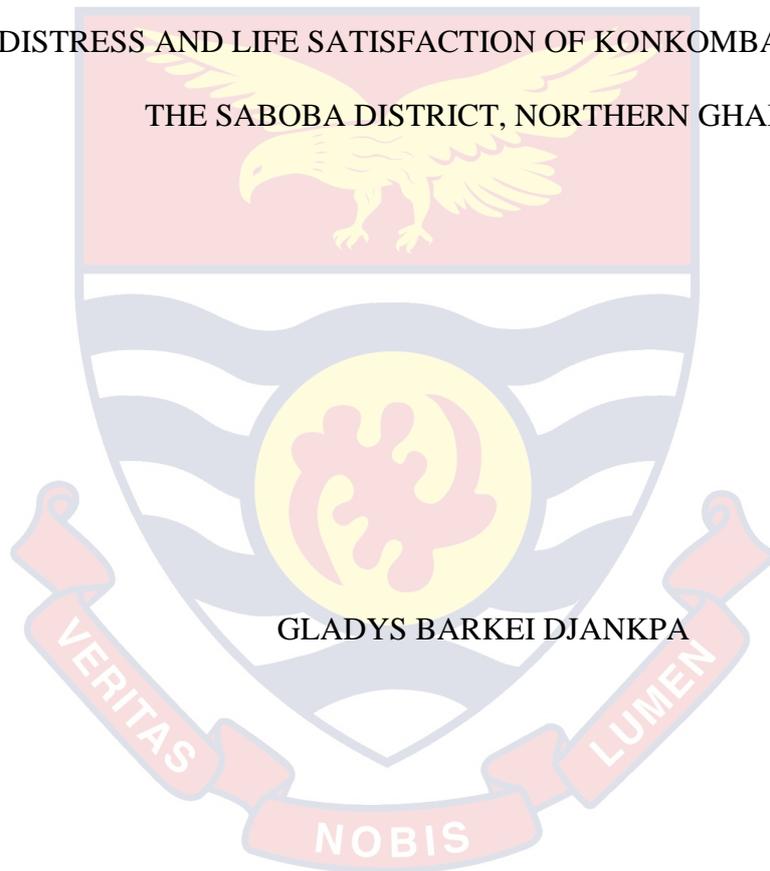


UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST

EFFECTS OF WIDOWHOOD RITES ON THE PSYCHOLOGICAL  
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THE SABOBA DISTRICT, NORTHERN GHANA.

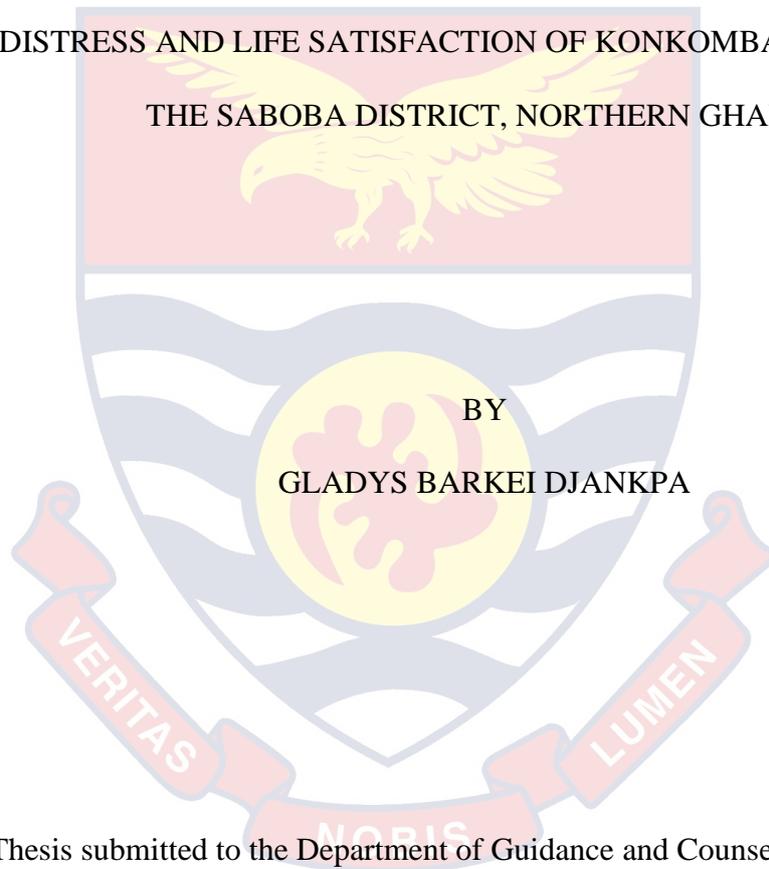


GLADYS BARKEI DJANKPA

2021

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DISTRESS AND LIFE SATISFACTION OF KONKOMBA WIDOWS IN  
THE SABOBA DISTRICT, NORTHERN GHANA.



BY  
GLADYS BARKEI DJANKPA

This thesis submitted to the Department of Guidance and Counselling, Faculty of Foundations, College of Education, University of Cape Coast, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Master of Philosophy degree in Guidance and Counselling.

AUGUST 2021

## DECLARATION

### Candidate's Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis is entirely the result of my original research and no part of this work has been used or presented for the award of any degree or equivalent certificate in this University or elsewhere. Works of authors that served as source of information have been duly acknowledged in the references.

Candidate's Signature: ..... Date: .....

Name: .....

### Supervisor's Declaration

I hereby declare that the preparation of this thesis was supervised in accordance with the guidelines on supervision of thesis laid down by the University of Cape Coast.

Supervisor's Signature: ..... Date: .....

Name: .....

## ABSTRACT

The study investigated the effects of widowhood rites on the psychological distress and satisfaction with life of Konkomba widows in the Saboba District of the Northern region of Ghana. Specifically, the study assessed the common widowhood rite practices and the extent to which it impact the psychological distress and the satisfaction with life of widows. The descriptive cross-sectional survey design was adopted for the study. The purposive sampling technique, stratified sampling technique, snowball sampling technique and convenience sampling techniques were used to select 120 widows from the Saboba District. Data were analyzed using frequency distributions, means and standard deviations, regression analysis, one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) and Kruskal Wallis H-Test. Findings indicated that Konkomba windows who underwent widowhood rites experienced high levels of psychological distress and low life satisfaction. Also, psychological distress of widows significantly predicted their life satisfaction. It was also realized from the study that widowhood rites by the Konkomba tribe are dehumanizing and gruesome. Generally, it is recommended that government institutions, NGOs and health practitioners should incorporate a more comprehensive approach where the attention is not only on the physical needs of widows but also their psychological and social wellbeing which are also affected. This will optimize the services and aids widows receive. Also, the government and other stake holders should intensify their campaign on the reformation or abolishment of these horrible practices of widowhood.

