual model which explains key concepts and variables: Age, income, occupation, education and type of marriage as personal attributes of the widow (Independent variable) and its outcome on the dependent variable (widowhood practice/property inheritance). The cultural environment measured in terms of gender role ideology is captured by male supremacy, male preference and patriarchy.

Multiple methods of data collection were employed: the survey method was utilized to generate the quantitative data. In addition, Focus Group Discussions, In-depth Interviews and Case studies complemented the quantitative data obtained from the survey. Three principal research tools utilized in this study include a survey questionnaire, Focus Group Discussion (FGD) guide, and In-depth Interview guide. The survey was a 65-item questionnaire which contained both open and close ended questions. In conducting the survey, both the purposive and snowball sampling techniques were adopted for the study areas which comprised both urban and rural communities. These communities were purposively selected because of the concentration of the Awori indigenes resident in the area. Since widows constituted about ninety percent of the study population, we enjoyed the co-operation of both religious and traditional rulers in various communities as they were very instrumental in mobilizing the majority of the widows sampled in this study. The identified widows assisted in leading us to the remaining widows within the study communities. A total of eighteen FGD sessions were held, while thirty-six respondents were interviewed in all. This was made up of twelve widowers, twelve widows and twelve selected opinion leaders in the study area. Essentially,

widows, widowers, ever married men and women, senior citizens, traditional rulers and religious leaders in the study area constituted the study population.

A 65-item questionnaire was designed and administered exclusively to widows using the personal interview method. Of the 997 copies administered, 982 were duly completed and returned representing a 98.5 percent completion rate. A total of 942 were adjudged usable for analysis. The statistical tools employed include frequency distribution, simple percentages, cross tabulations and linear regression models which were utilized to test the validity of the three (3) hypotheses stated for the study.

In hypothesis one, the independent variables tested focused on the personal attributes of the widow (age, education, occupation, income, and type of marriage as determinants of dependent variables (widowhood practices and property inheritance). Essentially, no relationships were found to exist between the dependent and the independent variables in the first model except for education and type of marriage which were found to be significantly related to widowhood rites. In the second model, widows' education and occupation were both positively related to property inheritance and statistically significant as revealed by the results in Table 4.14.

For hypothesis 2, Table 4.15 shows that there exists a positive relationship between will left by widow's husband and observance of widowhood rites by widow, even though the presence of a will was not statistically significant. Preference for a particular sex of children was negatively related to observance of widowhood rites in the Awori tradition but was not significant. In the second model for hypothesis 2, the study found that availability of a legal document known as will by widows' husband shows a negative relationship with property inheritance but this relationship was not significant. None availability of a will implies negative gender values. The results in Table 4.16 also found that sex of children preferred by widow's husband was negatively related to property inheritance. However, this relationship is not significant.

Hypothesis 3 captured the relationship between lineage-based family reciprocity and widowhood rites/property inheritance. The results showed that where the widow's husband inherited property, received support from his extended family, before, during and after his death, the dead husband could be said to have enjoyed lineage family-based reciprocity. But if otherwise, lineage family-

based reciprocity was absent. Thus, the extended family might not have a stake in widowhood rites performed by the widow and property inheritance issues.

The twelve case studies taken across the research areas and grouped into different categories complemented the findings from both the quantitative sources (survey) and qualitative data (focus group discussions and in-depth/key informant interviews). The conclusions and recommendations for policy for the study were made on the basis of findings from the data collected.

5.1 Major Findings and Discussion

5.1.1 Personal Attributes of the Widows:

On the personal attributes of widows sampled in this study, the following were found based on the five indicators used to capture the independent variable:

Age: The mean age of the widows surveyed was 55.6 years while the modal age was 55.0 years. The oldest widow in the sample was 101 years while the youngest was 20 years old. As revealed by this study, widows of all age categories exist. This is so because untimely death of a spouse could occur at anytime thus rendering many women as widows. Widows above 55 years were more in the sample. This might have informed why most of them did not have plans of remarrying unlike their male counterparts who readily remarry at the loss of their wife. This finding corroborates the works by James (1999), Hurd and Wise (1991) as well as Williamson and Rix (1999) which showed that there exist negative impacts on the economic well-being of women, particularly widowed women in old age.

Type of marriage consummated by the widow: As regards the type of marriage consummated, about half of the widows sampled had traditional marriage. Those who contracted Christian and Islamic marriages accounted for less than 30 percent. Less than 20 percent had no marriage consummated as was the practice in the olden days. They were simply taken to their husbands without any form of marriage ceremonies. This finding further reaffirms the high value accorded traditional marriage in most communities. In spite of the infiltration of western values and cultures, traditional marriage ceremonies are widely practiced in the study area. The study found variations in the experiences of the selected widows based on the types of marriage arrangements. Each marriage type (Christian, Islam or Traditional) dictated specific ideology, widowhood rites, and modes of property inheritance in the study area.

Level of education: Education in this study was a strong determinant of the quality of life, and a measure of the extent of individual investment in human capital. The study found that the quality of educational attainment of the respective widows, and the extent to which this was used to build individual capacity for sustained economic status (irrespective of whether or not the husband was alive) influenced their ability to accept and/or reject obnoxious widowhood practices and/or attainment of self-assertiveness, including positive property inheritance outcomes. Widows without any form of schooling constituted 60 percent of the sample which positively influenced the high level of conformity to societal dictates of widowhood rites as a cultural practice in the study area. On the other hand, widows with tertiary education resisted the traditional practice of widowhood rites and consequently non-compliance. The study revealed that 60 percent of the widows sampled had no schooling. Inability to read and write in the 21st century is a big challenge which hampers acquisition of the skills required to survive in the globalization era. Much more, the widows cannot maximize their potentials in the face of social change currently sweeping across the globe. This view was captured by Gbadamosi (2007) when he stated that “education is a social process in capacity building and maintenance of society since creation”. Similarly, as Oduolowu (2003) has noted, to cope with the changing realities and uncertainties of human life, education is a weapon with which to equip the people to acquire relevant knowledge, skills and habits for surviving in the modern world.

Occupation was used as an important index for measuring sustained quality of life and/or socio-economic status of widows in the study area. Majority of the widows sampled had no formal education and lacked the capacity for skilled employment, hence they resorted to petty trading which required little or no formal schooling to earn a living. It is noteworthy that a widow who is engaged in independent income generating activity with no recourse to lineage-mode of production (that is, independent of lineage-based resources such as land, houses, or other extended family owned resources) may find it easy to challenge exploitative lineage arrangements relating to her own nuclear family property ownership.

Income which presents a good indicator of the quality of life of the respective widows in the target area was derived from what the widow earns or receives as proceeds from individual occupation/business, which include wages or salaries or profit from other businesses. An important measure for this study was the average monthly income per widow. Results from both quantitative and qualitative sources revealed that more than half of the population earn an average monthly

income of less than ₦10,000 which is far below US\$1.00 per day. Obviously, the consequence is perpetual lack, want and abject poverty of the widows in study population.

In addition to the personal attributes of the widows examined in this study, other socio-demographic variables of interest that pertain to the Awori widow include: religion, average number of children, sex preference etc. The widows' religion cuts across the three major religions (Christianity, Islam and Traditional religion). However, sixty percent of the total sample practiced Islam while the remaining 40 percent belonged to Christianity and other religions. This shows that there are more Muslims in the study population than adherents of any other religions. Also, forty percent of the widows had between 4 and 5 children. The mean number of children per widow was 4.5. Even though there were a few widows without children, the maximum number of children per widow in the study area was eleven (11). The mean number of male children was 2.2 with the highest number of male children being eight (8). The mean number of female children by the respondents was 2.3, which is slightly higher than the figure for male children. Seventy one percent of the respondents preferred to have both male and female children. In other words, they did not show sex preference of children; the question of whether a child is a male or female is irrelevant because 'a child is a child'. However, virtually all the widows sampled in this study considered children to be valuable irrespective of their sex. For instance, a respondent had this to say: "*what a male child can do, a female child can also do*". Besides, *omo lo omo nje* (Yoruba) meaning 'a child is a child'. Polygyny was found to be predominant among the Awori as indicated by 64 percent in polygynous unions. However, since the Islamic religion that allows for the marriage of more than one wife is dominant in the area, one may not expect something different.

5.12 Cultural Environment

The findings in this section is discussed under gender role ideology expressed in various forms e.g. 'male supremacy'; 'male preference'; and the gender value orientation of the late husband. In this study, the gender role ideology is examined at three levels, viz.

The extent to which the number/sex of children of widows impacts on widowhood experience of mothers, especially in the area was examined. Findings from the study shows that the number/sex of widows' children does not impact on widowhood experiences.

The property status of the late husband was a major determinant of the gender role ideology of the husband and/or of the lineage group in this study. The result shows that where a man left behind an

estate worthy of re-distribution, the gender role ideology of the lineage group and/or of the late husband is usually considered in the re-distribution and the ensuing relation of gender to property. Most of the Awori widows sampled, however, lamented that their husbands had no property implying that gender role ideology and associated problems will be minimal under a condition of poverty and/or absence of property. In instances in which the widows' husbands left property, equity in property distribution was demonstrated.

