

Media Advocacy and the Perceptions of Widowhood Practices in Aniocha South Local Government Area of Delta State.

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Abstract

This study was conceived to investigate how media campaign on harmful widowhood practices has either helped or not in the eradication of such practices especially in Aniocha Local Government Area of Delta State. Three broad objectives were set out which included identifying the media through which people are informed about widowhood practices in Aniocha South Local Government Area, determining the channels that transmit campaigns against repugnant widowhood practices in Aniocha South Local Government Area and finding out how the people perceive widowhood practices in Aniocha Local Government Area as exposed to them by the media campaigns. The population of the study was 780,650. The study utilized convenience and availability samples to reach 384 respondents using a structured questionnaire. Data was also analysed using the Weighted Mean Scores on a Four Point Likert Scale and a 2.5 decision rule. The study found that the people of Aniocha Local Government Area use the mainstream media and the social media for informing people about widowhood practices. These media especially social media also help to launch the campaign against such harmful widowhood practices. The study further revealed that the people perceived the campaign against harmful widowhood practices as educative and informative but it has not been able to engineer the right change in attitude in them that will warrant jettisoning them. The study therefore recommended that the government should wake up to its responsibility of protecting the rights of the citizens and ensure that culprits are punished accordingly, the media should do more in the push against harmful widowhood practices by exploring other techniques of presentation to draw global attention to harmful widowhood practices and that the people of Aniocha Local Government should as a matter of urgency begin to not only speak against these harmful widowhood practices but also fight against them traditionally.

Keywords: Harmful Domestic Violence, Media Advocacy, Violence Against Women, Widowhood Practices.

INTRODUCTION

It can be observed that violence is not a new problem in our society and has been documented as far back in the first book of the bible when Cain killed his brother, Abel, in a fit of jealousy. Other forms of violence have continued to ravage the fabrics of society especially in traditional African societies and many of such have gone unreported, underreported or both. Such violence is in the area of maltreatment of widows by relatives of the deceased (Hamel & Nicholls, 2007). Several tales of pain, anguish and woes accompany the death of a person within the African society. This pain stems from the close affinity of the people through the kinship system

exemplified by the '*ubuntu principle*', which means "one for all, all for one." Closely associated with the kinship is their love for culture and traditions as the drivers of traditional African societies. The display of some grueling traditions usually plays out during the burial of the dead. Several communities within Nigeria, for instance, have different traditions that accompany the burial of the dead. All of them point to one thing – the suspicion that the dead was killed by someone or something sinister and that the death was not a natural occurrence.

Within the southern belt of Nigeria, it has become a norm that the woman is assumed to be the one that usually kills her husband upon his death but the man walks free when his wife dies. This is because of the patriarchal nature of the customs and traditions of the people. Once a woman loses her husband, she would be made go through a lot pains, trials and tribulations in the hands of the in-laws and relatives of the deceased. The pains and agony a widow go through after her husband's demise are unbearable, that her fellow women tend not to have pity on her because they are the chief executors of the will of the men. The traditions and customs of the Igbos in Aniocha South Local Government Area in Delta State, Nigeria, for example, shows no mercy in punishing a woman for her husband's death during the funeral rites (Ahrens, Rich & Ullman, 2011).

Arinze, Umobi & Anyogu (2011) inform that in some areas in Igbo land in Nigeria, it is demanded that a widow sleeps with the high priest of deity to separate herself from the spirit of the dead husband, as a mark of purification. Factors which influence female widowhood practices are; male dominance, poverty, illiteracy, inferiority complex etc. Wicked widowhood rituals include sitting naked to wash in a stream, returning home naked after cleansing and in some cases obligation to dress in black or white for a specified period of time. The widow is deliberately made to look dirty and ugly, labelled untouchable, defiled and banished from receiving gifts or handshakes.

There are various stories in Aniocha South Local Government Area, of how widows are maltreated due to cultural practices. These stories are terrifying and heartbreaking. Many widows are deprived of their husband's properties, some are outrightly thrown out of their husbands' house upon his death. Arinze, Umobi & Anyogu (2011) further reports that in some communities, widows may be perceived as "carriers" of disease and forced out of social structures entirely or subjected to "ritual cleansing" practices involving forced sex or bodily scarring that can have life-threatening health consequences. Sometimes widows are forcibly "passed on" to or "inherited" by a new designated partner, such as the brother or other relative of her deceased spouse, denying her of her right to choose, safety, bodily autonomy, justice, and dignity in life after loss.

Overtime, the media have continued to watch over society, alerting them at any point about things that are going awry they would have failed in their social responsibility function if they do not bring certain salient issues as flagrant abuses imminent in widowhood practices to the front burner. The media can be easily used to create consciousness in the world about the issue of dangerous widowhood practices and protecting the widowed and women. The media are the instrument which is used in changing people's behaviours which can be achieved by the manner in which they tackle the issues concerning dangerous widowhood practices and focus on the consciousness of the people about widowhood practices (Mulugeta, 2014). Against this backdrop, this study aimed to probe media campaign against dangerous widowhood practices in Aniocha Local Government area of Delta State.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

It is on the strength of the overwhelming evidence of torture, maltreatment, wickedness and man's inhumanity to man prevalent in the society in the guise of cultural practices preceding the burial of the dead that this study appraised media efforts in their fight against dangerous widowhood practices within the fringes of Aniocha Local Government Area of Delta State.

Dangerous widowhood practices are a snag on any community because it will determine people perceive the members of that society and how they relate with them. When people begin to apply caution in entering into relationship with a people, the development of such people will be stunted. This has led to wider problems in the society such as divorce, domestic violence, social disorder and some under reported troubles plaguing them. Some communities have been deprivation and discrimination because of certain traditional practices inherent in their culture. Sometimes, neighbouring communities have also shared from the pot of discrimination against them because people assume that such closeness meant commonality in the dangerous practices in focus.

The fact that a lot of widows are enslaved and subjected to all kinds of maltreatment, accusations and allegations which are unbearable within the Nigerian society and in the Southern belt, is no longer a matter for debate. The fatality of the problem lay in the fact that some of the people that were supposedly to speak against that scourge due to their educational, social, economic, religious standing and some of the worst culprits in the fray. Physical pains such as chest pain, hypertension, over reaction towards things, discrimination, insecurity, stigmatization are some of the resultant effect of dangerous widowhood practices. The maltreatment of widows can result to emotional pain like depression, trauma, anger, being tagged a bad name, become disoriented, feel numb, hence, creating another epidemic within society for which there are no facilities cum expertise to handle.

It is a common practice that when a man dies the relatives rush to carry away his properties and takeover lands, thus depriving the woman and children (if any) of their rights to such properties. In Nigeria, the disposition of the deceased properties is by will (testate) or by customary and traditional laws (intestate). Where there is no written will, Inheritance is generally based on applicable customs and traditions of the deceased's ancestral community. Abuse of rights in the form of the traditional practice excludes women from ownership of lands and properties, leaving many of them destitute after their husband's death.