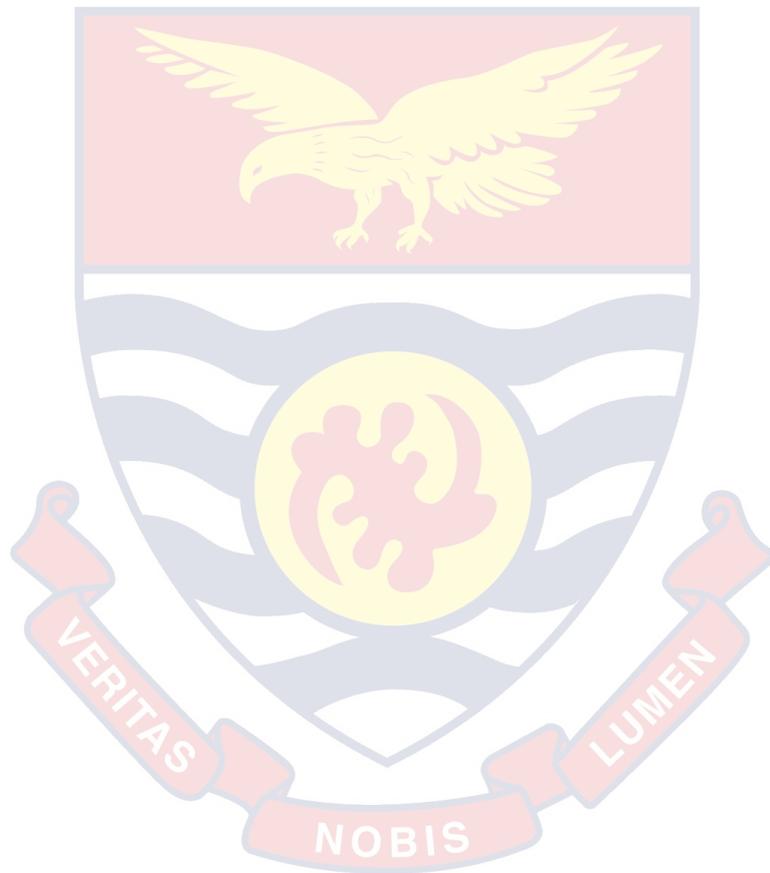
KEYWORDS

Widow

Widowhood Rites

Psychological Distress

Satisfaction with Life



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Again, I would like to show my gratitude to my dear husband, Dr. Francis Tanam Djankpa and my entire family for their encouragement and prayers. I am greatly indebted to Mr. Samuel Osae, Mr. Felix Larbi, and the Research Assistants in Saboba (Mr. David Nsila, Mr. James Kunji, Mr. Daniel Kunji and others) and all my friends for their immense support and guidance towards the collection of data and development of this dissertation.

Finally, I am highly grateful to my parents for their financial and spiritual support at every level of my academic adventure.

## DEDICATION

To my dear husband, Dr. Francis Tanam Djankpa and my children, Jethro  
Wumborja Djankpa, Othniel N-Muanbindo Djankpa and Shalom Mameel  
Djankpa.