All the children belonging to the widow's husband were treated equally, e.g. female children inherit property just as their male counterparts; preparation of 'WILL' with clear statements on how properties should be shared amongst family members (e.g. the extent to which the late husband based property inheritance on gender equity principles amongst the nuclear family members or otherwise) were upheld. In few instances in which a will was available, the content was respected. The number and sex of children was however, immaterial in widowhood practices and property inheritance. Both widows with or without children observed widowhood rites in the Awori culture. Widows did not directly inherit property, but inherit whatever property was shared to their children. A sharing formula for property inheritance was based one representative from each wife where the widow's husband was polygynous. Similarly, the number of children from each wife was inconsequential in property sharing. Property was shared equally among the children from each wife irrespective of the number of children each wife had.

5.1.3 Lineage Based Reciprocities

Within the lineage based arrangement, the principle of reciprocity reigns supreme and determines access to critical resources. A basic assumption in this study is that where a family is entrenched within the lineage mode of production, it may become difficult for individuals to lay claim to property ownership (such as the case of widows in this lineage). Where there is no social distance between couples and the extended family, especially in terms of sharing of access to lineage based critical resources (e.g. building on lineage land; farming on lineage land; living in extended family house, etc), it may be difficult for widows within these arrangements to lay claim to property inheritance and/or have a voice in widowhood rites. This study found that neither the widow nor her husband enjoyed family-based lineage reciprocity.

5.1.4 Widowhood Practices and Experience

This section presents major findings on widowhood practices and experiences in the study area.

1. Data from both qualitative and quantitative sources reveal that of all the personal attributes of the widows (age, education, occupation, income, and type of marriage consummated) examined in this study in relation to widowhood rites performed, only widows who possessed tertiary education had both significant and negative correlation with observance of widowhood rites in Aworiland.

2. The study shows that widowhood practice is an aspect of culture that is essential and mandatory among the local group. Observance of widowhood rites by Awori widow is regarded as the greatest honour and mark of respect accorded the dead. This finding is evidenced by the high level of conformity demonstrated by the bulk of the widows without any form of schooling across the research areas. By implication widowhood practices observed by the widows without dismay are cultural practices held in high esteem. This finding corroborates Otite and Ogionwo's (2006) definition of culture as the distinctive way of life of a group of people, and their complete design for living". A culture includes two major types of patterns: ideal patterns which describe what people would do or say in a defined situation if they conformed completely to ideals accepted in the culture. They represent the imperative (must) and obligation (should) of a given society. Behavioural (actual) patterns are derived from observations of how people behave in particular situations (Kluckhohn, 1941).

3. All forms of outing, business or social engagements are automatically suspended, outlawed and forbidden as long as the mourning lasts. Even though there are no direct sanctions in case of violation, it is believed that nemesis of some sort (death) will catch up with violators.

4. In spite of foreign religions (Christianity and Islam) which have gained much popularity among the study population, the traditional practice of widowhood and property inheritance is very prevalent. Both the widows and widowers performed widowhood rites. The few exceptions revealed by this study include those with issues of old age, ill health and extreme cases of child birth where the widow is unable to cope with the rigours associated with a long mourning period.

5. Sickness was primarily responsible for spouse's death. Death is considered as a natural occurrence as long as there is no physical evidence suggesting the contrary. This perhaps inform why 92 percent claimed that they were not accused of their husband's death. This finding is unique, contrary to what

has been reported in the literature which holds that widows are generally stigmatized as “husband’s killers”.

6. About 89 percent of the widows were confined for an average period of 4 months. Of all the widowhood practices among the study population, confinement indoor was most detested because it disallows widows freedom of movement within a restricted portion of the house in which they are confined. The major challenge of confinement indoor is largely boredom especially for the very active widows who are no so much used to staying indoors. Those who viewed widowhood practices as cultural dictates account for 35.6 percent.

7. Contrary to what obtains in certain parts of Eastern Nigeria where widows are subjected to trial by ordeal, such as drinking water used to wash the corpse and swearing at the shrine to prove the widow’s innocence, 93 percent of our sample claimed that trial by ordeal was non-existent in the Awori tradition.

8. About 70 percent of the widows indicated that religion played a positive role during widowhood. Forty five percent received cash and kind support from their religious brethren. Other roles performed by religion as stated by the respondents include consolation, counseling, emotional support, prayers and faith in God. For Fifty five percent religion influenced widowhood practices and property inheritance.

9. Over half of the respondents performed stipulated widowhood rites which range from confinement indoors, sleeping on a mat, observance of vigil on the 8th day, usage of separate utensils from those of other members of the family and disposal of all items used to fellow widows or beggars in some cases. Suffice to note that, items used by the widow during mourning are considered as contaminated and must never be used by non-widows or shared with other members of the family. During the widowhood period, widows are considered as ritually unclean unless they undergo purification rites. The rites re-admit the widow into the community and at the same time cleanse her from unforeseen circumstances.

During the period of confinement and mourning, the widow is not expected to :

- Remarry nor bring another man into her husband’s family house
- Change her mourning clothes without due process and necessary rituals.
- Attend market, festivals or any other social engagement.
- She must never allow rain or sun to the clothes she had on throughout the period.

10. Majority of the widows stated that they had no problem performing the stipulated widowhood rites. This is evidenced by the high level of conformity in the study area. Majority of the widows considered widowhood practices they performed as cultural dictates that must be observed and not queried by anyone. For the few who detested the widowhood rites observed by them, confinement indoor was the most detested due to its resultant effects of loneliness, boredom, and loss of revenue resulting from complete or partial close down of their business ventures during such mourning periods.

11. The average mourning period according the findings in the study was three months. Sickness was primarily responsible for the death of respondent's spouse. However, respondents were unwilling to make additional comment on the exact sickness/disease responsible for their husband's death, which poses a challenge in recommending solutions.

12. Widows enjoy social sympathy in Aworiland especially during mourning periods. This is evident in the manner in which widows received supports in cash and kind from all quarters including the spouse's family, the widows relatives, friends, and brethren from the same religious organizations. This finding is also buttressed by the fact that, ninety two percent confessed that they were not accused of their husband's death. Similarly, 93 percent were not subjected to trial by ordeal- a common practice in certain parts of Nigeria. To most Awori, death is taken as a natural end as long as there is no physical evidence suggesting otherwise. Refusal of the widow to honour the dead through stipulated mourning rites may suggest otherwise. In which case, the widow may be confronted of having a hand in her husband's death in very extreme cases. Beyond the sympathy, enjoyment and supports provided for widows during mourning period as revealed by data in this study which gives an impression that all is well, in reality, widows confessions, evidences and personal observations from the field confirms otherwise in terms of the quality of life and good living standard most the widows are far from being comfortable. During the field work, we came across some cases of extreme poverty, absolute dependence, lack and want in addition to the fact that majority of the widows earn below N10,000 monthly income.

Also, over half of the widows involved in petty trading can hardly make ends meet. I recall some of the widows sampled openly demanded for welfare assistance from our research team. Quoting an aged Muslim widow during field work:

Tell the government to come to our aid. We are hungry and suffering. I am too old to run around like before. I don't need a loan because I will not be able to pay back all I want is regular supply of food to keep me going.

13. Majority of the widows (89 percent) were confined indoors. The confinement duration for widows differs from that of widowers. While the widowers enjoy shorter duration of confinement, usually a maximum of 8 days, widows are not too lucky. As this study shows, widows are confined for an average of 3 months. The maximum confinement duration was 24 months.

14. The study found that confinement of widows indoors has several socio-cultural implications. Findings from this study also show that other persons including widow's mother, aunts, older widows, grand parents, friends, other relatives as well as religious and cultural demands enforced the widowhood practices carried out by the widow.

15. Religion had positive influence on widowhood practices as indicated by over half of the sample in the study. Some of the specific roles of religion during widowhood includes of cash and kind supports especially for committed and dedicated members of the religious group. Other roles performed by religion in widowhood include: consolation, counseling, prayers/intercessions and faith in God.

16. No significant changes have occurred in widowhood practices over the years. This finding further affirms the strong hold of cultural traditions such as widowhood practices among the Awori even in the 21st century. From the perspective of widows without schooling, their high level of conformity to widowhood rites may as well be as a result of their lack of formal education which is expected to open their critical thinking, make them query some old traditions that are anti-progressive. However, it is possible for persons to be oppressed and denied certain rights and privileges without knowing. Are these widows conscious of their right on issues of widowhood and property inheritance? If yes, what steps have they taken to query unfavourable and debasing mourning rites and property disinheritance where it exist?.

17. Evidences from the field indicate that there were no court cases challenging widowhood practices or property disinheritance among the Awori. No such records were found in the court.

18. Even though men are also expected to mourn their wives, they received more sympathy. Culture is more sympathetic to the widower (Korieh, 1996). This finding buttresses why widowhood is considered as deeply gendered and more of a woman's problem among the Awori. The fact that men

mourn their wives for shorter duration and receive more social sympathy to cope with by remarriage show elements of patriarchal attitudes and bias for the widow.