In Aniocha South Local Government Area, Delta State, when a man dies, his wife is subjected to fulfill the cultural rites and practices such as cutting and shaving off their hair, wearing only mourning clothes for a period of time, being isolated at home for a particular period, drinking of water used to wash her husband's corpse (in some places). Sometimes they are made to sleep in the same room with their husband's corpse. Some even go as far as instructing the widow to be dropping food for the late husband at particular spots in the house for a period of time. These are very retrogressive practices that have not and will never help any society to develop. The presence of inhumanity and other forms of detestable cultural practices in a society questions the integrity and intelligence of the members of the society no matter the efforts at excelling at technology, economy, religion and other human indicators of growth. This is because justice is the first condition for humanity.

Objectives of the Study

This study was conceived to probe media campaign against dangerous widowhood practices in Aniocha Local Government Area. Specifically, the study shall among other things;

1. identify the media campaigns through which people are informed about widowhood practices in Aniocha South Local Government Area.
2. determine the channels that transmit campaigns against repugnant widowhood practices in Aniocha South Local Government Area.
3. find out how the people perceive widowhood practices in Aniocha Local Government Area as exposed to them by the media campaigns.
4. examine the factors that influence the perception of Aniocha South Local Government Area on the widowhood practices as campaigned by the media.
5. find out the hindrances to the use of media advocacy to change the perception of people of Aniocha South Local Government Area about widowhood practices.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following questions were raised to guide the study.

What are the media through which people are informed about widowhood practices in Aniocha South Local Government Area.?

1. What are the channels that transmit campaigns against repugnant widowhood practices in Aniocha South Local Government Area?
2. How do people perceive widowhood practices in Aniocha Local Government Area as exposed to them by the media campaigns?
3. How effective and consistent has the media fought against widowhood practices in Aniocha South Local Government Area?
4. What are the factors that influence the perception of Aniocha South Local Government Area on widowhood practices as campaigned by the media?
5. What are the hindrances of the use of media advocacy to change the perception of people of Aniocha South Local Government Area, about widowhood practices?

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

This research is centered on women in general especially widows. Geographic scope; the research is primarily carried out in Aniocha South Local Government Area, in Delta State, Nigeria.

THEORETICAL LITERATURE

The work is anchored on the Gender Schema Theory.

Gender Schema Theory

The Gender Schema theory was propounded by Cantor and Mischel in the year 1979. The theory propose that the phenomenon of sex typing derives, in part, from gender-based schematic processing, from a generalized readiness to process information on the basis of the sex-linked associations that constitute the gender schema (Cantor and Mischel, 1979). The theory stated that sex typing results from the fact that the self-concept itself gets assimilated to the gender schema. Several studies are described which demonstrate that sex-typed individuals do, in fact, have a greater readiness to process information including information about the self in terms of the gender schema. A schema is a cognitive structure, a network of associations that organizes and guides an individual's perception. A schema functions as an anticipatory structure, a readiness to search for and to assimilate incoming information in schema-relevant terms (Bem, 1972).

By assigning roles and self-esteem based on sex or gender, the society creates a structure that regulates expectations from both sexes and tends to limit them to the cultural expectations therefrom. These structures are further reinforced through the creation of laws for such society and all members of the society subscribe to obeying such laws as a sign of their membership of the society.

As recently review by Taylor and Crocker (in press), the schema concept has been a heuristically valuable, if ill-defined, concept within psychology. The gender schema is currently at a comparable level of conceptual maturity. Although it is likely that much of the information in the gender schema consists of fuzzy sets organized around male and female prototypes (Cantor & Mischel, 1979; Rosch, 1975), the theory does not explicitly commit itself with respect to the exact nature or structure of the gender schema. Thus, by assigning roles and self-esteem based on sex or gender, the society creates a structure that regulates expectations from both sexes and tends to limit them to the cultural expectations therefrom. These structures are further reinforced through the creation of laws for such society and all members of the society subscribe to obeying such laws as a sign of their membership of the society.

Therefore, the study of media advocacy against harmful widowhood practices is anchored on the gender schema theory. This is because the schema within a given society can be seen as the organizing framework, a structure and context for processing information. The theory proposed that gender-based violence or schemas develop during childhood through relationships with gender-based schematic processing. The sex-typing selectively filter for corroborating experience such that the schemas are extended and elaborated throughout the individual's life-time. At the cognitive level, the schema is believed to be maintained by magnifying information that confirms the schema, and negating or minimizing information that is inconsistent with the schema.

CONCEPTUAL REVIEW

Concept of Media Advocacy and Campaign

Media advocacy is a strategic use of media to influence public opinion and policy by raising awareness about critical social issues. It involves using media platforms—such as newspapers, radio, television, and digital media—to promote specific health or social policy changes or to influence decision-makers. The goal of media advocacy is not only to raise awareness but also to frame issues in ways that motivate action or societal change. Often, it targets policymakers, the general public, or specific communities by offering evidence-based information, personal stories, and calls to action. Media advocacy can be effective in shifting public narratives, changing behaviours, and promoting societal transformations. For example, advocacy campaigns around tobacco use or climate change have effectively shaped public attitudes and led to significant policy changes (Wallack et al., 1993).

Violence Against Women

Violence against women (VAW) refers to any act of gender-based violence that results in or is likely to result in physical, sexual, or psychological harm or suffering to women. It includes acts such as domestic violence, sexual assault, trafficking, female genital mutilation, and other forms of physical or emotional abuse. VAW is a violation of human rights and a reflection of entrenched gender inequalities in society. It is widely recognised as a public health issue, with survivors facing long-term physical, emotional, and psychological consequences. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), approximately one in three women worldwide

experience physical or sexual violence during their lifetime, often by an intimate partner (WHO, 2017). Efforts to combat VAW include legal frameworks, social interventions, and gender-sensitive education that aim to empower women, challenge patriarchal norms, and promote equality in all spheres of life.

Overtime, the media have continued to watch over society, alerting them at any point when things are going wrong. The media would have failed in their social responsibility if salient issues are not highlighted in the interest of society. Through the media, it is easy to create awareness among the society towards the various social injustices that go on in the society, especially domestic violence. The media is an instrument for social change in the way the public behaves through the various means by which they address the issues in the society (Mulugeta, 2014).

Media advocacy interventions and campaign are based around the concept of empowerment processes through potential solutions with the woman rather than being prescriptive and telling her what she ought to do, it helps the victim to achieve the goals he/she has set rather than being directive and setting the goals for the victim, and helping victim to understand and make sense of the situation and her responses to it (Campbell, 1993).