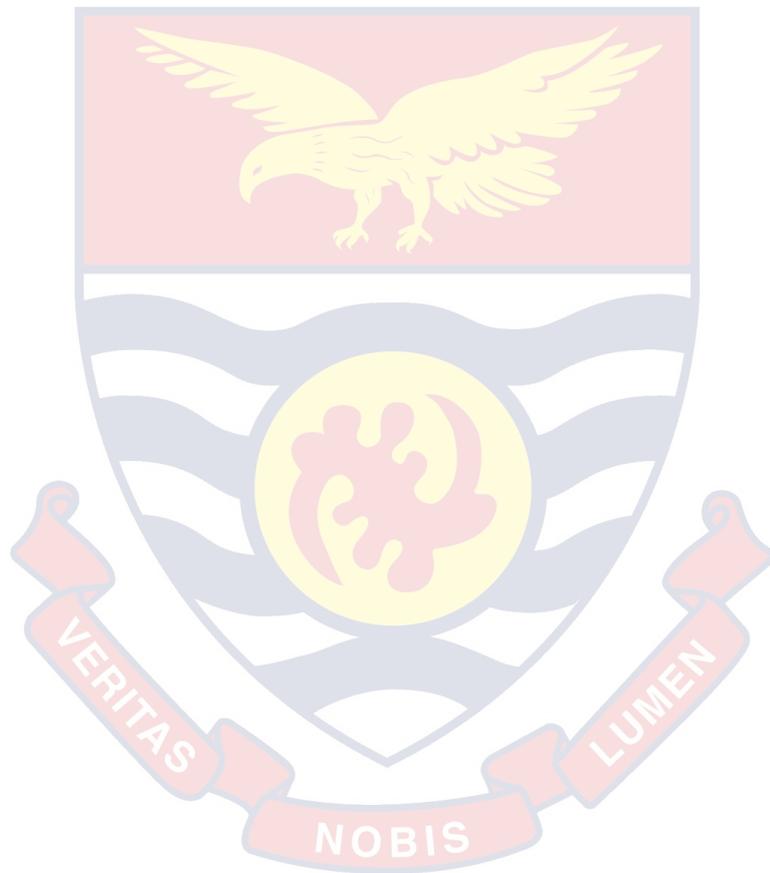


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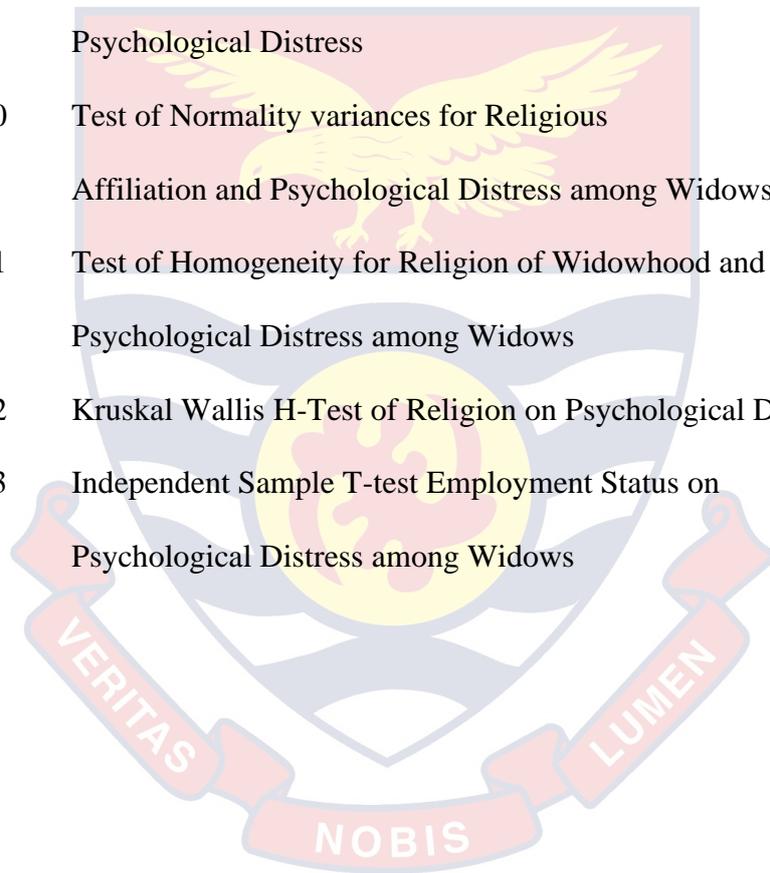
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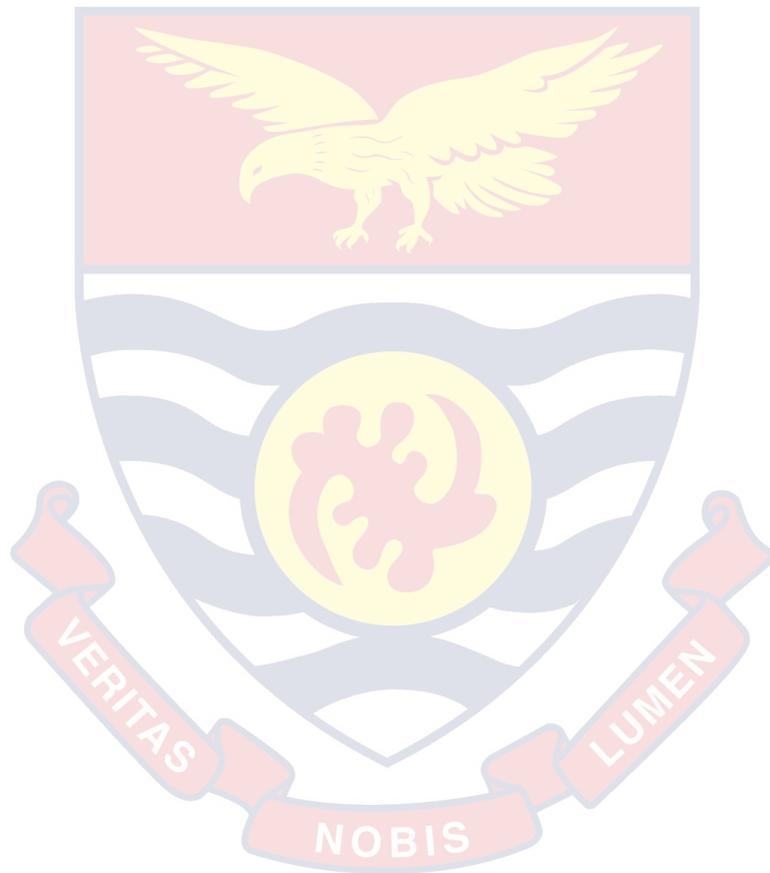
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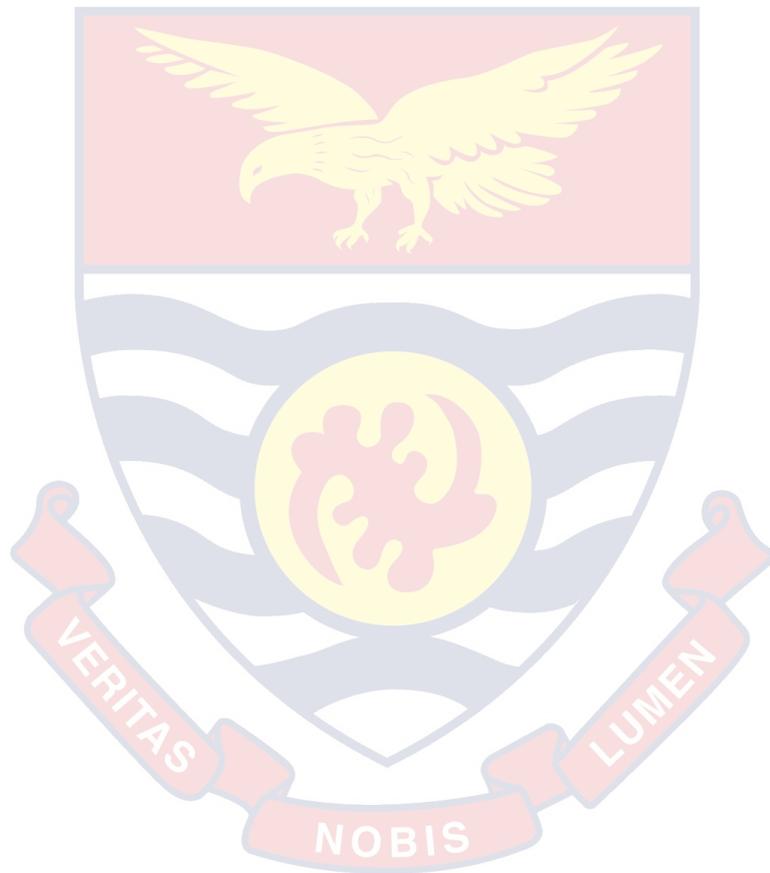
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## LIST OF ACRONYMS

ANOVA	Analysis of Variance
CHRAJ	Commission on Human Right and Administrative Justice
CR	Cultural Relativism
HIV/AIDS	Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome.
WOM	Widows and Orphans Movement



## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

This chapter looked at the background to the study, the statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, objectives of the research, research questions, hypothesis, significance, delimitation, limitations, organisation of the study and operational definitions of key terms used in the study. It looked at some pertinent issues raised by researchers on the pros and cons of widowhood rites as well.

#### **Background to the Study**

Customary rites form an integral part of many cultural practices worldwide. Such practices reveal the beliefs and values of a particular group of people or community over an extended period of time (Maluleke, 2012). According to Gill (2013), traditional practices encompass marriage, festivals, funeral rites, birth rites, puberty rites, widowhood rites, values, and beliefs. While many of these traditions and cultural practices uphold unity and development in the society, some outmoded ones adversely impact the wellbeing of women (Ajayi, Olanrewaju, Olanrewaju & Nwannebuife, 2019). Some of the dehumanising and outmoded cultural practices are widowhood rites, trokosi system, female genital mutilation and forced marriages. Many research findings recommended the outright abolishment of such dehumanising practices (Azumah & Nachinaab, 2018; Ajayi et al., 2019; Ojo, 2019). This may be because most of these negative practices impose a lot of torture on its victims, especially women and children.