5.1.5 Property Inheritance

The key findings of property inheritance among the Awori local group are listed below:

1. The husbands of majority of the widows (88 percent) died interstate without a will. Will, referred to as *Akosile* (Yoruba) is of western origin. Sudden death gives little or no room for a will or other preparations. Also, the little or low level of education attained by a large proportion of the population may partly account for the high level of ignorance on will preparation. For those who left a will, the content of the will was respected in 68.8 percent of the cases.
2. For those who had joint property with their spouse, almost 58 percent stated that they were not denied access to their joint property with their deceased spouse. This finding is contrary to what is reported in literature that widows are victimized and denied access to the property of the deceased. The Awori example reveals that as much as widows are not entitled to property inheritance but the children of the deceased, in cases of joint property ownership, the widows are hardly denied access to such joint property. And where a will exists, the content is usually respected in the Awori tradition. This finding is contrary to what has been reported in the literature namely that widows are denied access to joint property with their deceased spouse.
3. The study showed that traditional institutions are very much respected and utilized in cases of property tussle whenever it occurs. This, among other reasons accounts for why court case on property inheritance among the study population significantly few or almost non-existent. Another major explanation for widows not seeking redress from the law court by the widow is their little or no schooling. According to a male informant aged 60 years in Igbesa one of the research communities:

There are hardly disputes on property inheritance among the Awori. But whenever it happens, such cases are taken to the traditional ruler who mediates, and the matter is settled among the parties. I am not aware of any matter settled at the palace that is taken to the court again.

This observation brings to the fore the high reverence accorded the traditional institutions among the Awori. As clearly shown in the findings, the traditional and religious leaders

mediate in cases of widowhood and property inheritance whenever such issues are referred to them. Their judgments are taken as final by the parties involved. This may partly account for why widows in the study area hardly seek redress in the law court. This perhaps also accounts for why the researcher was unable to lay hands on secondary data or materials on court cases relating to widowhood and property inheritance in the area. Both the customary court and the High courts visited in Ota do not have cited cases on the research topic.

4. As a tradition, neither the widow nor the widower inherits property in the Awori culture. Essentially, the widows/widowers have no business with property inheritance as whatever is given to their children belongs to them. This finding is contrary to Alliyu's (2007) assertion that "women are considered as part of their husband's property and that whatever property is left by a wife is inherited by the husband". Even though no family member challenges the husband with respect to the assets and wealth of her dead spouse, the deceased children irrespective of their age and sex inherit the property left behind by either parent. Virtually all the respondents across the different religions affirmed that property is usually inherited by the deceased's children in Awori culture. In some cases, the extended family may partake in inheritance where family-based reciprocity exist. However, the eldest son, widow or the eldest daughter hardly inherit property. Property is shared equally among the deceased's children. This finding supports what obtains among the Ondo, a Yoruba ethnic group in Southwestern Nigeria where property belongs to the children of the deceased. It is shared as *Ori o ju ori*, Yoruba phrase meaning 'equality among children' (including girls), or as *Idi'igi* i.e. equality among the wives in a situation where the man is polygynous, though the eventual beneficiaries are the children. Where the widow has no child, she may not get anything from her husband's property. It reverts to the husband's family.
5. A widow without at least a child or children is a total stranger in her husband's compound. Such a barren widow is considered as a mere "girlfriend" irrespective of how long she has been married and has lived together with her husband. However, there are a few exceptions:
 - (i) if there is a will stating what property belong: to whom, it will be respected accordingly.
 - (ii) In the absence of a will, there must be is a living witness to testify to the claim of the widow.

(iii) If the widow possesses a good character, she may be considered at the discretion of the extended family members.

6. To the Awori, inheritable property are, essentially, tangible physical items such as land, farm, and house(s) (completed or uncompleted), car(s), household equipments, furniture, machines, clothes, cash and children produced from marital union in some cases.
7. The position of the eldest son or daughter is irrelevant in issues of inheritance as property is shared equally among the children. The only exception is in Islamic religion where the male child may inherit more property than the female child.
8. There is no sex preference. For majority of the Awori, a child is a child when it comes to property inheritance. In other words, every child has equal right to inherit whatever property is left by the parents. Property essentially belongs to the deceased's children. However, the extended family may partake of property inheritance in some cases if lineage-based family reciprocity exist. This perhaps inform why the extended family remains a very potent force in taking decisions on property inheritance.
9. However, this study reveals that little or no cases of widow disinheritance exist in Aworiland as revealed by respondents who had joint property with their husbands.
10. Eighty percent claimed there was cordial relationship between them and their spouse before his death. This is a pointer to the high level of marital stability among the study population. Also widows who had cordial relationship the extended family of husband tend to enjoy more social support to cope during and after widowhood period.
11. In very few instances in which husband of the widow left a will behind, the will was respected in 68.8 percent of the cases.

In summary, irrespective of respondents' religion, level of education attained, occupation and income, two major findings are apparent:

- (i) The deceased's children essentially inherit property among the Awori. This is followed by members of the extended family, eldest son, the widow and the eldest daughter in a few cases. This is ranked in order of importance. This result negate Lasebikan's (2001) finding in which traditionally, the girl is not recognized as an important member of the family and it is only the sons who have the right of

inheritance. All the deceased children irrespective of sex inherit property in the Awori tradition.

- (ii) The position of the eldest son or daughter is irrelevant in issues of inheritance as property is shared equally among the children essentially because debts are shared on equal basis. The only exception in the study area was found among adherents of the Islamic religion in which the male child may inherit more property than the female child

5.1.6 Widows' and Widowers' Coping Strategies

On the means of coping by the widows and widowers across the study population the study found the following:

1. A total of 80 percent of the respondents maintained cordial relationship with their spouse before the incidence of death and 93 percent were still together as husband and wife at the time of death. This finding reveals that peaceful co-existence and marital stability are evident among the Awori.
2. The vast majority of widows in the study area are facing hard times psychologically and financially, in spite of the confessions by some widows that they enjoyed social sympathy from members of their husband's family, and the fact they were not subjected to trial by ordeal or any dehumanizing cultural practice such as shaving of the hair on parts of their body. The widows were not forced to drink the water used to bath the corpse. Instead, food flowed in from every corner throughout the mourning period. However, the concern is: What does the widow fall back on at the expiration of mourning? Does she still enjoy the emotional and material support from the extended family? These questions may appear to put the widow in a position of absolute dependency. The truth of the matter is that majority of the Awori widows can be said to be in a state of absolute dependency.
3. Sixty percent of the widows stated the gross neglect (socially, morally, financially, psychologically and otherwise) by the extended family and spouse's relatives. Most of them lamented that the death of their spouse had left a big vacuum. In the words of one Christian widow aged 37 years interviewed at Iju during field work:

My husband was everything to me. We did everything together. Since his death, the burden of two people is now left for only one person to carry. The load is too heavy for me. Life can never be the same again.

4. Even though 70 percent of the widows had cordial relationship with their spouse's extended family both before and after the demise of their husbands no form of support, be it financial or otherwise, was received from their husband's family members after the mourning period as indicated by over two-thirds of the respondents.
5. Other sources of support in cash and kind received by the widows were from their grown up children, relatives, friends, neighbours, brethren and income from their vocation/businesses. This finding supports Potash's (1986) assertion that, "apart from the help given by children and sometimes natal kin, widows generally receive little or no income support, but may receive some labour assistance".
6. Some who are of marriageable age would rather resort to re-marriage as a coping response to widowhood. They simply affirmed that they are still young and can fulfill marital destiny, have more children and be relieved of heavy financial burden currently their lot. It was also noted that the young widow of marriageable age reserves the exclusive right and freedom to remarry whosoever she chooses either within or outside the spouse's extended family. These days, no restrictions are placed on young widows by the extended family after the successful completion of widowhood rites. Levirate as a practice seems to be fading out very fast.
7. Majority of the widows (92 percent) do not have plans of remarrying. Their reasons range from old age, ill health and the fact that they have older children currently assisting them financially. Other widows sampled boldly declared that they have enough children and financial burdens to tackle. Thus, remarrying may distract and compound their problems.
8. This study also reveals that the option of remarrying the widow's husband's brother was never suggested to the widow at any point in time as indicated by 90 percent of the respondents. This finding is a pointer to the non-popularity of levirate among the study population in recent times.
9. Unlike the finding that the widows do not cope very well during and after widowhood due to the hardship and lack of support from the extended family, the widowers seemed to be coping very well, essentially because the widowers spend shorter mourning periods compared to their female counterparts who spend minimum periods of 41 days to 3 months and in some cases for as long as two years of mourning during which period, her source of income/business is completely abandoned for widowhood practices.
10. Widowers not only mourn for a shorter period they mourn for as short as 8 days, which is mandatory. After this, they are free to move around to work or visit places of choice. 'Partial

widowers' exist in the Awori tradition. We have a situation in which, the widower naturally takes solace in his other living wives if he is a polygynist. If he is a monogamist, a woman is arranged to sleep with him for the night to prevent the spirit of his dead wife from haunting him. Within a space of 6 months or 1 year the widower remarries. This finding corroborates Lasebikan (2001:19), who stated that "a widower is evidently pitied and consoled genuinely and encouraged out of his situation as early as possible while arrangement for a substitute is in high gear, because "*Opo 'kunrin ki da sun nitori iyawo orun*" (Yoruba). In other words, "A widower does not sleep alone because of the dead wife's spirit". Though the widower experiences emotional trauma at the loss of a wife, he is usually given more social support to cope, and to eventually re-adjust to a new life. This finding buttresses Erinoshio (2001) remarks that, "widowers are never subjected to dehumanizing rites. On the contrary, they enjoy preferential treatment in Africa". Social sympathies are encouraged to readjust quickly to a new life. If a polygynist, he takes solace in other wives. If a monogamist, a woman is arranged to keep him company so that he is not haunted by the spirit of the dead.