Harmful Widowhood Practices as Domestic Violence

Domestic violence is an abuse of the fundamental human right of the victim and an abuse of power in a relationship displayed by assertions of verbal, physical, emotional and psychological control (Jura and Bukaliya, 2017). It is a form of abusive behaviour in any relationship that is used by one partner to maintain a sense of control over the other (Jura and Bukaliya, 2017) it repeats itself in a cycle of events which, in the absence of any intervention could spread out of control (Jura and Bukaliya, 2017). It occurs without regard to race, age, sexual orientation or religion.

In Nigeria, domestic violence is prevalent in myriad ways, from wife abuse to rape, dowry killings, acid throwing, sexual harassment and mental torturing. At the death of a male spouse, some women are made to go through grueling experience in the hands of them in laws, relatives and the community at large as a form of propitiation for the death of the man. Schuler (1998) identifies in a study that 38 percent of women are beaten by their husbands in rural areas of Nigeria. The figure seems much higher in urban areas documenting 60 percent of adult women battered by their husbands in Nigeria (GOB, 1999).

There are various stories in Aniocha South Local Government Area, of how widows are maltreated due to cultural practices. These stories are terrifying and heartbreaking. Many widows are deprived of their husband's properties, some are outrightly thrown out of their husbands' house upon his death. A case of a widow named Amaka was observed by the researcher, she could not bear a child for her husband, when he was alive. She urged her husband to marry another wife. The second wife happened to bear children for her husband. After her husband's demise, she was thrown out of her husband's house simply because she could not conceive and give her husband a child. Her mate occupied the whole house with her children.

Arinze, Umobi & Anyogu (2011) further reports that in some communities, widows may be perceived as "carriers" of disease and forced out of social structures entirely or subjected to "ritual cleansing" practices involving forced sex or bodily scarring that can have life-threatening health consequences. Sometimes widows are forcibly "passed on" to or "inherited" by a new designated partner, such as the brother or other relative of her deceased spouse, denying her of her right to choose, safety, bodily autonomy, justice, and dignity in life after loss.

Ogundipe (2009) and Olaniyi (2010) provides overwhelming evidences on widowhood practices in Igbo culture of the South-Eastern part of Nigeria and the violence perpetuated against widows from relatives and family members. There, widows are kept in dark rooms for days and are sometimes deprived of access to food, they are forced to weep daily, sleeping on mats or old banana leaves, eating from broken pots, forced to drink the water used in bathing their husbands' corpse, they are compelled to mourn the husband with black clothes and also expected to allow the (Umuada) married daughter of the community to shave the hair on their head and pubic with razor blades, to prove their innocence in relation to their husband's death. Widows in this part of the country have to undergo certain traditional rites and practices which forms part of the deceased husband's funeral ceremony in other to show respect to the dead husband.

In the South-South Nigeria, particularly Delta State, Ewelukwa (2002) reveals that after the initial seven days confinement, additional 30 days is made mandatory for widows in a tinning hut. This is done to ensure isolation, restriction of movement and association with people. In Nigeria, stories abound of widows being forced to drink the water used to wash their husband's corpse in the belief that it will kill them if they are guilty of causing his death – or of being made to declare their innocence before a local deity. The stigma, or outright rejection, a woman who has lost her husband can face often leaves her abandoned. Superstition causes other women to believe they may lose their husbands if they associate with a widow, while some men fear they, too, will die when they have any form of relations with the widow. Such stigmatising practices have been outlawed in Nigeria since 2015 under the Violence Against Persons Prohibition Law and are subject to a 500,000 naira (\$1,220) fine or two years in prison, but so far only 23 out of Nigeria's 36 states have formally adopted these laws into their own statutes, and cultural practices continue regardless.

Legal Framework for the Protection of Women against Violence in Nigeria

There have been increased efforts to enhance the protection and promotion of women's rights through the international, regional, and national enactment of laws and policies. Such efforts have resulted in documents like the Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the Beijing Platform for Action at the international level.

There are however, few states in Nigeria which have passed laws to protect women in their respective states. Such states include Lagos State, Ekiti State, Ebonyi, Cross River and Jigawa States. In Lagos, the Law that was set up to protect women is referred to as the Protection against Domestic Violence Law 2007. The Law prohibits any person from committing any act of domestic violence against any person in Lagos State (Baobab, 2013). It prescribes and regulates the behaviour of every citizen of Lagos state in their domestic environment. The Law is made not only to protect women who are most times, the target of domestic violence, but also to safeguard the interests of men, children, servants, maids and everyone who may be a victim of domestic violence. This is regardless of sex, age or marital status.

In Ekiti State, Nigeria, the bill prohibiting gender-based violence was signed into law by the Governor, Dr Kayode Fayemi, in Ado-Ekiti on November 25, 2011. With the development, Ekiti became the first state in the federation to pass such law that seeks to protect both genders against physical and psychological abuse and violence. The Gender based Violence Law seeks to create an Act to eliminate violence in private and public life, prohibit all forms of violence including physical, sexual, psychological, domestic, harmful traditional practices and discrimination against persons and to provide maximum protection and effective remedies for victims and

punishment of offenders. The law seeks to protect the human rights and fundamental freedoms of women, children and a minority of men against physical, economic, mental or sexual harm or suffering, as well as threats of such acts, coercion and other deprivations of liberty within the public or private spheres.

Factors Influencing Widowhood Practices

There are notable factors influencing the unhealthy widowhood practices in every part of the country. According to Eke-Ejelam (2009, p. 67-72), the notable factors include: illiteracy, poverty, Male-dominance influence, poor socio-economic status of women.

Poverty: Poverty is the inability for a person or persons to live a good and decent life with comfort. This is one of the reasons family and relatives of a dead person especially if it is a man who has properties and finance, leaving them to go to the world beyond without a will.

Male Dominance Influence: The African society is generally male chauvinistic except for a few societies where the women are held in special regard. In such societies, the men have often regarded themselves to be superior after God, and see women to be inferior. When a man loses his wife, he does not have to undergo any ritual or carryout any cultural practices or traditions as the woman performs after the demise of her husband. Widowers only ensure that they bury their dead wives and move on with their lives after then. If they decide to marry again or not, people do not interfere.

Illiteracy: The level of illiteracy amongst women is very high. People value boys education than girls education. Women and girls are considered to stay at home and do the domestic work, while men go out to fend and provide for the family, that is why male children were rather sent to school, and female children kept at home to tidy up the house.

Inferior Social Status: With widowhood, many women lose their social status. Widowhood is a risk for transition into poverty. The imposition of restrictive and extensive mourning, seclusion, mandatory dress-codes have great implications on the socioeconomic status of widows. Additionally, because of lack of income and financial security, widows are unable to provide children's education, adequate food, secure accommodation, and maintain the household.