Widowhood rites are culturally defined as ceremonies that a spouse undertakes in honour of the deceased partner (Ayagiba, as cited in Atindanbila, Bamford, Adatara, & Kwakye-Nuako, 2014). George et al (2016) also opined that widowhood rites are socio-cultural rituals which a woman undergoes to mourn and show respect to her deceased husband. Manala (2015) notes that widowhood rites serve as a transitional period that prepares a woman from marital status to being a widow. A widow can be described as a woman who survives her husband or losses the husband by death and is not married (George, Omonijo, Uche, Anyaegbunam, & Shaibu, 2016; Oniye, 2000). Culturally, it is required of the widow or widower and the entire family to mourn the demise of a spouse to bid him or her farewell.

Owen (2001) discovered that widows are seen as the devils that cause evil situations, including the death of their husbands. They are seen as witches who kill their husbands, are deprived of their property and comfort and treated like people without dignity and sometimes beaten and left without shelter or food. Other devaluing practices notable of widowhood rites in Africa include shaving the hair of the woman, deprivation of bath and personal hygiene, eating from broken plates, drinking the water used to wash the corpse (Edemikpong, 2005; Atindanbila et al., 2014; Dery, 2016). These and other practices can endanger the health of widows and may lead to many psychosocial problems.

Additionally, the loss of a husband is more devastating on the wife than the loss of a wife on the husband (Amlor & Owusu, 2016; Azumah & Nachinaab, 2018), probably because men easily adapt to changes and also their widowhood rituals are friendlier in most cultures. Culturally, widowhood rites are meant for both men and women, however, women seem to be the only

ones going through the ordeal of widowhood rites in most cultures (Yu, Kahana, Kahana, & Han, 2019; Dolphyne, 2005). Widows, therefore, tend to experience more psychological effects than widowers (Yu, et al., 2019). Traditionally, widowhood rites are meant for the welfare and wellbeing of widows, but in reality, widows are subjected to many rituals and customs, which affect them negatively.

These experiences surprisingly, come from the society in which the widows find themselves; the husband's family members and the community members. The woman is not prepared to be aware of what she is supposed to go through in case her husband dies. For this reason, it is traumatising for widows and they get psychologically derailed on account of harrowing experiences that await them during their widowhood rite performances (Chuku-Okoronkwo, 2015). For example no traditional guidance services are provided to prepare the widow to effectively manage the challenges of the loss. At best, the widow is advised by the older ladies to cry aloud to show their pain and to show that they love the departed husband.

Notably, the death of a husband has adverse effects on the wellbeing of the wife and children. Any additional practises that detrimentally affect the woman significantly increase their woes and can result in serious physical, psychological, social and economic problems. For instance, Rendall et al (2011) found that widowhood is significantly associated with physical health decline, depression, and an increased mortality level in both men and women. Another study by Yu, Kahana, Kahana, and Han (2019) reported that compared with men, women experienced significantly higher levels of depression during the loss of a spouse. According to Atindanbila et al (2014), the most common psychological effects of widowhood on widows is

depression. The study also revealed that young widow experienced extreme psychological effects than older widows. The findings revealed the extent to which widowhood influence the psychological distress of widows.

Widows are also subjected to hostile treatment, including forced marriage, harassment, rejection, loneliness, poverty, loss of status, restriction on social activities, fear of the unknown and alienation which are far more than one can imagine (Azumah & Nachinaab, 2018; Manyedi et al., 2003; Gunga, 2009; Sossou 2002). Consistently, Peterman (2012) noted that after the demised of a husband, most women (widows) are discriminated, deprived of the property they toiled and acquired with their husband, dehumanising abuse and are often exploited by their in-laws. Sossou (2002) also mourns that aside the psychological trauma that widows experienced, they are also deprived of certain privileges such denial of the husband's property, ejection from homes and forced married to the late husband's relatives. For instance, Kalmijn (2017) found from a longitudinal study that the experiences of traumatic and stressful events (divorce or bereavement) are associated with episodes of depression and less satisfying life. Generally, it takes about 5 – 7 years before people live a normal life. Judging from the mishaps that befall widows, particularly, it is hypothesized that their quality of life will be greatly impacted.

According to Phelps et al (2017), the assessment of the quality of life is based on two distinct but related concepts namely; the health-related quality of life (HRQoL) and Satisfaction with Life (SWL). HRQoL is expressed in terms of the extent to which a person believes diseases have impacted his overall functionality in life (Center for Disease Control, 2009). On the other hand, Diener, Emmons, Larson, and Griffin (1985) defined Satisfaction with Life as:

*"a cognitive judgmental process of comparing one's circumstances with what is thought to be an appropriate standard set by each individual for himself or herself regarding an overall evaluation of life".*

In other words, SWL assesses whether a person is content or satisfied with his or her current life when compared with their ideal or personal standards. Satisfaction with life encompasses the results of a long-term reflection as opposed to short-term reflections (Pavot & Diener, 1993). Less direct literature is available on the subjective quality of life among widows in Ghana. Based on the enormous negative practices and consequences associated with widowhood rites, the study investigated the extent to which these practises impact widow's satisfaction with life and the psychological distress of the widows.

As already indicated widowhood rites are still practiced in most African countries including Ghana, despite calls from researchers, NGOs, and women rights advocate organisations to abolish this custom due to its far weighed negative consequences. Additionally, the practices of widowhood rites differ in nature and intensity across cultures. In Ghana, some researchers have studied widowhood rites as practised by Akans (Korang-Okrah & Haight, 2015), the Gbi Northern Ewe of Ghana (Amlor & Owusu, 2016), the Talensi people of Upper East Region (Dery, 2016), the Gas of James Town in Accra (Potočnik, 2017) and many others. However, to the best of my knowledge, there has not been such a study on the Konkomba people. Studies on different cultures and how they perform widowhood rites is important because it reveals the details of what widows go through and hence the magnitude of the consequences. According to Potash (1986), researchers must

avoid generalising African widowhood rites because of their cultural differences. Since Konkombas are a distinct ethnic group with different cultural practices, it will be interesting to assess the experiences of widows during widowhood rites and some accompanying consequences of these rites on the widows. Against this backdrop, the study aims to examine the effects of widowhood rites on the psychological distress and life satisfaction of Konkomba widows in the Saboba District of Northern Ghana.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Widowhood rites have been described as dehumanizing and denigrating, compelling researchers to call for its abolition. However, it is worrying to note that despite the problems posed by widowhood rites, very little research has been done globally on this topic compared to its consequences on the widows (Limann, 2003; Owen, 2001; Owen, 2011; United Nations, 2014). Less light has been shed on the practices of widowhood despite the negative effects of the rites (United Nations, 2014). Consequently, the issues of widowhood rites have not been tackled aggressively and with much seriousness globally. According to Manala (2015), problems associated with widowhood rites have not received the needed attention due to the unwillingness of many scholars to tackle the issue of African widowhood practices and its impact. Similarly, the perpetrators have not received the right amount of punishment, even if there is any (Ajayi, 2018; Mathias, 2015). This affirmation is valid for the Konkomba widows. They have been left to their plight especially that their culture does not allow women to voice out their opinions and be part of decision making (even those concerning women).