11. It was found that the Awori widower shaves his head as a sign of mourning and respect for his deceased wife. This is contrary to what obtains in the eastern part of the country in which the widows' head is shaven with broken pots as part of widowhood rites and in some extreme cases, the widow is made to drink from water used to bath the husbands' corpse. This finding brings to the fore the relativity and uniqueness of cultural practices from one society to another.

5.2 Conclusions

The main thrust of this research was to examine and describe the challenges associated with widowhood and property inheritance among the Awori of Ogun State, Southwest Nigeria. On the basis of the findings in this study, it can be concluded that, of the personal attributes of widows (age, income, occupation, education and type of marriage) examined in this study, education had the strongest influence on widowhood rites performed in the study area. Observance of traditional widowhood rites by widows with tertiary education in the study area was uncommon. In cases where the practice is carried out, widows in this category spend shorter mourning period than their counterparts with less education. Even though a relationship exists between the widows level of income and widowhood rites performed as revealed by the results from the tested hypotheses, other socio-cultural variables such as tradition and religious beliefs tend to influence widowhood rites and

property inheritance in the study area. Essentially, age, occupation, income and the type of marriage consummated by the widow do not necessarily determine property inheritance in the research area.

In spite of the value placed on children in the Yoruba culture, and the patriarchal ideology which emphasizes male supremacy and/or male preference, the Awori example indicates equality among male and female children in property inheritance. The study found that, having a male child (or male children) does not in any way influence widowhood rites and/or property inheritance among the Awori. Positive gender values that encourage equality among male and female children were upheld as every child irrespective of sex inherited property where it exists in the study area. In few cases where widow's husband left a 'will' the content was respected even though will was uncommon in the study area.

Results from both the quantitative and qualitative data sources show that the husbands of most of the widows sampled, did not inherit property from extended family or enjoyed other favours, which could exert pressure on property inheritance and widowhood rites performed by the widow. On the basis of this finding, we conclude that lineage-based family reciprocity is uncommon in the study area.

Other conclusions that can be drawn from this study are presented thus: widowhood practices are sacred cultural dictates performed by both the Awori widow and widower as a mark of love, honour, and respect for the dead. The practices are carried out to ensure total separation of the living from their deceased spouse. Unique widowhood practices and experiences found among the Awori include: confinement indoors for specified period, sitting on a mat or stool for as long as mourning lasts, wearing of few dark clothing, observance of vigil on the eve of the 8th day, usage of separate utensils, disposal of all items used during widowhood and taking of a special bath to commemorate the end of widowhood rites and total separation of the living from the dead. While some widows spent longer mourning periods, others did not for certain permissive socio-cultural reasons such as childbirth, old age, sickness and disease.

There are no direct sanctions for violators of widowhood practices besides gossips and name calling (that the widow or widower killed the spouse). About seventy five percent of the sample claimed that they did not detest any of the widowhood practices identified in this research, but rather such

practices are considered as sacred and cultural means of mourning the dead. It can be deduced that western influence and current social change have not succeeded in eroding widowhood practices in the Awori tradition, rather, it remains a potent cultural tradition widely practiced in both rural and the urban communities studied.

The experiences of widows differ among ethnic groups in Nigeria. This study shows that widows in the Awori area are not maltreated, rather they are sympathized with by extended family members, friends, relatives, etc. during the mourning period. This perhaps informs why 'trial by ordeal' - a practice in which widows are made to swear by a shrine to prove their innocence /knowledge about the death of their husbands is almost non-existent in the area. What becomes of the widow after the expiration of widowhood period is another issue worth examining.

Contrary to popular findings in literature that widows are maltreated and stigmatized as 'husband killers' in some societies, the Awori example reveals otherwise. They are hardly accused of killing their spouse. Findings shows that death is usually taken as natural in the study area provided there is no physical evidence or attack leading to the death of the spouse. We therefore conclude that stigmatization of the widow as 'husband killers' and consequent trial by ordeal are hardly ever considered.

In spite of some noticeable changes such as non-strict adherence to widowhood rites by the younger generation and decline in levirate among other changes as observed in this study, majority of the widows sampled observed various widowhood rites (confinement indoors for specified period, sitting on the mat, wearing of a few dark clothing/accessories, observance of vigil on the eve of eight day, taking of special bath, usage of separate items/utensils and disposal of same at the expiration of mourning period.)

Like most patriarchal societies, there exist among the Awori, societal structures which tend to favour the widowers and not the widow especially in a polygynous setting; other living wives provide succour for the widower. Also, the duration of confinement for the widower tends to be shorter than that of widow. In most cases, the widower spends at most 8 days to enable him provide for the rest of the family unlike the widow who is expected to mourn her husband for a minimum of 41 days, three (3) months in some cases or for as long as two (2) years depending on the community. Widowhood is thus more of the woman's problem. Indeed, when one considers the long mourning

duration for widows which spans up till 24 months in some cases, during which the widow's source of livelihood is either closed down completely or only skeletal services are carried out resulting in consequent huge financial loss, this could lead to low self-esteem and psychological trauma for the widow.

Property inheritance is exclusively the right of the deceased's children whether male or female. Irrespective of age, religion and level of education attained, all children are considered equal among the Awori. Thus, there is no sex preference. Property is shared equally, the same way debts are borne equally among the deceased's children. The only exception is found among the Muslims, where the male child may be given more property than the female child (ratio 2:1). The Islamic religion is of the view that, the male child only inherits from his father, while the female child inherits in two places: from the father and indirectly from the husband. In addition, specified property such as farmlands are usually inherited by the male. The observed discrimination in certain aspects of property sharing especially farmland is borne out of the fact that, women are perceived as the weaker vessels in such societies. Also, women are considered unable to carry out tedious farm work unlike their male counterparts.

The study found that widows are forbidden from inheriting their deceased spouse's property as long as the marital union is blessed with children. It is a common belief among the people that whatever property is given to the children belongs to their mother. Property sharing is usually supervised by the head of the family, otherwise referred to as the (*Olori ebi*) in the Awori tradition. Widows without children are hardly considered in property inheritance except there is a will to that effect, or if the widow possesses good character. At the discretion of the extended family, she may be compensated in order to avert calamities for the deceased's children. In the study area, it was found that widows without children are considered as strangers in their husband's house and in most cases they are called *strangers*. Perhaps this informs why they are usually referred to as '*mere girl friends*' and not wives. Due to the high premium on children among the Awori, a barren woman has no part in the husband's property. In some cases, she stands the risk of eviction when the unexpected (death of spouse) occurs.

Re-marriage was found to be a secondary option for majority of the widows sampled in this research. Old age, child care, ill health, unwillingness to have more children and heavy financial burdens associated with remarrying were some of the reasons given by the respondents.

A large proportion of the widows (90 percent) confessed that they did not cope very well as widows due to lack of assistance in cash or kind from their extended family and other sources. This finding corroborates Nna and Nyeke's (2007:173) assertion that,

Widows all over the world face varying degrees of difficulties and untold hardship. Even though they tend to suffer in silence, in most cases the problems range from obnoxious legislation, which subsume women under male dominance, of cultural practices such as widowhood practices and disinheritance which aggravates the poverty and social disempowerment of women.

The few exceptions are those with other sources of support in the form of cash or kind from their older children, relatives, friends, neighbours and brethren from the same religious group. There is no known social organization that caters for widows in the Awori communities, at least to the knowledge of the widows. Care and support came largely from their immediate family members and religious groups.

While a few of the young widows stated that they could fulfil marital destiny by getting married, for the widowers, remarriage was not a major strategy for coping during widowhood. The study found that because the majority of them practised Islam which allows for polygyny, it was only natural for them to take solace in their other living wives rather than resort to marrying another wife. But if they choose to re-marry at the death of their spouse, they are given all the necessary support. On the other hand, the re-marriage of the young widow within or outside the deceased's spouse's family is not an issue. This finding contradicts Nwadinobi (1997), and Ahonsi (1997) finding on widowhood practices in Nigeria (in which they stated) that, "In some societies in Nigeria widows are not allowed to re-marry within the same community as their dead husbands".

Non-popularity of levirate is yet another discovery in this study. The rate of decline in levirate was found to be attributed to the current economic crisis and the influence of western values which encourage small family size. In addition, consequent gossips and stigma that perhaps the widow and the deceased husband's brother were instrumental in the death of the spouse tend to discourage the practice of levirate among the Awori in recent times.

Like what obtains in certain parts of Eastern Nigeria where the sisters of the husband in the family otherwise referred to as the *Umuadas* enforce widowhood rites that are performed by the widows, in the Awori culture, older widows are the custodian of the various widowhood rites performed by the widows. Older women in the family are saddled with the primary responsibility of socializing the younger members. From birth up till the time of marriage and when she becomes a widow, the Awori woman is socialized to accept the norm of observing widowhood rites as a mark of love and honour to a deceased spouse. This partly explains why the level of conformity to widowhood practices was found to be high in the study group. However, there were a few exceptions. Those with tertiary education did not totally adhere to the cultural dictates of widowhood. Therefore, we conclude that, higher education tends to influence widowhood practices negatively in spite of early socialization and other proximate variables.