Husbands Conflict before Death: Some men are at war with almost people around them, some men are so troublesome that they fight everybody around them, they are never at peace with anybody and so when they die their widows and children suffer the consequences of their actions. Some men while they are a live, do not show their siblings love and once they are not there due to death, their widows suffer in the hands his siblings and people.

Poor Socio-Economic Status of Widows and Women Another notable influencing factor responsible for the harmful widowhood practice, particularly in Southwestern, Nigeria is poor socio-economic status of widows and women generally. From all indications, widowhood remains an important risk for transition into poverty. For instance, the imposition of restrictive and extensive mourning rites, such as seclusion, dress code or feasting are all having great implications on the socio-economic status of widows.

Widowhood Rituals/Rites/Practices

The widowhood rituals are immoral traditional practices, which include mourning rituals and food taboos that are enforced on widows, and which inevitably expose them to economic hardship, confinement and ill treatment (Afolaya, 2011). These rituals are enforced on widows because of the patriarchal nature of the Nigerian Society, particularly the Igbos of the South East.

Women are regarded as their husband's property or chattels. They are compelled by cultural practices to be and remain subservient to their husbands.

The subservient nature of women during their husband's lifetime are carried into the death of their husbands and thereafter. This is done notwithstanding the provisions of our local statutes, such as the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (CFRN) 1999 (as amended), and the Malpractices Against Widows and Widowers (Prohibited) Law of Anambra State 2005; and the International Instruments on human rights ratified by Nigeria, which guaranteed human rights to all citizens, such as, right to life, equality of all men and women, dignity of all human persons, freedom from discrimination etc. The above legislations are ad rem and in place, but their enforcement and actualization remain elusive and very far-fetched. The subjugation of women is deeply rooted in our culture and tradition emanating from the alleged inferior status of women, unstable character and impropriety of women political and social participation, stretching also to economic circles. Predicated on these, women are also depersonalized and regarded as objects of rights, rather than subjects of rights (Otaluka, 1992). Widows are made to suffer double jeopardy of losing their husbands, sometimes even at the early period of their marriages, and going through some excruciating cultural rites of proving their innocence in the death of their husbands (Arinze-Umobi, 2008).

a. Seclusion and Confinement. This practice cuts across a lot of African societies. The widow may be restricted from going out for social events or may be kept secluded or isolated in a small hut without interacting with anybody for specified period. She is expected to live in unclean surroundings, use unwashed utensils to eat and empty her bowels within that confinement. She is regarded as unclean and therefore forbidden to touch anybody. At meal times, the food is pushed into her hut with a stick. Where she needs to scratch herself, she does this with a stick. She sits on the bare floor throughout the period of mourning as a sign of her dethronement. At this period, she is expected to cry continually for her loss, sex is an abomination and marriage is forbidden. In Islamic law, the period of confinement is used to ascertain whether she is pregnant. Islamic law stipulates a period of four months and ten days as period of confinement. In Pakistan, menopausal and working-class women are excluded from confinement.

b. Trial by Ordeal

Ewelukwa (2002) reports that in most traditional societies in Nigeria, the widow is immediately presumed culpable in her husband's death and consequently most widowhood rites include trial by ordeal to vindicate or convict the woman whose husband has died. In fact, there is a popular African proverb that "no married man dies a natural death but at the hands of a bewitched wife." This is quite common in Edo and Delta States of Nigeria. The widow is therefore expected to prove her innocence by crying and wailing consistently. Sometimes she is required in some of the Eastern States of Nigeria to wake up in the early hours of the morning and cry repeatedly before others in the community wake up.

Sometimes tradition demands that a widow be locked up with the corpse of the husband in solitary confinement for a period of time and to drink the water used to wash the corpse all with the aim of proving her innocence. She is expected to take the 'acid test' of drinking bitter water, swearing at a shrine, going to a T junction to bathe and returning home by 2. 00 a. m. If she does not survive any or a combination of these, or takes ill thereafter, the conclusion is that she is responsible for the husband's death.

c. Property Grabbing.

There is the practice of immediately grabbing all the property, real and personal, of the couple, without regard to the contributions of the wife. From research, this is a common occurrence in

the eastern states of Nigeria. The widow would be expected to immediately surrender all the man's properties, including bank accounts, for appropriation by the relatives. Property grabbing is made more effective by demand for all title deeds to such properties, accompanied by the administration of an oath on the wife that she has not concealed any of the properties of the marriage.

Okoye (2020) documents that in Ghana, as soon as the death is announced the widow is dispossessed of all that they had and could be thrown out of the matrimonial home. It is apparent that these rites and practices in widowhood subjugate and oppress women and are reflection of gender inequality. This is bearing in mind that these practices are an offshoot of death and inheritance issues with their latent function being the continued subjugation of women. The major practices in widowhood as highlighted above have been classified as defacement, dethronement and confinement/seclusion.

d. Levirate Marriage: Levirate marriage is forced marriage with the late husband's brother. It has biblical roots. It is also a common practice among the Igbos in Nigeria. There is also the practice of widow inheritance, in which the deceased's brother takes over as husband of the widow and father to her children. Any child of this new union is regarded as that of the new husband. Levirate is accepted by the women in most cases because of the fear of losing custody of their children. Research has shown that in most cases of levirate marriage, male relations take up their brother's widow only if it is beneficial to them. Gaye & Njie (2019) suggest that this is especially so when the children are working and could give monthly allowance to their "father" and where there is the likelihood of inheriting the estate of the deceased.

e. Defacement

This includes shaving of hair, not bathing for specified periods, and adorning black or other dull apparel. In spite of the social standing of a widow, the head and other parts of the body is shaved. Shaving of hair is practiced in a lot of societies. Some have argued that the practice may have arisen out of a need to make the widow unattractive to other men. Among the Igbos, the widow is to go in rags for a year and shave off all her hair.

Widows Right to Inheritance

In Nigeria today, the disposition of property or succession to a deceased's property is by will (testate) or by customary and traditional rites (intestate). Hence the disposition of deceased's property is either by writing a valid will or otherwise. The existence of a valid will dispenses of all cultural attachments (Arinze-Umobi and Anyogu, 2011). The type of marriage celebrated also determines what accrues to a woman at the demise of her husband. Under the Nigerian legal system three forms of marriages are celebrated namely; marriage under the Act, Customary Law Marriage and Islamic Law or Moslem Marriage. If a marriage is contracted under the Act and in the absence of any valid will the widow is entitled to one-third (1/3) of the deceased husband's property, while two-third (2/3) goes to their children in equal shares.

The above provision is considered unfair; the widow should inherit the entire estate which will then devolve to her children in equal shares. While the widow inherits half, the widower inherits, all, if the wife dies without children. The above provision is thus discriminatory and should be amended accordingly.