The views about the effects of widowhood rites among Konkombas in Northern Ghana are dichotomous just as views are divided in the world about widowhood rites. While some believe the rites have merits and are beneficial to women, others perceive them as marginalization, isolation, loss of social life, discrimination, disinheritance, stigmatization, abuse of dignity and human rights violation (Korang-Okrah & Haight, 2015). In a typical Konkomba culture, a widow may remarry but before she qualifies to do so, she must first go through widowhood rites. These rites are often characterised by witchcraft accusations (with some widows ending up in witch camps), blame games, impoverishment and physical abuse (ActionAid, 2013; Manala, 2015; Manyedi et al., 2003).

Due to the increase in conflicts, violence, and natural disasters in the Northern part of the country many men are losing their lives leading to an increase in the number of widows (ActionAid, 2013). Although natives and stakeholders discuss the pros and cons of widowhood rites among Konkombas, there is no empirical data to support their claim. Again, though similar works have been done among other ethnic groups in Ghana, they are not generalizable to Konkombas because of substantial differences in cultural practices (Atindanbila, Bamford, Adatar, Kwakye-Nuako, & Benneh, 2014; Korang-Okrah & Haight, 2015). For example some widows have suffered extreme consequences of widowhood rites which made them experience depression and anxiety disorders (Yu et al., 2019). Unfortunately, it appears no empirical research has been done to ascertain the effects of widowhood rites among the Konkomba widows.

The physical, psychological and economic effects of widowhood rites on widows potentially decrease their quality of life. I hope that this study will

ignite a more analytical investigation into widowhood rites among the Konkombas to decrease the high level of trauma depicted in the literature on widows. This study sought to find out the widowhood rite practises and its effects on the psychological distress and life satisfaction of Konkomba widows in the Saboba district.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The study sought to explore the effects of widowhood rites on the psychological distress and life satisfaction among Konkomba widows in the Saboba District of the Northern Region of Ghana. The aim was to empirically describe the plight of widows in the Saboba District.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The objectives of the study were to:

1. determine common widowhood rite practices that widows in the Saboba District undergo;
2. determine the level of psychological distress among Konkomba widows who have undergone widowhood rites in the Saboba district;
3. assess the level of life satisfaction among the Konkomba widows who have undergone widowhood rites in the Saboba district;
4. evaluate the influence of psychological distress on the satisfaction with life of Konkomba widows.
5. examine the effects of widowhood rites on satisfaction with life of widows in the Saboba District;
6. explore the differences on the basis of age and duration of widowhood of Konkomba widows in terms of psychological distress.
7. explore the differences among religion and employment status of Konkomba widows in terms of psychological distress.

### Research Questions

The following research questions guided the conduct of the study.

1. What are the common widowhood rite practices that widows in the Saboba District undergo?
2. What is the level of psychological distress among Konkomba widows who have undergone widowhood rites in the Saboba district?
3. What is the level of satisfaction with life among the Konkomba widows who have undergone widowhood rites in the Saboba district?

### Research Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated to guide the study.

1. H<sub>0</sub>: There is no significant effect of psychological distress on the satisfaction with life of Konkomba widows.  
H<sub>1</sub>: There is a significant effect of psychological distress on the satisfaction with life of Konkomba widows.
2. H<sub>0</sub>: There is no significant effect of widowhood rites on the life satisfaction of Konkomba widows who have gone through widowhood rites in Saboba District.  
H<sub>1</sub>: There is a significant effect of widowhood rites on the life satisfaction of Konkomba widows who have gone through widowhood rites in Saboba District.
3. H<sub>0</sub>: There is no significant difference between the ages of Saboba widows in terms of psychological distress.  
H<sub>1</sub>: There is a significant difference between the ages of Saboba widows in terms of psychological distress.

4. Ho: There is no significant difference between the duration of widowhood rites among Saboba widows in terms of psychological distress.

H<sub>1</sub>: There is a significant difference between the duration of widowhood rites among Saboba widows in terms of psychological distress.

5. Ho: There is no significant difference between the religions of Saboba widows in terms of psychological distress.

H<sub>1</sub>: There is a significant difference between the religions of Saboba widows in terms of psychological distress.

6. Ho: There is no significant difference between the employment status of Saboba widows in terms of psychological distress.

H<sub>1</sub>: There is a statistical significant difference between the employment status of Saboba widows in terms of psychological distress.

### **Significance of the Study**

Tribal conflicts in Northern Ghana have led to the demise of many men thereby increasing the number of widows among Konkombas. With the increasing number of widows going through widowhood rites, there is bound to be an increasing effect of widowhood rites and its consequences among these women. Knowledge of the effects of widowhood rites on these women will be very useful for government agencies and stakeholders who are engaged in peace building and reintegration of conflict victims into society.

Obtaining information on the plight of widows in the Saboba District will guide Counsellors, Clinical psychologists and Health practitioners to formulate policies and treatment procedures aimed at helping widows to

overcome the psychological consequences associated with bereavement and the practices of the outmoded widowhood rites.

Also, it seems that less empirical studies have examined the effects of widowhood rites on widows among Konkomba people in the Saboba district. Often widows end up being beaten for claims of not being faithful to their deceased husbands. Others are maltreated and in some cases sent on exile into witch camps on false accusations of killing their husbands and other community members. It was important to undertake this study because the findings will contribute immensely to prospective social reforms and help in pruning the out-dated widowhood rites to ensure that widows derive maximum benefits from the widowhood rites with little or no psychological distress problems. The empirical data from this study is a call to abolish the widowhood rites since the findings showed severe effects on widows and form a basis for future research on this topic.

Furthermore, although some research has been done on the effects of widowhood rites among other tribes in the Northern Region, the findings are not amenable to Konkomba widows because of cultural differences. Specific findings are more trusted and can be used to seek social support system. The findings will form the basis for suggestions for improvement in widowhood practices and a call to protect the widows from any potential human rights abuse and mental torture.

In addition to a call to social reform, widows are encouraged and guided through this study to form associations through which they can seek support from Non-Governmental Organizations, Churches, Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice (CHRAJ), the Districts Assemblies, Ministry for Women and Children Affairs and other agencies to improve their

livelihood. According to Ogungbamila and Adeyanju (2010), gender advocate organizations have a pivotal role in ensuring that the rights and freedom of marginalized women such as widows are uplifted by all social and political practices and they are to champion issues affecting their well-being.

### **Delimitation**

The study was limited to the Konkomba widows in Saboba District of Northern Ghana. This included women above 18 who have lost their husbands through death within the last twelve months and had gone through widowhood rites were used in this research. Based on religious background, some widows either went through milder forms of widowhood rites or severe forms of widowhood rites. This gave room for a better comparison and establishment of the findings.