5.3 Recommendations for Policy

On the basis of the findings in this study, the following recommendations are hereby made for direct policy intervention:

1. As much as widowhood practices are sacred cultural/traditional practices handed over from one generation to the next as a mark of love, honour and respect for the dead, long mourning periods aggravate the sufferings and poverty of widows. A widow that is confined indoors for as long as 3 months to 2 years in some cases in the current dispensation, will no doubt lose her source of livelihood if she is a civil servant especially in this era of massive unemployment. If, on the other hand, she is in private business (trading), she will lose her customers, income or immediate source of livelihood as well as her self-esteem. It is against this premise that we suggest that the long mourning period for widows, though not uniform among the Awori should be reviewed and reduced to about one month maximum in order to alleviate the sufferings of this segment of the population who are economically incapacitated due to long mourning periods.
2. The fact that about 60 percent of widows sampled in this research had no form of schooling and earn a monthly income of less than ₦10,000 from petty trading is worrisome. Without any doubt, this figure is alarming and remains enough justification for urgent policy intervention. In the light of this, the need for women's education and subsequent empowerment to alleviate the sufferings and poverty currently the lot of the majority of widows is recommended. Women's

education and economic empowerment through (formal/informal) channels is crucial. Considering the mean age of 55 years, it may be a herculean task to provide formal education for the majority of the widows in the study area. Non-formal means such as seminars, workshops, talk/film shows in the local language of the people could be adopted to bridge the existing gap in knowledge. Like the popular Chinese adage, *“To teach a man how to fish is better than to give a man fish”*. Government, NGOs and other stakeholders could provide a slot for widows’ employment in their various capacities. Providing such job opportunities to young and employable widows will assist tremendously in reducing the existing gap in poverty alleviation. Besides, the employed widows will no longer constitute a burden to themselves and the society at large. Other gestures could be in form of vocational training under the supervision of the traditional and religious leaders. Designated centers such as the palace of the traditional leaders or worship centers will enhance easy access for affected widows.

3. Since most of the widows (about 67.5 percent) engaged in petty trading, the design and introduction of user friendly micro-finance/credit schemes for women to access will assist in poverty reduction. The micro-finance credit schemes will go a long way in boosting their potentials if properly harnessed. Like the Delta State micro-finance scheme among several others, which has recorded huge success in recent times based on group participation, some lessons can be borrowed for the Awori widows to boost their businesses by grouping themselves into a cluster for ease of distribution and loan accessibility.
4. Lack of adequate information and data on widows have no doubt hindered the prospect of planning and implementation of policies targeted at this under privileged segment of the population. Supporting of researches and scholarly works on widows by all stakeholders in designated centres across the country will facilitate a robust data bank on the status and plight of widows for direct policy intervention. Just as children are registered at birth, widows should be registered to know their location and means of assistance. Widow centres are highly recommended to enhance the collation of baseline data on widows for direct policy intervention and implementation.
5. Bursary scholarship awards to bright children of the less privileged widows is strongly recommended. This will assist tremendously in relieving them the burden of providing sound and quality education for these future generations of our great country.

6. A bill on budgetary allocation for widows/widowers is hereby suggested and this should as a matter of urgency be debated for more robust public opinions and passed into law in accordance with statutory provisions by the states and federal legislators. The government can go the extra mile to vote certain amount of funds for the aged widows/widowers in form of monthly stipends as is currently practiced in most industrialized nations of the world.
7. The phenomenon of death and will preparation are topics many people in most Nigerian societies shy away from discussing, perhaps because of the sorrow and negative consequences often associated with them. The public, both the young and old irrespective of age, sex, creed and socio-economic background, require basic knowledge on the relevance of timely will preparation essentially because death does not give notice of its coming. Thus, public enlightenment programmes, seminars and workshops on this topical issue of will preparation becomes very crucial as it will assist tremendously in reducing the problems associated with property inheritance whenever it surfaces in this 21st century.
8. There is the need for women to take their destiny in their hands through diligence, hard work and absolute trust in God. Widows are enjoined to see beyond their limitations by empowering themselves and investing wisely. Investment in children's education is the best legacy rather than property or material acquisition. The era of being a complete housewife is over and must be discouraged. Women should try as much as possible to engage in small scale businesses and to save for the rainy day. A widow that is not hard working will mismanage property if at all she is allowed to inherit anything. Thus, women are enjoined to be diligent and above all put their trust in God.
9. The study recommends the establishment of data bank for widows in designated centres. Recently, the Nigerian government announced seven centres for reporting domestic violence/violation of fundamental human rights to enable them to have a pool of data on the extent of the problem. This is a welcome development if it can be replicated for the widows across the six geo-political zones in the country. This data bank will not only help to curtail the plight of the average Nigerian widow but it will also assist tremendously in ensuring that whatever assistance is meant for the widows get to the right hands. In addition, such data banks will further more researches on widows in the country.

10. Finally, It is hoped that if these recommendations are considered and urgent pragmatic steps are taken, the story of many, if not all widows, will change for the better in our society.

5.4 Contributions to Knowledge

The contributions to knowledge by this study is three fold: theory construction, methods of research and body of literature.

- (i) **Theory Construction:** Both the structural functionalist theory and the feminist theories adopted by this study have successfully expounded key issues on the traditional practice of widowhood and property inheritance in Aworiland. While the structural functionalist theory explains the functions and sustenance of the cultural practices, feminist theories question the sustenance and functional utility of the practice in the face of emerging social change and cultural dynamics.
- (ii) **Methods of Research:** The triangulation of various research methods: Survey Questionnaire (SQ), In-depth Interviews (IDIs), Key Informant Interviews (KIIs), Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and Case Studies(CSs) which assisted to explore key findings in this study is a major contribution to knowledge.
- (iii) **Contributions of study to scholarship and existing literature** are discussed in the subsequent section:
 - (a) The study has helped to chart a new understanding of widowhood and property inheritance among the study group. Contrary to a priori expectations that widows are maltreated and disinherited, the Awori example which this research pioneered has been able to show the uniqueness in widowhood experiences and practices among the local group.
 - (b) The study has equally assisted in expanding the landscape of understanding the socio-cultural practices that sustain widowhood practices and property inheritance in the study population. The roles performed by both the traditional and religious institutions in widowhood and property inheritance have been identified.
 - (c) This study has provided robust data on the extent of the problem of widowhood and property inheritance among the Awori local group in addition to supplying baseline data for direct programme intervention.

- (d) The roles played by various institutions, i.e. the State, NGOs, religious groups and the local institutional structures in resolving and sustaining this problem have been identified.
- (e) Finally, this work has provided data on the coping mechanisms of both men and women, across different socio-economic groups with regard to the experience of widowhood and property inheritance.

5.5 Research Implications and Directions

This research is both a quantitative and qualitative study of widowhood and property inheritance from the sociological point of view. It is a step towards developing a holistic model that identifies, explains and predicts widowhood and property inheritance. The various traditional practices widows are subjected to in the name of culture are no doubt very alarming and worrisome. “The need for a change in African customs militating against widows must be seen in the context of the principle that equality means equality of opportunities, of rights and responsibilities for humanity, for the good of the society as a whole” (Oke, 2001:56).

According to the United Nations Beijing Declaration and platform for Action (1995), “Human rights and fundamental freedom are the birthright of all human beings, their protection and promotion is the first responsibility of Governments”. Possible future research directions should as a matter of urgency, focus on the elimination of all harmful cultural and traditional practices that devalue widows and traumatize this disadvantaged group. The need for a reduction of the existing long mourning periods for widows should be seen as a matter of urgency. Capacity building to enhance women empowerment should be urgently addressed to fill the already existing wide gap in knowledge.

5.6 Suggestions for Further Studies

The topic on widowhood and property inheritance among the Awori has no doubt led to some interesting findings and revelations about this sensitive and cultural aspect of the Awori people of Ogun State, Nigeria.

In terms of the robust data base that has been generated in the course of this research, the author calls for further studies in the near future. The researcher is interested in a comparative analysis of widowhood and property inheritance in other parts of the country. Since the Awori example is a

pioneer study among the sub-ethnic group of the Yoruba, it should form a veritable platform for exploring other areas of this Nigerian reality.

Finally, the essence of marriage for the Awori can be investigated by further studies. The psychological and social functions of marriage can be adequately identified so as to ascertain their roles as coping strategies during and after widowhood. This suggestion is informed by the finding in this study which reveals that over half of the widowed women did not consider remarriage as a primary option for coping during widowhood unlike their male counterparts. Further studies on the subject should explore the role of marriage among the local group. Why is remarriage unattractive to widows? Is marriage meant for just procreation and not companionship? Among other questions, these can be answered by subsequent studies.

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APPENDIX I: QUESTIONNAIRE SCHEDULE

Dear Respondent,

This is a research into “Widowhood and Property Inheritance among the Awori of Ogun State, Nigeria”. Your response to the following questions is highly solicited. The research is purely for academic purposes. Please answer the questions as truthfully as you can. All information volunteered would be treated with utmost confidentiality.

Thank you.

Tayo Ola George

Section A: Demographic and Background Information (Please tick or record answers as appropriate)

1. Are you an Awori? [a] Yes () [b] No () [c] Partly () [d] Not at all ()
2. How long have you lived in this Awori community? _____ years
3. How old were you as at your last birthday?