Traditionally, women are excluded from ownership of landed property which are culturally the exclusive preserve of men. So, women cannot inherit land of their husbands Onyegu and Essiet (2002). A widow under the customary Law in Igbo land can only inherit her husband's estate if it is given to her under a valid will by him. But where a husband dies intestate, the widow's interest

in the house and farmland is merely possessory and not proprietary, and this is however subject to good behavior. This position of the customary law was restated in Nezianya & Anorv Okagbue Ors (1963) wherein the court held that the Onitsha Native Law and custom postulates that a married woman, on the death of her husband without a male issue, with the concurrence of her husband's family, may deal with his (deceased's) property; her dealings, of course, must receive the consent of the family. The consent may be actual or implied from the circumstances of the case, but she cannot assume ownership of the property or alienate it. She has however a right to occupy the building subject to good behavior.

EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE

Different researchers have carried out research on domestic violence in different parts of the world. One of these studies was conducted in Lagos, Nigeria by Baudri (2005) in exploring socio-economic correlates of wife battering in Nigeria: The research design used was survey carried out using multi-stage sampling method with a validated 77 item structured wife battering interview schedule. This was used to collect data from 450 married men and women aged between 15–50 years. Five null hypotheses were stated. Twelve trained field assistants were recruited for the main survey. Data were collected and processed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Research findings indicated that; the incidence of wife battering tended to occur more early in marriage.

Yogo (2008) conducted research on impact of domestic violence against women in Nigeria. The research problem was marrying off of girl-child forcefully to men or traders from big cities. Women were not considered during family decision making and women labor. The research design used was survey with the use of questionnaire and interview. The population for the study was 10675 people in Baba I community. The sample of the population composed of 100 women chosen randomly from different women groups. The researcher used qualitative and quantitative analysis. Frequencies and percentages were used in analyzing the data. The results revealed that ignorance made people to behave the way they did. It was recommended that, people who had no access to education should be enlightened through seminars, workshops, conferences and religious gathering about the education of girl-child. Through education, parents will know their roles as parents and give women and children right as human beings.

Imaobang and Usoroh (2005) carried out research on domestic violence during pregnancy. The objective of the study was to investigate the issue of domestic violence during pregnancy in Uyo local government area of Akwa Ibom state of Nigeria. The instrument for the study was use of questionnaire on rate of violence against pregnant women. The research revealed that education and occupational status as well as period of marriage have significant influence on domestic violence during pregnancy. The study did not indicate the number of hospitals in the local government as well as the criteria he adopted in choosing the population and how he came at choosing the hospital was not stated. This mean the population of pregnant women was not known nor the sample for the study. The instrument used in carrying out this research was used by the present researcher to conduct her research.

Ellsberg (2002) conducted research on domestic violence against women: methodological and Ethical Consideration. The study was carried out on family planning in Nicaraguan Leon (UNAN) and Limed University, Sweden. The aim of the study was to measure the prevalence and characteristics of physical and sexual violence directed by intimate partners against women as well as women response to abuse. A random sample of women of 488, aged 15–49 was interviewed. A structured questionnaire was on women's reproductive health including use of

contraceptive and detailed birth histories, child health and nutrition. Survey design was used in conducting the research. Data was collected through the use of structured questionnaire which were filled and collected while some subjects responded orally through oral interview and the responses were filled as in the structured questionnaire. Data was analysed using SPSS 9.0 for logistic regression and chi-square tests. Significance was tested by means of 95 percent confidence interval and P-values of <0.05. The study found prevalence of physical violence from a partner of 28percent, with 12 percent of women reporting violence.

In this study, the prevention programs developed for a number of reasons, which include negative physiological and mental health impacts intimate partner violence has on individuals in a relationship. In fact, IPV was determined to be a “significant public health problem, (Capaldi & Langhinrichsen-Rohling, 2012). However, the critical component of these prevention/intervention programs and main focus of this study is to reduce and prevent domestic violence before it ever occurs and identifying effectiveness of prevention programs. As an effort to address this limitation, this study focuses on media advocacy and campaign strategies to foster healthy, non-violent relationships. Since there is limited research on the factors explicitly defining the development of a healthy relationship, the term will be defined through several sources. Individuals in a healthy relationship have healthy communication and decision-making skills they can use across several high-pressure situations and behaviors, including personal safety and injury prevention, healthy growth and sexuality, and substance use and abuse (Antle, Sullivan, Dryden, Karam, & Barbee, 2011).

Lending voice to this, Lewu (2011, p. 227) stated “in some cultures also, widows are shaved and cannot bathe until seven days after their husband’s death. Besides, water used to wash the husband’s corpse has to be taken by the widows to prove that they were innocent of the men’s death. It is not the case with widowers”. She further noted that under the three systems operating in Nigeria, statutory, customary and Islamic, women face discrimination in matters of inheritance. A widow is entitled to one third of her late husband’s property if there are children but if there are no children, she is entitled to half of his estate. However, this is far from the practice. Many widows with or without children have been dispossessed of their late husband’s property by family members. Wife inheritance and other forms of widowhood malpractices practised in many parts of Nigeria debase women by reducing them to common property. In certain communities, widows are forced to drink water used in washing their husband’s corpses to prove innocence and non-complicity in husband’s death.

Eweluka (2002) noted that customary law permits gender discrimination in the family. Some women suffer from marital torture, which continues after their husband’s demise. Nwanegbo (1996) says that in Igbo land, when a man dies his wife ties a wrapper and wears a blouse, and stays at home. She won’t take her bath or talk to anyone until her husband is buried. After the burial, the Umuada’s comes to bath her, they question her about her husband’s death and her reaction towards it, her communication with his family. When her answers to the questions are not satisfactory. She drinks the water used to wash her husband’s corpse, as to prove her innocence.

Lewu (2011) conducted research titled “Discrimination against Women in Nigeria: An Overview”. The study examined the reasons for discrimination against women in Nigeria by highlighting the various ways discrimination manifests and their consequences. It was discovered that social, cultural, political and economic factors account for the discrimination against women in all spheres of life. The paper concluded that for Nigeria to achieve democracy, development, growth and good health for her people, women must have maximum opportunities to realize their

optimum potentials. The paper recommends that the public should be enlightened through programmes at all levels of government to stop harmful cultural practices through radio, television announcements, plays and dramas. Legal instruments should be provided to prosecute offenders. Religious organizations should promote morality and the dignity of womanhood, NGOs promoting women's rights should be encouraged by the government, gender studies should be included in school curriculum and excessive use of drugs should be discouraged.

Ngambouk & Mathias (2016) conducted a case study on "the social context of widowhood rites and women's human rights in Cameroon". The study examined the social logic of superstitious beliefs and associated fears sustaining the dehumanizing practice of Widowhood Rights and Practices (WRP). The study combined ethnographic field work on harmful traditional practices and participant observation was concluded between October and December, 2009 in the Balengou community. Through systematic and purposeful sampling, 39 women and 8 male elders were interviewed. The findings of the study showed that the rites have negative effect on the women and therefore suggested that there be the strengthening of women's rights through gender-neutral marriage, succession and inheritance legislation based on notion of equality and social justice.