Again the study focused on the effects of widowhood rites on the psychological distress (measured with psychological distress scale) and the quality of life (measured with satisfaction with life scale). The types of treatment that the widows were subjected to were also investigated. However, the entire procedure of the widowhood rites as practised by the Konkomba tribe was not the focus of this study.

Additionally, the relationship among the demographic characteristics of widows such as age, duration of widowhood, religion and employment status were examined with regards to psychological distress and satisfaction with life.

### **Limitation**

Widowhood rites run through many tribes in Ghana with very dehumanising practices. However, it was difficult to reach out to all the tribes during the study. Also, though the Konkomba people are found in other towns

and regions in Ghana, time and resources did not allow me to reach out to all of them. I therefore, limited myself to only the hometown of the Konkomba people (Saboba). It is believed that most widows would have recovered from some of the consequences of the widowhood rites after one year (Azumah & Nachinaab, 2018), but others may not.

It would have been appropriate to use a qualitative or longitudinal study to investigate a study of this nature to obtain in-depth information on the experiences of widows in Saboba district. However, the quantitative research method specifically the cross-sectional survey design was adopted for the study. A descriptive survey design was used through the administration of questionnaires to collect data and was based on the voluntary cooperation of participants through self-reports. Some limitations of the quantitative method however include the fact that the quantitative approach detaches information from its original ecological real-world context (Castro, Kellison, Boyd & Kopak, 2010) and have social desirability and response bias. Participants are likely to act unnaturally and give socially accepted responses rather than reality. When this happens, it is likely to affect the trustworthiness and generalizability of the results.

### **Operational Definitions of Terms**

**Widow:** A widow is a woman whose husband has died, (irrespective of age, social status, income level) and who has not remarried within the past twelve months.

**Widowhood Rites:** An acceptable customary rite which a widow undergoes to mourn and honour the demise of her husband.

**Psychological distress:** The overall mental, emotional, social and spiritual well-being of a widow.

**Life satisfaction:** being content and happy with the current state of one's life based on an individual's overall evaluation of life.

**Nkpopigmii (Likpakpaaln language):** A white rope tied on the neck, hands and waist to identify a widow among the Konkomba people.

**Bitindam:** The landlords or traditional leaders.

### **Organisation of the Study**

This study was organized into five chapters. Chapter One presented a background to the study, the problem statement and the purpose of the study. Additionally, the importance of the study on a macro and micro level was discussed. Other subheadings include delimitation, limitation, and the definition of key terms.

In Chapter Two, the focus was on literature review. This chapter was organised under the following subheadings: theoretical review, conceptual review and empirical review.

Chapter Three discussed the scientific research methodology used in this study. In this chapter, the discussion includes the study design, study area, population and sample and sampling technique. The data collection instrument, ethical consideration, data collection procedure and analysis were also incorporated.

The fourth chapter covered the presentation of results and the emerging trend from the data to bring out the key findings of the study. The findings were presented and discussed related to previous empirical studies.

Lastly, Chapter Five summarizes the study, provides relevant conclusions and recommendations based on the findings of the study.

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### Introduction

In this chapter, the focus was to review relevant literature to provide a solid backdrop for the study. The concept of widowhood rites and its effects are discussed. Similarly, the concept of psychological distress and its relationship with quality of life (Satisfaction with life) are reviewed. The conceptual and theoretical reviews that govern the study, as well as the empirical review of related studies were all discussed in relation to the research objectives. Lastly, the chapter provides a summary of the review of the literature.

#### Theoretical Framework

##### Cultural Relativism and Universalism

The theory of Cultural Relativism was established by Franz Boaz during the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. According to Boaz (1887) society is not absolute but relative and thus our knowledge of the world is based on the limit of our civilization. Cultural relativism (CR) is a theory concerning the nature of morality which contends that there are no specified, objective universal moral laws and that the moral rules that exist are culturally created. According to this theory, universally, no law or moral principles apply to all cultures. Therefore every culture should be allowed to institute their individual moral laws. The cultural relativism as seen and explained by scholars seems to rationalize some traditions considered as violent to humanity. It is assumed

that once something is accepted by the society, it is okay for it to be practiced, irrespective of its consequences on the individual.

Another leading advocate for the theory of cultural relativism is James Rachels. According to Rachels (2003), the theory is established on the belief that human rights rest heavily on a particular culture. In other words, culture determines the rights of the people. Many scholars have applied cultural relativism in such a way that it has been used to rationalize many customary rites such as widowhood rites, which impose danger to people (especially women and children). Again, the theory justifies the cultural reasons for the permissiveness on the continuance of such dehumanising traditions as widowhood rites.

On the other hand is the universalism theory. According to Donnelly (2013), all human beings are equal and as such must have equal rights. Universalism believes that human rights are non-negotiable and as such must be protected regardless of national status or religious beliefs. While universalism seeks equal rights for every humans, cultural relativism calls for its acceptance because a particular culture upholds it, even if it is detrimental to the life of individuals.

Criticism against cultural relativism argues that culture and traditions are flexible and change with time. It is therefore important to re-look at widowhood performances among the cultures and either modify or abolish them. In essence, society does not prosper when outdated and potentially dangerous traditional rituals (such as widowhood rites), which may interfere with the rights and freedom of people are maintained. According to Terry (2007) the theory fails to recognise power imbalances and relations that exist in most societies and how these limit women's choices and rights.

Furthermore, she submits that if cultural relativism is taken to its logical conclusion, then it will mean that one should accept any behaviour no matter how crude or inhuman it may be.

It is from this background that some widows even in our present-day are subjected to several inhumane practices through widowhood rites. With a call to ban all forms of cultural practices that affect the lives and individuals, proponents of cultural relativity theory permits such rites to be upheld. However, universalism calls for the end of discrimination and harmful cultural practices. This Theory was selected as part of the theoretical underpinnings of the study because it helps to ascertain why even to present age, some cultures permit that certain inhumane practices are undertaken within cultures and how they infringe on the basic human rights of widows.

### **Conceptual Review**

In this section, a review on other researchers' views and findings on the concept of widowhood rites, the justification of widowhood rites and the gender-based violence related to the performance of widowhood rites have been considered.

### **The Concept of Widowhood Rites**

A widowed woman is called *Ukpopii* (which means the dead's woman) and a widower is referred to as *Ukpoja* (the dead's man, though it is rarely used) as the case may be in the Likpakpaln language. Widowhood rites (referred to as *Tikpopiir* in the Likpakpaln language) on the other hand can be seen as a ceremony performed by a living spouse to mourn, honour and remember the dead spouse. Widowhood rites are customary norms and traditions practised by a living partner to honour the dead husband or wife (George et al., 2016). It can also be described as the act of mourning a beloved

spouse after their demise. It is the belief in many parts of the world that the practices are a transitional ceremony for a bereaved spouse to enter into (Manala, 2015; George et al., 2016; Ayagiba, 2005 & Agunwa, 2011). Again, some say it marks the change of status of a widow when the husband is no more. Pauw (1990) identified that in Botswana culture widowhood is seen as a specific state of womanhood, such as pregnancy and menstruation, which necessitates strict taboos for the widow.