4. What is your marital status? [a] Married () [b] Single () [c] Divorced/Separated () [d] Widowed () [e] Other () : Please specify.
5. What is your religion? [a] Christianity () [b] Islam () [c] Traditional Religion () [d] Other: Please specify _____
6. If ever married, what type of marriage was consummated between you and your spouse? [a] Muslim () [b] Church Marriage () [c] Traditional () [d] Court marriage () [e] Other () : Kindly specify _____
7. How many wives, including yourself, did your husband have? _____
8. How many children? _____

9. How many of your children are males? _____

10. How many of your children are females? _____

11. Do you have preference for a particular sex of children? [a] Yes () [b] No ()

12. If 'Yes', which sex do you prefer? [a] Male () [b] Female ()

13. Highest level of education attained [a] No schooling () [b] Primary () [c] Secondary () [d] Tertiary () Other [e] Please specify _____

14. What is your occupation? [a] Farmer () [b] Trader () [c] Artisan () [d] Transporter () [e] Other () (Please specify _____)

15. On the average, what would you say is your monthly income?

Section B: Widowhood experiences and practices

16. How long have you been a widow? [a] less than 1year () [b] 1-5years() [c] 6-10years () [d] 11- 15years () [e] 16years and Above ()

17. What was the cause of your husband's death? [a] Sickness () [b] Old Age () [c] Unknown causes () [d] Other() (Please specify _____)

18. When your husband died, were you accused of being responsible for his death?

[a]() Yes [b] No () [c] Other Please specify _____)

19. What was the reaction of your husband's family members towards you?

[a] Normal () [b] Sympathetic () [c] Harsh () [c] Other Please specify _____)

20. Were you confined indoors[a] yes () [b] No () [c] Other (Please specify _____)

21. If the answer to question 20 is 'Yes', how long was your confinement? _____ Months

22. What happened to your business/career during this period? [a] Closed down completely () [b] skeletal services () [c] Huge financial loss () [d] Other () (Please specify _____)

23. During your mourning period were you subjected to certain widowhood rites?

[a] Yes () [b] No () [c] Exempted [d] () Other () (Please specify _____)

24. If answer to 23 is 'Yes', kindly list at least 5 of such widowhood practices:

(i) _____ (ii) _____ (iii) _____

(iv) _____ (v) _____

25. Which of the widowhood practice(s) did you detest most? _____

26. Why did you detest it? _____

27. How would you describe these widowhood practices?

[a] Traumatic () [b] bearable () [c] One of those things () [d] cultural dictates () [e] No comment ()

28. Apart from these widowhood practices, were you subjected to any form of trial by ordeal to prove your innocence? [a] Yes () [b] No () [c] Partially () [d] Other: Please specify _____

29. If answer to question 28 is 'Yes', briefly describe your experience. _____

29. Did your religion play any positive role(s) during your widowhood period? [a] Yes () [b] No () [d] Other : (Please specify _____)

30. If Yes, what was the exact role played? _____

31. Do you think your religious belief has any influence on the widowhood practices carried out by you? [a] Yes () [b] No () [c] partially ()

32. Compared to the past, would you say that widowhood practices carried out in your community has changed over the years? [a] Yes () [b] No ()

33. If answer to question 32 is 'Yes', kindly mention some of the changes observed by you. _____

34. Which people were responsible for enforcing the widowhood practices you underwent?

[a] Male members of your spouse family() [b] Female members() [c] Both male and female members

() [d] Other() (Please specify _____)

Section C: Property Inheritance

35. How would you describe the relationship between you and your husband while he was alive? [a] Very cordial() [b] Cordial() [c]Somewhat cordial () [d] Not cordial ()

36. Were you still together as husband and wife when your husband died? [a] Yes() [b] No ()

37. Did your husband leave a Will [a] Yes () [b] No ()

38. If answer to question 37 is 'Yes', was the Will respected at his death [a] Yes () [b] No ()

39. Who inherits property in your community? [a] Widow() [b] Eldest son () [c] Eldest daughter () [d] Extended family () [e] Other() (Please specify _____)

40. What type of property is/are usually inherited? _____

41. Does a widow's family size determine the type and portion of property Inherited? [a] Yes() [b] No () 2. Who takes decision on property Inheritance? [a] Widow () [b] Eldest son() [c]Eldest daughter() [d] Husband's extended family or wife's? [e] Other () (Please specify _____)

43. Whether type of marriage contracted determine access to property Inheritance?[a] Yes() [b] No() [c] To some extent () .

44. Whether income influences property inheritance? [a] Yes () [b] No () [c] Other : (Please specify : _____)

45. Whether sex of the first child is a determinant in property inheritance? [a] Yes () [b] No () [c] Other : (Please specify_____)

46. Are women without children considered in property inheritance? [a] Yes() [b] No ()

47. Did you jointly own property with your husband? [a] Yes () [b] No()

48. If answer to question 47 is 'Yes', kindly list the joint property or properties_____

49. Were you denied access to inherit your joint property? [a] Yes() [b] No ()

50. If answer to question 49 is 'Yes', did you bother to seek redress from the law court? [a] Yes () [b] No() [c] Other (Please specify_____)

51. What was the role played by your husband's family in terms of property inheritance?_____

Section D: Coping Mechanisms of Widows

52. Now that you are a widow, how are you coping? [a]Very well () [b] Not too well () [c] Very bad() [d] Other () (Please specify_____)

53. Did you have a cordial relationship with members of your husband's family before his death [a] Yes () [b]No() [c]Other ()Please specify_____

54. If 'Yes', would you say the relationship is still cordial now? [a] Yes() [b] No()

55. Did you receive any form of support from his extended family members in your time of loss? [a] Yes() [b] No () [c] Other Please specify_____

56. If answer to question 55 is 'Yes', kindly mention in specific terms the support received

57. Did you receive support from other sources? If 'Yes', kindly mention the sources and supports received_____

58. Do you think economic empowerment will be an elevation for women in widowhood and property inheritance? [a] Yes() [b] No () [c] Other() (Please specify_____)

59. Are you thinking of remarrying? [a] Yes () [b] No()

60. Kindly state reason(s) for your answer_____

61. Was the option of marrying your husband's brother ever suggested to you? [a] Yes() [b] No() [c] Other (Please specify_____)

62. Do you think wife inheritance as a practice is old fashioned in your community? [a] Yes () [b] No () [c] Other () Please specify_____)

63. Do you think widowhood as practiced in your community is more of a woman's Problem? [a] Yes () [b] No() [c] Other () (Please specify_____)

64. Would you say that women are disinherited and marginalized in issues of the deceased property? [a]Yes () [b]No () [c]Other () (Please specify_____)

65. From your experience of widowhood practices and property inheritance in your community, kindly suggest solutions to solve these problems._____

**APPENDIX II: FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION (FGD) GUIDE ON WIDOWHOOD
AND PROPERTY INHERITANCE AMONG THE AWORI**

FORM FOR NOTE-TAKER'S NOTES

Name of community-----

Description of Participants: place of origin, age, religion and level of education-----

Date-----

Time started-----

Time finished-----

Venue-----

Name of Facilitator-----

Name of Note taker-----

Participant's seating arrangement-----

| S/N | Name | Occupation | Observation |
|-----|------|------------|-------------|
| 1. | | | |
| 2. | | | |
| 3. | | | |
| 4. | | | |
| 5. | | | |
| 6. | | | |
| 7. | | | |
| 8. | | | |
| 9. | | | |
| 10. | | | |

APPENDIX III:

FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION (FGD) GUIDE ON WIDOWHOOD AND PROPERTY INHERITANCE AMONG THE AWORI CONTD.

My name is Tayo George, from Covenant University, Ota, and the lady with me is, Mrs. Wuraola Oyelami from Ota. She is here to assist in taking notes based on our discussion for today. I will like you to introduce yourself. Tell us your name, place of origin, age, religion, occupation and other information you will like us to know about you.

*We are here to find out your opinion on the topic “**Widowhood and property Inheritance among the Awori of Ogun State**”. Kindly answer the following questions as truthfully as you can. All information given will be treated with utmost confidentiality and used purely for academic purposes.*

Thank you.

Tayo Ola George

Section A: General Questions

1. What are the widowhood practices in this community?
2. Are these widowhood practices mandatory for all widows in the community or are there exceptions?
3. How would you describe the plight of widows in your community today?
4. Has there ever been a situation in which a widow refuses to perform these widowhood rites?
5. In case of refusal to adhere by widows, are there sanctions? If yes, kindly mention some of those Sanctions: _____

Section B: Specific Questions

6. When a man dies, who is entitled to inherit his property?
7. Do people suspect his wife/wives as the immediate cause of his death?
8. What is the duration of mourning?
9. How would you describe the economic status of widows during mourning?
10. Are widowers subjected to widowhood practices as well?
11. Is levirate (wife Inheritance) practiced in this community?
12. What is the predominant religion in this community?
13. Does religious belief affect widowhood practices and property inheritance?
14. Is the sex of the first child a determinant in property inheritance?
15. Who are the custodians of widowhood practices and property inheritance in your community?
16. What is the role of the extended family?
17. Are you aware of any legal structure where widows can seek redress?
18. What is the role of the local institution in intervention?

Section C: Probing Questions

19. In your own view, what function do these widowhood practices perform for the community?
20. When you compare the past to the present, do you notice any change(s) in widowhood practices in the community? Kindly elaborate.
21. What are the coping mechanisms adopted by the widows?
22. Kindly suggest the solutions to the problems of widowhood and property inheritance for your community and the larger Nigerian society.

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APPENDIX IV:

IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR WIDOWS, OPINION LEADERS, MARRIED MEN AND MARRIED WOMEN

Dear Sir/Madam,

This is a research into “Widowhood and Property Inheritance among the Awori People of Ogun State, Nigeria”. Your co-operation will be appreciated by responding to the questions that would be asked. Be assured that all information volunteered is for academic purpose and will be treated with utmost confidentiality.