METHODOLOGY

This section addressed the research methods employed in this study.

Research Design

The research design adopted in this study was the descriptive survey method. According to Nwankwo (2013), the descriptive survey is that study in which the researcher will collect data from a large sample drawn from a given population and describe certain attributes or features of the sample as they are and as required by the study at that particular time. The author collected data from a large sample of women and men in Delta State and describe the influence of media advocacy on repugnant widowhood practices in Aniocha South LGA.

Population of the Study

The population of the study was Aniocha Local Government Area of Delta State. The population estimated at 564,525, based on the statistics from the National Population Commission (NPC, 2006), cited in the National Bureau of Statistics (Annual Abstract of Statistics, 2022). However, considering that 2006 is too far a time, the researcher did a projection using an annual growth rate of 3.2 percent according to the United Nations Development Population (UNDP, 2014). In light of this projection, the population of Aniocha Local Government Area of Delta State had increased to 780,650 as at 2024, covering the period of eighteen (18) years, 2006 to 2024. The population of this study therefore is 780,650.

Sample Size and Sampling Techniques

Sample size entails the percentage of the population of study to be sampled for objective analysis. When done objectively, samples can represent the population. To this end, the sample size was determined using Krejcie and Morgan (1970) sample size determination table. According to Krejcie and Morgan (1970), for a large population over 800,000 a sample of 384 is appropriate. Therefore, the sample size of this study is 384.

Instrument for Data Collection

Questionnaire was the research instrument for data collection. The questionnaire had twenty items which was divided into two parts. Section A: required personal information about the respondents which contained four items from number one to four. Section B answered research question one to sixteen which focused on eliciting data in line with the research question.

Method of Data Analysis

The data collected for this study were analyzed using mean rating and standard deviation to answer the research questions and to determine the closeness or otherwise of the responses from the mean. Descriptive statistics in the form of frequencies, tables, percentages, mean and standard deviation was used for the demographic profiles and items related to the characteristics of respondents. However, the mean score was obtained by the summation of responses divided by the total responses: For example; $4+3+2+1 = 10 \div 4 = 2.50$. Any item with a mean score of equal to 2.50 and above was considered as accepted while items with a mean score below 2.50 were regarded as rejected. Where the calculated probability value is greater than 0.05, level of significance, the null hypothesis was rejected.

RESULTS

Psychographic Data

This section presents the responses of the respondents to the research questions posed. The responses are presented in tables using the four-point Likert Scale for Weighted Mean Scores.

Research Question One: What are the media through which people are informed about widowhood practices in Aniocha South Local Government Area?

Table 1: Research Question One

S/N	Media through which people are informed about widowhood practices in Aniocha South Local Government Area	SA	A	D	SD	WMS	DECISION
1	Radio and Television	105 (420)	154 (462)	77 (154)	14 (14)	3.00	Agreed
2	X (Twitter) and Tiktok	7(28)	70 (210)	189 (378)	84 (84)	2.00	Disagreed
3	Facebook and Instagram	168 (672)	168 (504)	7 (14)	7 (7)	3.42	Agreed
4	Billoards and posters	7(28)	-	182 (364)	161 (161)	1.58	Disagreed
5	Newspapers and Magazines	126 (504)	98 (284)	105 (210)	21 (21)	2.91	Agreed

Table 1 above shows the media through which people are informed about widowhood practices in Aniocha Local Government Area. The results show that the mainstream media and the social

media are the various media for informing people about widowhood practices. This implies that widowhood practices are not alien to the media within the vicinity.

Research Question Two: What are the channels that transmit campaigns against repugnant widowhood practices in Aniocha South Local Government Area?

Table 2: Research Question Two

S/N	Channels that transmit campaigns against repugnant widowhood practices in Aniocha South Local Government Area	SA	A	D	SD	WMS	DECISION
1	Newspapers and Magazines	126 (504)	98 (284)	105 (210)	21 (21)	2.91	Agreed
2	Facebook and Instagram	154 (616)	140 (420)	42 (84)	14 (14)	3.24	Agreed
3	Radio and Television	105 (420)	154 (462)	77 (154)	14 (14)	3.00	Agreed

Table 2 shows that virtually all the media used to inform people about harmful widowhood practices in Aniocha Local Government Area also transmit campaigns against the said practices but the issue has been the unchanging nature of the people in adhering to such practices.

Research Question Three: How do people perceive widowhood practices in Aniocha Local Government Area as exposed to them by the media campaigns?

Table 3: Research Question Three

S/N	Perception of widowhood practices in Aniocha Local Government Area as exposed to them by the media campaigns	SA	A	D	SD	WMS	DECISION
1	It is very educative and informative	126 (504)	175 (525)	35 (70)	14 (14)	3.18	Agreed
2	It is interesting and engaging	14 (56)	28 (84)	182 (364)	36 (36)	1.54	Disagreed

Table 3 shows that the people perceive campaign messages on widowhood practices in Aniocha Local Government area as educative and informative but not engaging enough to warrant a change for the better. It means that such practices are culturally rooted and therefore not easy to uproot. Understandably, even when they perceive the messages as being informative and educative, what they did with the information and education was different as the hurtful widowhood practices still persists to date.

Research Question Four: What are the factors that influence perception of Aniocha Local Government Area on widowhood practices as campaigned by the media?

Table 4: Research Question Four

S/N	Factors that influence the perception of Aniocha Local Government Area on the widowhood practices as campaigned by the media.	SA	A	D	SD	WMS	DECISION
1	Illiteracy	105 (420)	154 (462)	77 (154)	14 (14)	3.00	Agreed
2	Inferiority complex	14 (56)	28 (84)	182 (364)	36 (36) 7 (7)	1.54	Disagreed
3	Cultural norms	168 (672)	158 (504)	7 (14)		3.42	Agreed
4	Religious beliefs	7 (28)	70 (210)	189 (378)	84 (84)	2.04	Disagreed

Table 4 shows that there are certain factors that Influence the perception of Aniocha Local Government Area on widowhood practices as campaigned by the media. Such as illiteracy, inferiority complex, cultural norms and traditional beliefs and religious beliefs. Although most of the respondents agree the the factors which influences the perception of widowhood practices in Aniocha South Local Government Area, as campaigned by the media are illiteracy and traditions of the forefathers which are tagged as necessity. While most respondents disagreed that religious beliefs and inferiority complex not the major cause of widowhood practices in Aniocha South Local Government Area.

Research Question Five: What are the hindrances to the use of media advocacy to change the perception of people of Aniocha South Local Government Area, about widowhood practices.