Widowhood is also believed to be a time during which a surviving spouse remembers, honours, and shows love to her dead husband (Idialu, 2012). It is a time to pay last respect and say goodbye to a spouse who is no more (Tasie, 2013). In his study titled “Death and Dying” among the Frafras of Ghana, Atinga (2006) asserts that the essence of widowhood rite is to separate a dead person from the living spouse to avoid any harm from the dead. This is in line with Tasie’s conclusion that widowhood rites are used to separate the ghost of the husband from the living wife (Tasie, 2013). It is believed that there is life after death and spirits of the dead lives among the living, hence the need to perform these rites to separate the deceased from those who are alive.

Losing a spouse does not only create a vacuum which cannot be filled but also leads to a drastic reorganisation in the social world and social roles of the bereaved widow (Utz, Carr, Nesse, & Wortman, 2002). In addition to the grief experienced by the widow, many things in her life changes and she learns to take up new roles and responsibilities which she never took up in the past. These changes in roles and responsibilities may however differ across genders (Yu et al., 2019). A widow assuming the role of the late husband (masculine

roles) may have a different experience as compared to the widower taking up the responsibilities of the late wife (feminine roles).

Marked with these stressful experiences and emotional breakdown, widows must be assisted to adapt and cope with the changes in life that the death of her husband has wrought. Contrary to this, the reverse is true in much of African society. Culturally, widows are required to observe some rites and customs before, during and after the burial of her husband. Edemikpong (2005) and Nyongkah (2018) contended that the customary requirement of widows is based on the belief that widows are impure and contaminated and need purification, and thus the practices purify the woman and pacify the spirit of the late husband. Consequently, the widow is forbidden from engaging in pleasurable activities she enjoyed in the past. In some cultures, the widow is prevented from public gatherings and from having a conversation with persons outside of her family and in-laws. Though some of the practices may differ from culture to culture, most of them are similar but may be done with different intentions.

According to Edemikpong (2005), widows are deprived of practising personal hygiene and are mostly allowed to wear a prescribed cloth (sackcloth), during the mourning period, which lasts from three to six months or sometimes a year. Widows must also sit on the bare floor; eat with unwashed hands and from broken or prescribed plate only. Similarly, among the Konkomba people, the widow wears 'kiyook' (a rag used as a pad) throughout the mourning period without changing to prevent the dead husband from coming to have sex with her. Similarly, the widow wears nkpopiigmin as long as it will take to perform the husband's funeral. This is for identification purposes. An attempt to practise personal hygiene by a widow will incur

whipping, spitting or reprimanded that she intends to attract men when caught (Edemikpong, 2005). She may also be accused of having a hand in the death of her husband and can only be innocent if she swears to the corpse and drink the bathwater of her husband's remains (Edemikpong, 2005). The wife is regarded as part of the family property and widows are usually demanded to marry their spouse's brother or the step son as an inheritance (Edemikpong, 2005; Owen 2001; Atindanbila et al., 2014; Dery, 2016). This is also the case among the Konkomba clan.

Views are divided on whether to abolish the practice among Konkombas or leave it as it is as seen from interactions with traditional leaders. Some genuinely believe it should be stopped or modified, considering the atrocities of the rituals. Surprisingly, however, some including aged widows suggest it should be maintained to propagate their culture.

### **Justification of widowhood practices**

Culturally, widowhood rites are believed to be needed for the good of society (Tasie, 2013). This is because the practice is seen as an essential part of the culture and those who do not complete widowhood rites may die (Amlor & Owusu, 2016). Another view is that widowhood rites pave way for the widow to move on with life after the cleansing through widowhood rites (Tasie, 2013). Also, Ajayi et al., (2019) stipulate that widowhood victims accept their fate because they see widowhood rites as cultural practices that allow them to pay their last respect for their dead spouses. In some cultures, it is important to find out the cause of the death of a man and this can be ascertained through widowhood rites (Oyeniyi & Ayodeji, 2010). Very often, the wife of a deceased spouse is the primary suspect. Widowhood rites are therefore observed for many reasons including proving the wife's innocence

regarding the cause of death of her husband (Oyeniya & Ayodeji, 2010; Tasié 2013). This may be why widows are subjected to harsh practices to prove their innocence. Among the Igbos of Nigeria, it is reported that the practice proves the innocence of the widow and vindicates her (Ajayi et al., 2019).

Gunga (2009) found that custodians of widowhood rites revealed that the practice is very vital to pacify the spirit of the deceased and prevent them from further involvement in matters of the family and society. Another study emphasised that widowhood rituals pave way for the ghost to be at peace and detach itself from the widow (Tasié, 2013). It may be a difficult task going through widowhood rites but once it will appease the dead husband and honour him, the widows believe the suffering is worth going through. Additionally, it is also to purify and regain the wealth of the dead. Similarly, the belief is that detention and isolation helps the widow to mortify herself and test her endurance in time of mourning (Gunga, 2009). Other findings revealed that widowhood rites must not be seen as a threat to women's rights but as a fulfilment of cultural beliefs of the people (Oyeniya & Ayodeji, 2010; Nyongkak, 2018). Okoro and Nkama (2018) also emphasised that widowhood rites makeup for and amend dislocated relationship between the living and the dead. Such opinions tend to fuel the tension between culture and human rights (Okoro & Nkama, 2018).

According to Tasié (2013), widowhood rites, especially in Africa, were not meant to take away the rights of the widow and to impoverish the woman. Instead, it was meant to separate the ghost of the dead husband from the living wife, to enable the widow to become self-reliant to face life challenges in the absence of the husband, and to give a peaceful burial to the deceased husband.

Another advantage of widowhood rites according to Amlor and Owusu

(2016), is to prevent adultery by the widow or widower after the demise of the spouse. It is believed that as widows remain in a state of mourning, men are deterred from having any sexual relations with them (Amlor & Owusu, 2016). In the Konkomba culture, widowhood rite expose and punish any previous adulterous acts committed by the widow during the lifetime of her husband and therefore serves as a deterrent to all other women to remain faithful to their husbands. An informal conversation with a widow (Nlanyaan, not her real name) revealed that her sister was beaten mercilessly recently for not being able to come out with her face during her widowhood rites. The implication is that she had an affair with another man while her husband was still alive and has to come out from her room with her back during the widowhood rites. A time of widowhood rite is also seen as a way of protecting widows from becoming objects of sexual manipulation from men with uncontrolled sexual drives and to prevent them from being taken advantage of and abused due to their vulnerable situation. Such men are often punished when caught. Traditionally, it is believed that men who engage widows sexually during widowhood rites will be punished by the gods (Amlor & Owusu, 2016). This also deters men from raping or abusing the widows.