Thank you.

Tayo Ola George

QUESTIONS

Briefly explain the meaning of widowhood among the Awori

1. Kindly mention and explain some of the common widowhood practices
2. Are widows confined?
3. If answer to question (3) is yes, how long does the confinement last?
4. What is the role of culture in Widowhood practices among the Awori?
5. Does religion have any part to play in widowhood practices?
6. How is property inherited in your community?
7. Is the sex of the child/children considered in property inheritance?
8. If answer to question (8) is yes, state the preferred sex of children.
9. What happens to widows without children?
10. What proportion of the deceased property is inherited by the widow?
11. Briefly describe the economic status of widows during the confinement period?
12. Are there available social supports for widows to take solace?
13. What is the role of the extended family in property inheritance?
14. Would you say widows are marginalized and exploited?

15. Is wife inheritance still a common practice among the Awori?
16. Are you aware of any institutional/legal framework to improve the plight of widows?
17. What is the role of traditional institutions in widowhood practice and property Inheritance?
18. Have there been changes in widowhood practices among the Awori over the years?
19. If yes, briefly describe some of these changes.
20. Kindly suggest ways you think widowhood and property Inheritance can be practised successfully among the Awori.

Thank you for your co-operation.

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APPENDIX V

IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW GUIDE (WIDOWERS) ONLY

Dear Sir,

This is a research into “Widowhood and Property Inheritance among the Awori People of Ogun State, Nigeria”. Your co-operation will be appreciated by responding to the questions that would be asked. Be assured that all information volunteered is for academic purpose and will be treated with utmost confidentiality.

Thank you very much.

Tayo Ola George

QUESTIONS

1. Are you an Awori? If yes,
2. Briefly tell us about yourself (age, religion, number of wife/wives and children)
3. Briefly explain the meaning of widowhood among the Awori
4. Are widowers confined at the loss of their wife/wives?
5. If answer to question (3) is yes, how long does the confinement last?
6. Kindly mention and explain some of the common widowhood practices by widowers in your community.
7. What is the role of culture in widowhood practices among the Awori?
8. Does religion have any part to play in widowhood practices carried out by widowers?
9. What is the role of the extended family in property inheritance?
10. How is property inherited in your community?
11. Is the sex of the child/children considered in property inheritance?
12. If answer to question (11) is yes, state the preferred sex of children.
13. What proportion of the deceased’s property is inherited by the widower?
14. Briefly describe the economic status of widowers during the confinement period?
15. Are there available social support for widowers to take solace?
16. Would you say widowhood is more of a woman’s problem or that of a man?
17. Have you remarried? Or, do you intend to or not? Please state reason for your answer.
18. Is wife inheritance still a common practice in your community? If yes or no, please state reason for your answer.
19. Are you aware of any institutional/legal framework to improve the plight of widows/widowers?
20. What is the role of traditional institutions in widowhood practice and property Inheritance?
21. Have there been changes in widowhood practices among the Awori over the years?
22. If yes, briefly describe some of these changes.
23. Kindly suggest ways you think widowhood and property inheritance can be practised successfully among the Awori.

APPENDIX VI

LETTER OF REQUEST FOR WIDOWS

Department of Sociology
Covenant University
Km 10, Idiroko Road,
Ota, Ogun State.
2nd October, 2008.

Your Royal Highness
Oba Moshood Adetoro Alani Oyede
Arolagbade III, the Olota of Ota
Ado-Odo Ota LGA
Ogun State.

Dear Sir,

Letter of Request for Widows (50 - 100)

I humbly request for your support for the next phase of my Ph.D research which involves administration of questionnaire to between 50- 100 (Fifty to one hundred widows in Ota) Any day between the 12th and 19th October 2008 and between the hours of 1pm and 3pm will be preferable at your palace.

Sir, the date and time are subject to change depending on your convenience and approval I will appreciate If the widows are gathered at your palace for this exercise.

Thank you for your usual kind fatherly support and co-operation.

Yours faithfully,


Tayo O. George
Lecturer, Department of Sociology
Covenant University,
Ota.
Tel 08025931037

APPENDIX VII:

SOME YORUBA WORDS AND PHRASES USED IN THE THESIS

| Yoruba | English |
|----------------|---|
| 1. Akogun | A traditional title chief and head of Oruba quarter in Ota. |
| 2. Akosile | Will |
| 3. Awori | A distinct Yoruba sub-ethnic group that speaks the dialect of the same name |
| 4. Akobi | Eldest child |
| 5. Ako ati Abo | Male and Female |
| 6. Ayo | A kind of traditional game played among the Yoruba during leisure |
| 7. Baale | Traditional head of a community |
| 8. Balogun | A traditional title chief that serves as “Minister of Defence” |
| 9. Dukiyya | Property |
| 10. Ebi oko | Husband’s relative |
| 11. Ege | A traditional game prevalent in Awori land |
| 12. Egungun | Masquerade |
| 13. Esin | Religion |
| 14. Gelede | A masquerade inherited by the Ota people |
| 15. Idiigi | Stalk |
| 16. Idile Oba | Royal family |
| 17. Igbagbo | Christianity |
| 18. Igbeyawo | Marriage |
| 19. Isheri | A settlement founded by the Awori where elephants were hunted |
| 20. Iwa | Character |
| 21. Iyalaje | Mother of good luck |
| 22. Iyalode | Mother of outing |
| 23. Iyaloja | Mother of market |
| 24. Kabiyesi | Official title for a Yoruba king. |
| 25. Koto Otun | A historic dreaded gully at Otun area of Ota |
| 26. Oba | A Yoruba king |
| 27. Ogun jije | Inheritance |

- | | |
|-----------------|---|
| 28. Ojo ori | Age |
| 29. Olaju | Civilization |
| 30. Olokemeji | A settlement near Ibadan founded by the Awori |
| 31. Oloye | Title chief |
| 32. Olori | The Kings' wife |
| 33. Olori ebi | Head of a family |
| 34. Omokunrin | Male child |
| 35. Omobirin | Female child |
| 36. Oodu'a | The legendary ancestor of the Yoruba |
| 37. Opokunrin | Widower |
| 38. Opobirin | Widow |
| 39. Ori oju ori | Equality of sexes |
| 40. Oruba | A quarter of Ota city |

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**APPENDIX VIII: SOME IMPORTANT DATES AND EVENTS IN ADO-
ODO/OTA, (1842-2001).**

| DATE | EVENT |
|-------------|--|
| 1842 | The Vicarage of St. James Anglican Church, the 2 nd storey building in Nigeria was built in Ota. |
| 1843 | St. James (CMS) Primary School Ota was founded. |
| 1857 | Reverend Henry Townsend visited Ota. |
| 1864 | Bishop Samuel Ajayi Crowther stationed in Ota to continue his work of translation. |
| 1891 | The first African Church Mission, Ota was established. |
| 1907 | Ota Native Court hall was built by communal labour. |
| 1908 | Ota Grade 'C' Court was established. |
| 1917 | Ota Court warrant was signed. |
| 1918 | A Central Mosque was built in Ota. |
| 1919 | Zion Methodist Church, Ota was built. |
| 1922 | The Roman Catholic Church was built in Ota. |
| 1924 | (i) Ota Central Mosque was built. (ii) The Roman Catholic Mission School (R.C.M) was established. |
| 1927 | Oba Salami Oyelusi's Palace (now Olota's palace) was built. |
| 1929 | Ota Grade 'C' Court was converted to grade 'B'. |
| 1938 | (i) Ota Native Authority Treasury was opened. (ii) Water supply scheme was established in Ota. |
| 1945 | Ansar-Ud-Deen Practising school was founded in Ota. |
| 1955 | Zion Methodist Primary School Ota was opened. |
| 1958 | Ota District Council Maternity Centre was built. |
| 1960 | (i) Electricity was installed in Ota. (Iganmode Grammar School) the first Secondary School on Ota was opened. |
| 1965 | The International Road linking Ota to Idiroko was opened. |
| 1970 | Ota District Hospital (now State Hospital) was opened to the public. |

- 1971 The tarring of Ota Township Road.
- 1977 Ifo/Ota LGA was created by General Olusegun Obasanjo.
- 1989 Ado-Odo Ota LGA was created by Rtd. General Ibrahim Babangida.
- 1991 1st Iganmode Day Celebration.
- 1997 Installation and Presentation of Staff of office to Oba Alani Oyede
(the reigning Olota of Ota).
- 1999 The official dedication of Faith Tabernacle at Canaanland, Ota.
- 2001 Covenant University, Ota, was founded by God through the Visioner
and Chancellor, Bishop (Dr.) David Oyedepo.

Source: Some important Historical dates in Ota (1842-2001) *Alani Oyede :The People's Monarch*,
edited by Deji Kosebinu (2000) Bisrak Communications, Ota.