Table 5: Research Question Five

S/N	The hindrances to the use of media advocacy to change the perception of people of Aniocha South Local Government Area about widowhood practices	SA	A	D	SD	WMS	DECISION
1	Traditions	105 (420)	154 (462)	77 (154)	14 (14)	3.00	Agreed
2	Politics	7(28)	70 (210)	189 (378)	84 (84)	2.00	Disagreed

Table 5 shows that there are hindrances to the use of media advocacy to change the perception of people of Aniocha South Local Government Area, about widowhood practices. The hindrances include traditions and politics.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Research Question One: What are the media through which people are informed about widowhood practices in Aniocha South Local Government Area?

The answer to this was shown in Table 4.1 and it shows that the media through which people are informed about widowhood practices in Aniocha Local Government Area. The results show that the mainstream media and the social media are the various media for informing people about widowhood practices. This implies that widowhood practices are not alien to the media within the vicinity.

According to Philip (2012), there are basically eight different mass media: radio, television, film, books, sound recordings, newspapers, magazines and the internet. Of course, these eight are not the only mass media that exist. Others are billboards, comic books, posters, direct mail, matchbooks and buttons. These eight media listed above have the largest audiences, employ the most people and have the greatest impact. People are also most familiar with these media.

Torloni, *et al.* (2020) aver that the common communication media or channels often used for political campaign include but not limited to television, radio, newspaper, magazine, billboard, poster, blogs, VCD, DVD, pamphlets, mobile phones, flier and social media (Facebook, Twitter, Youtube, Whatsapp, Instagram etc

It is a common saying that education liberates the mind from ignorance and slavery, as individuals are capable of being exposed and alive to social issues stimuli transmitted through the mass media eg. Radio. Mass media make information available to majority (the masses) of the people and by this satisfy the information need of both the urbanites and the ruralites. To achieve this goal, the desired target audiences are supposed to properly select a medium base on their choice. Because radio has powerful strengths of giving information as sense of importance and legitimacy, and of reaching many people at the same time and of creating a bandwagon effect that can encourage and pressure people to join in, etc. it has to be generally accepted as they are the best media to use in passing information to rural dwellers. If media selection is not properly chosen in carrying the rural people along in political process, it will affect the people on the nature and requirements of participation as the deformed ones are not expected to participate in any of the political process categories already mentioned.

Research Question Two: What are the channels that transmit campaigns against repugnant widowhood practices in Aniocha South Local Government Area?

The data here as shown in Table 4.2 shows that virtually all the media used to inform people about harmful widowhood practices in Aniocha Local Government Area also transmit campaigns against the said practices but the issue has been the unchanging nature of the people in adhering to such practices.

Angela (2013) wrote that part of the functions includes to inform, to educate, to entertain and to enlighten the public. Adding that to inform is the primary function of mass media (broadcast media) as is usually to inform on daily happenings from the local area, on a nationwide basis and internationally. In doing this effectively, mass media (broadcast media) often employ journalists to gather information about events, or they pay some agencies to have access to stories. These stories help inform audience as to what is going on in the communities.

Another important function of mass media (broadcast media) is to offer guidance and opinion to help shape people's view on certain subjects or matters. As an extension to merely reporting the facts of a matter, mass media often have opinion pieces which attempt to interpret events and offer new angles and implications about their occurrence. Here, mass media may also be reviews sports matters and commentary on personalities, theater or cinema and comments and opinions on life in general, doing all these is to enlighten the public beyond regular news.

News reports and broadcasts have been found to reflect and shape public opinion (Cunningham, 2011; McManus & Dorfman, 2003). Recently, more studies looking at how DV is portrayed in the news have been emerging. Specifically, the press, televised news, and newspaper articles have been shown to have a profound impact on public perception of crime, as cited in (Cunningham, 2011). Looked at how newspapers word articles about DV crimes and related crimes such as rape. She found that the articles tended to describe the offender positively and to characterize the victim in a negative light. She claims that such wording can change the way the public perceives the victim; if a victim is shown negatively, others may believe that the victim deserved it and that violence is acceptable (McManus & Dorfman, 2003) also discuss how the wording of an article about Domestic Violence can impact the way the public views on Domestic Violence.

These authors discuss a newspaper article about a man who fractured his Russian mail order bride's skull and subsequently pointed a gun at responding police officers. The policemen began firing killed the man. When local newspapers covered the story, they portrayed the man as lovesick and wronged by his wife. These researchers suggest that stories like this distort reality and consequently distort public opinion (McManus & Dorfman, 2003). Also looked at local and national newspaper articles and collected the articles related to violence and Domestic Violence; they found that even high-quality newspapers do not cover Domestic Violence consistently.

Research Question Three: How do people perceive widowhood practices in Aniocha Local Government Area as exposed to them by the media campaigns?

Data in this regard as shown on Table 4.3 indicates that the people perceive campaign messages on widowhood practices in Aniocha Local Government area as educative and informative but not engaging enough to warrant a change for the better. It means that such practices are culturally rooted and therefore not easy to uproot. Understandably, even when they perceive the messages as being informative and educative, what they did with the information and education was different as the hurtful widowhood practices still persists to date. The researcher recently witnessed when a woman was told to jump over her husband's grave after swearing that she had no hand in his death. Jumping the husband's grave was in further proof of her supposed innocence.

Patriarchy in Nigeria over time has remained a way of life, children are cultivated from childhood and socialized based on their sexes. In accordance with the Nigerian culture, this is to prepare them for the several roles they are to play as adults (Ezenwa-Ohaeto, 2015, p. 60). Social researchers have found that amongst other values learnt through the socialization process, gender-role is most prominent and practiced in any society. Women as children learn from their culture, gender roles. They grow up with such beliefs and act based on what is learnt. These gender roles specifically associated to women are domestic work such as housekeeping, cooking and in general living to impress and cater for the domestic needs of men, while men are taught to be strong, fast, religious and politically ready. Correspondingly, Oyinate, Daramola and Lamidi (2013 p. 27) noted that earlier research indicated that "in Nigeria, women's place is in the home", and as early as children's childhood, they are nurtured in gender specific roles where

girls are taught kitchen duties and how to cook but never boys. Equally, Silvia (2009 p. 96) argued that the roles of men in the family structure are directly linked to the definition of masculinity. “Media, then reinforces established social standards of masculinity as men are shown as hard, tough, independent, sexually aggressive, unafraid, violent, totally in control of all emotions, and-above all-in no way feminine” (Wood, 2014, p. 32).

Abraham and Omeregise (2009, p. 451) found that one of the major factors of male dominance in Nigeria is access to educational opportunities. Women are given less chances based on socially constructed roles of men and male preference in the society. The expected role of a woman is to clean, bare children, nurture the children and please their husbands. Similar, “Okanta (2012) agreed that Nigerian culture tend to frame male and female children as separate people with different capabilities, potentials, and constitutions” (Izugbara, 2014, p. 9). This gender differentiation in societal role has an effect on women’s profession in the society. In many societies, top management activity and professions have been seen as the perquisite of men (Hannagan, 2006).