APPENDIX IX: ABBREVIATIONS

| Acronym | Meaning |
|-------------------|---|
| 1. ANOVA | Analysis of Variance |
| 2. ATR | African Traditional Religion |
| 3. APE | African Political Economy |
| 4. BFHRI | Bounty Food for Hunger Relief Initiative |
| 5. CEDAW | Conventions on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination against Women |
| 6. FCT | Federal Capital Territory |
| 7. FGD | Focus Group Discussion |
| 8. FPE | Feminist Political Economy |
| 9. FGM | Female Genital Mutilation |
| 10. HDI | Human Development Initiatives |
| 11. HND | Higher National Diploma |
| 12. ICT | Information and Communication Technology |
| 13. IDI | Indepth Interview |
| 14. KII | Key Informant Interview |
| 15. LGA | Local Government Area |
| 16. MAN | Manufacturing Association of Nigeria |
| 17. NCE | National Certificate of Education |
| 18. ND | National Diploma |
| 19. NGO | Non Governmental Organization |
| 20. NPC | National Population Commission |
| 21. RCM | Roman Catholic Mission |
| 22. SPSS | Statistical Package for the Social Sciences |
| 23. SSA | Sub Sahara Africa |
| 24. STF | Structural Functionalist Theory |
| 25. UN | United Nations |
| 26. UNDP | United Nations Development Project |
| 27. UNICEF | United Nations Institute for Cultural and Educational Fund |
| 28. VAT | Value Added Tax |
| 29. WAEC | West Africa Examination Council |

APPENDIX X: POPULATION FIGURES FOR OGUN STATE

**Federal Republic of Nigeria
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| S.I. No. | Short Title |
|----------|--|
| 23 | Legal Notice on Publication of the Details of the Breakdown of the National and State Provisional Totals 2006 Census |

**NATIONAL POPULATION COMMISSION
OGUN STATE
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Page 175-198
6/1/07/09
B 175 - 198

**NATIONAL POPULATION COMMISSION
OGUN STATE
DESPATCHED**

| | | OGUN | | |
|-------|------------------|------------|---------|---------|
| State | LGA | Population | Males | Females |
| Ogun | Imeko Afon | 82217 | 40681 | 41536 |
| Ogun | Egbado North | 181826 | 87525 | 94303 |
| Ogun | Abeokuta North | 201329 | 96877 | 104452 |
| Ogun | Abeokuta South | 250278 | 118346 | 131932 |
| Ogun | Odeda | 109449 | 54263 | 55186 |
| Ogun | Obafemi-Owode | 228851 | 115369 | 113482 |
| Ogun | Ewekoro | 55156 | 28154 | 27002 |
| Ogun | Egbado South | 168850 | 82001 | 86849 |
| Ogun | Ipokia | 150426 | 71917 | 78509 |
| Ogun | Ado-odo/ Ota | 526565 | 260021 | 266544 |
| Ogun | Ifo | 524837 | 267587 | 257250 |
| Ogun | Shagamu | 253412 | 123801 | 129611 |
| Ogun | Ikenne | 118735 | 68729 | 50006 |
| Ogun | Remo North | 59911 | 29100 | 30811 |
| Ogun | Ijebu North | 284336 | 138419 | 145917 |
| Ogun | Odogbolu | 127123 | 62247 | 64876 |
| Ogun | Ijebu Ode | 154032 | 74754 | 79278 |
| Ogun | Ijebu North East | 67634 | 33968 | 33726 |
| Ogun | Ijebu East | 110196 | 57323 | 52873 |
| Ogun | Ogun Waterside | 72935 | 36228 | 36707 |
| Ogun | Ogun | 3728098 | 1847243 | 1880855 |

Source: National Population Commission, Ogun State Zonal Office, Abeokuta.

APPENDIX XI: PHOTOGRAPH SECTION



The Researcher (right) in a Key Informant Interview (KII) session with the traditional head of the Awori kingdom (The Olota of Ota)–Oba Moshood Alani Oyede (III), the Arolagbade of Ota in his palace at Ota.



The Researcher (left) in a Key Informant Interview with an Awori title holder (Chief Ajibola Salako) the Asojuoba of Ota and the first man to publish the biography of Ota, the foremost Awori Town.



The Researcher (left) in a KII with another Awori Traditional Ruler (Onilogbo of Ilogbo), Oba (Lawyer) Samuel Olufemi Ojugbele (right) in his palace at Ilogbo.



The Researcher (Right) in a Key Informant interview with An Awori Traditional Ruler – The Baale of Atan.



The Researcher (right) in a KII session with an Awori traditionalist -The Akogun of Ota, Mr. Deinde Wadudu in his chamber at Oruba Quarters in Ota.



In-depth interview session with selected Awori traditionalists & Religious leaders at the palace of Onigbesa of Igbesa. Inset is the researcher (middle) taking notes.



From left is the research assistant taking notes, in the middle is the researcher recording responses elicited during a KII session with an Awori Religious leader at Atan.





Group photograph of Researcher (3rd Right) with widows at Igbesa after an FGD session.



Researcher (second from right) in a group photograph with married women in Ota after an FGD session.



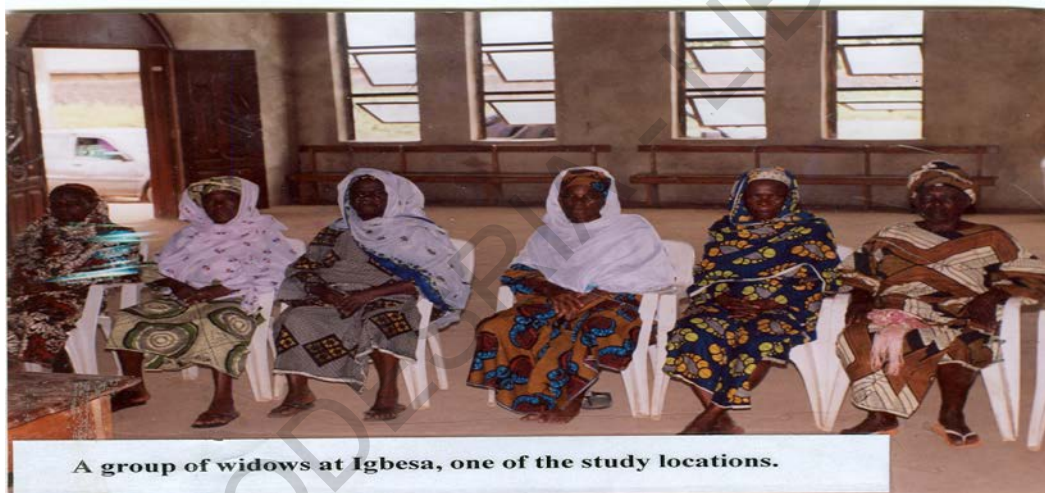
FGD session with married men at Atan



Indepth interview session of researcher (2nd from right) with widows at Atan.



In-depth interview session with older widows in Ota. First from left is the oldest widow in Ota community aged 101 years.



A group of widows at Igbesa, one of the study locations.





A mud house in which a widow was confined



A bathroom made from local materials used by a widow



A traditional mat sat on by a widow during confinement



A stool sat on by a widow



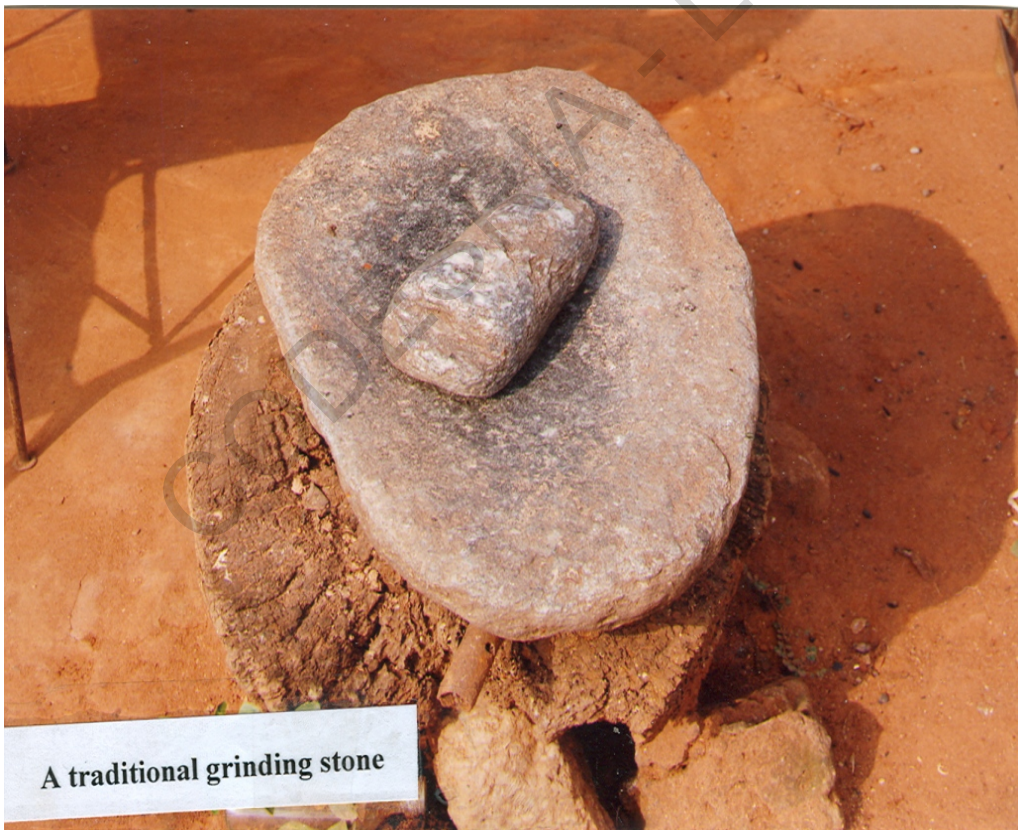
A traditional cooking pot used by a widow.



A frying pan used by a widow.



Firewood and cooking items used for a widow



A traditional grinding stone