Fapohunda (2012, pp. 88-89) stated that “based on United Nations Development Plan’s (UNDP) observation between 1985 and 2008, inequality in Nigeria increased from 0.43 to 0.49, making Nigeria one of the countries with the highest level of inequality in the world”. It was also found that in the medical profession, male doctors had a mean annual pay of 2,056,000 Nigerian Naira while their female counterparts only had a mean annual pay of 1,904,000 Nigerian Naira giving an annual difference of 152,000. While looking at journalism as well as other profession, there was a significant pay gap between males and females despite substantial gain in education attainment, literacy level and work experience.

According to a study done on women and leadership in Nigeria, Okafor & Akokuwebe (2015, pp. 1-4) asserts that globally, the issues of women marginalisation and low participation in political leadership and decision making have been attracting a lot of attentions from scholars. In Nigeria, women are still excluded from political activities, decision making and leadership. Shamim and kumara (2012, p. 2) cited in Okafor & Akokuwebe (2015, p. 4) found that most political parties do not maintain adequate statistics of women membership and participation in politics. Before 1960, women took active roles in the political process at the national, regional, and local levels, and their presence was important. However, in recent times, the obvious lack of representation of women's participation started evolving and can be linked to socio-cultural and politico-religious dimensions of the Nigerian structural reality (Okafor & Akokuwebe, 2015, p. 4).

Research Question Four: What are the factors that influence perception of Aniocha Local Government Area on widowhood practices as campaigned by the media?

The respondents also perceived that woman observe widowhood rites to prove that they are not responsible for their husband's death, to show respect to their dead husbands, to break the bond between the widow and her dead husband, and to protect the widow from harm by the spirit of the dead. Majority of the respondents opined that culture is a major factor that determines what a widow should do. Some of the respondents were also of the opinion that religion and illiteracy influence the practice of widowhood rites respectively. Most of the respondents were of the opinion that the government, traditional leaders and religious organizations can help to stop harmful widowhood rites.

Research Question Five: What are the hindrances to the use of media advocacy to change the perception of people of Aniocha South Local Government Area, about widowhood practices?

Traditions of the land is the major hindrance of media advocacy to change the perception of the people concerning widowhood practices. The people believe that the traditions which were made by the fore fathers were made for the best interest and has been of use by many generations before them, so they find it difficult to abolish the law of harmful widowhood practices.

The other one is politics, most persons who seek for political or would like to do so in the future, refused to stand against the widowhood practices even though they know very well that the widowhood practices are harmful and very bad. Politician tend to seek favour before the monarchy, the king makers, the chiefs of the communities, the elders etc. They keep mute over these wicked practices in order to gain favour and support from the communities.

Incidentally, the media are a cardinal part of society in shaping societal identity and being the custodian of societal aspirations. In fact, their contents are a reflection of topical issues and happenings in society (Okon, 2006; Hallin and Mancini 2014). Essentially, the media are saddled with the responsibility of creating awareness in society. A maximum number of the populace depend on the media to inform them concerning what goes on in the society and if adequate and sufficient information is not provided, majority of the public will be misinformed and misled (Tsegyu, 2015).

Overtime, the media have continued to watch over society, alerting them at any point things are going awry they would have failed in their social responsibility function if they do not bring certain salient issues as flagrant abuses imminent in widowhood practices to the front burner. The media can be easily used to create consciousness in the world about the issue of dangerous widowhood practices and protecting the widowed and women. The media are the instrument which is used in changing people's behaviours which can be achieved by the manner in which they tackle the issues concerning dangerous widowhood practices and focus on the consciousness of the people about widowhood practices (Mulugeta, 2014).

FINDINGS

This study was conceived to investigate how media campaign on harmful widowhood practices have either helped or not in the eradication of such practices especially in Aniocha Local Government Area of Delta State. Abalysis of the results found that:

- i. the mainstream media and the social media are the various media for informing people about widowhood practices. This implies that widowhood practices are not alien to the media within the vicinity.
- ii. virtually all the media used to inform people about harmful widowhood practices in Aniocha Local Government Area also transmit campaigns against the said practices but the issue has been the unchanging nature of the people in adhering to such practices.
- iii. the people perceive campaign messages on widowhood practices in Aniocha Local Government area as educative and informative but not engaging enough to warrant a change for the better. It means that such practices are culturally rooted and therefore not easy to uproot. Understandably, even when they perceive the messages as being informative and educative, what they did with the information and education was different as the hurtful widowhood practices still persists to date.
- iv. there are certain factors that Influence the perception of Aniocha Local Government Area on widowhood practices as campaigned by the media. Such as illiteracy, inferiority complex, cultural norms and traditional beliefs and religious beliefs.

- v. there are hindrances to the use of media advocacy to change the perception of people of Aniocha South Local Government Area, about widowhood practices. The hindrances include traditions and politics.

The study further revealed that the people perceived the campaign against harmful widowhood practices as educative and informative but it has not been able to engineer the right change in attitude in them that will warrant jettisoning them.

CONCLUSION

It can be gleaned that the issues around harmful widowhood practices in the South-East, South-South and indeed Aniocha Local Government Area of Delta State are not new to the media. They have been there for as long as they have existed and have continued to exist. The people have made several of such harmful practices go viral on social media as a way of drawing public condemnation to it. But the practitioners have managed to continue their trade through the instrumentality of culture and traditions of the people.

Nigeria as a country with varying cultures has specific roles allocated to men and women respectively. For example, women are seen as house wives that should stay at home and cater for the home and the children from their marriage while the man is seen as the bread winner that must be out there to ensure that every provision is made for the up-keep of the family. With this and other role allocations, whenever each sex does a role that was originally not prescribed for such sex, it is often viewed as an anathema.

These patterns have continued to be perpetrated because people refer to it as the African culture hence, creating a tinge of guilt in the heart of whoever would dare to question the dogma, talk more of changing them. Progressive societies review repugnant practices whenever there is an outcry against them. But the funeral rites processes in Nigeria is for fanfare with no real significance to the wellbeing of practitioners.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In the light of the above, the following were recommended.

The government should wake up to its responsibility of protecting the rights of the citizens and ensure that culprits are punished accordingly. The government should set up human rights agencies for widows who are subjected to such maltreatment, in order to the human rights activists to fight for the widows and protect them from such maltreatment.

The media should do more in the push against harmful widowhood practices by exploring other techniques of presentation to draw global attention to harmful widowhood practices. This will force the government to sit up.

The people of Aniocha Local Government should as a matter of urgency begin to not only speak against these harmful widowhood practices but also fight against them traditionally.

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