On these accounts, one would expect widowhood rites to be a celebration and a support system for grieving widows. On the contrary, the process of widowhood rites is without respect and dignity and meant for a widow who is going through the painful loss of her husband (Kotzé, Lishje, & Rajuili-Masilo, 2012). Widows are stereotyped, stigmatized, dehumanised, and alienated from others in the society. The whole process of widowhood brings pain and discomfort to the victims (Azumah & Nachinaab, 2018; Kotzé et al., 2012; Kalu, 1989) and must be abolished. Ojo (2019) opined that the

widowhood rites meant dehumanizing treatment to widows and results in severe psychological disorders with lasting effects. The very social support system that is needed to mitigate the traumatic impact of widowhood have rather turned to bringing harrowing and sadistic experiences upon the widows and widows are blamed and accused of being the cause of their husbands' death.

### **Widowhood rites as a Gender-Based Violence**

According to Merry (2006), Gender-Based Violence refers to “violence activity perpetrated against a partner, closed relative or a person in the form of assault, rape and murder due to the individual's gender” (p. 21). Keck and Sikkink (1998) noted that cultural practices including female genital mutilation, violence against refugee women, sexual harassment, and widowhood rituals are regarded as a form of Gender-Based Violence. Violence against women is closely connected to both structural and cultural factors that are intentionally or unintentionally calved to relegate women to the background in the society (Abraham & Tastsoglou, 2016). Another study revealed that most violence against women is socially and culturally constructed and it is historically justified rather than being a natural phenomenon (Coomaraswamy & Kios, 1999). Among the Bansara clan of Cameroon for instance, a wife is found for a widower on the very day the wife dies (Edemikpong, 2005). This is because it is believed a deceased wife returns to share the marital bed with her living husband (Edemikpong, 2005). This is however not the case with the widow. No husband is found for a widow on the same day the husband dies. Instead, she is required to mourn the dead husband in order to show respect and honour to him.

According to Merry (2006), violence against women denies them of their basic human rights and fundamental freedom. Although widowhood rites are culturally legitimate they are harmful to women. Research findings have shown that activities that go with widowhood rites bring economic hardships, confinement, and ill-treatments (Anugwom, 2011; Samuel 2011 & United Nations, 2001). It could be asserted that widowhood rites are among the fundamental issues around which gender-based violence is conceptualized as a harmful traditional practice. The oppression and health hazards associated with widowhood rituals, though justified by traditions, should be seen and defined as a violation of women's rights. Ajayi et al (2019) recommended that result-oriented policies and structures must be put in place to get rid of the effects of widowhood rites in Nigeria and other parts of Sub-Saharan Africa. Ghana has the responsibility to protect the rights and dignity of its citizens as enshrined in its constitution and other legal instruments both international and national by eliminating cultural and traditional practices that are regarded as dehumanising or harmful to women. It is important to uphold the epitome of human rights relating to the effects of widowhood rites on the widows of the Konkomba people of Northern Ghana.

Although widowhood rites are meant to be for both widows and widowers, there has been discrimination among genders when it comes to this practice (George et al., 2016). Women are usually the ones who go through widowhood rites in most cultures. For instance, Owen (1994) points out that bereaved men freely interact and remarry immediately after the burial of the deceased wife, because their movements are not culturally restricted by widowhood rites. Also, whereas widows are exposed to very strenuous widowhood rites, widowers are not taken through the same strenuous

widowhood rites (Dery, 2016). In some cultures, some men may go through some rituals but in a more relaxed and mild way than what women go through (Limann, 2003). This can be described as discrimination against women. Similarly, ostracism is performed on widows among the Edo's and Esan's in Nigeria (Idialu, 2012) but not on their men counterparts.

Widows in some cultures are usually seen as defiled and carry the omen, which can also defile other people in society. Similarly, in most cultures in Ghana, women are the only ones who go through vigorous widowhood rites that are degrading. Men do not have to go through vigorous rituals as part of widowhood. In cases where they go through, the rituals are friendlier and take place within a short period of time. It therefore, follows that the way men and women cope with these rights will also differ. Since women go through more vigorous rituals, the impact may as well be great on them. Dery (2016) further observes that women in the Ga culture in Ghana go through an elaborate widowhood rite processes than men. The widow cleansing among Ga involves the preparation of chewing sponge, herbs and water in an earthen pot or bowl and the process can go deep into the night by an elderly woman who herself has undergone the rites before (Atinga, 2006). However, the widower does not go through this.

Studies on these gender differences with regards to widowhood are inconsistent and have generated different understanding (Lopata, 1996; Lee & DeMaris, 2007). Some have reported similarities between the responses of men and women to the widowhood experience (Sasson & Umberson, 2013). These arguments are possible because in-depth studies from various cultural backgrounds have not been studied on the effects of widowhood rites concerning women and men. Since women are the most affected, it is good to

start with them. An understanding of the effects of widowhood rites will mean a better understanding of the kind of social support to offer the widows. It is in this respect that this research seeks to assess the impact of widowhood rites on the Konkomba widows since this tribe still find widowhood rites to be a core part of the performance of their funerals.

Despite the wide variety of cultural groups and traditions, customs related to women and the rights afforded them, in the case of marriages are derived from customary laws that share basic similarities across African societies and patterns of kinship organization (Ndulo, 2011). Across the continent, legal protection privileges go with men. This is particularly so concerning the laws governing unions and their dissolution, child custody arrangements, property rights, and inheritance. Although constitutions, laws and international conventions have been adopted that forbid discrimination based on gender, there continues to be a considerable chasm with the actual practice. Civic law has been largely ineffective in displacing customary law, which often denies women's rights. As the basis for production and women's avenue to social and economic rights, marriage and a surviving spouse remain crucial to a woman's access to resources and productive assets (Fafchamps & Quisumbing, 2005; Gray & Kevane, 1999a; Gray & Kevane, 1999b). Traditional Islamic law as typically practised in Africa dictates that daughters inherit half of what sons inherit and husbands are the sole owners of family property (Djuikom & Van de Walle, 2018). Widows receive one-eighth of the inheritance, to be shared among any co-wives and customary law also excludes women from property ownership and inheritance in much of the rest of Africa (Djuikom & Van de Walle, 2018). Similarly, women's access to property and land use rights is obtained through marriage and contingent on

marital status (Djuikom & Van de Walle, 2018). These are all evidence of discrimination against women. Furthermore, every person according to the constitution shall be entitled to her liberty and no person shall be deprived of his liberty (The Constitution of the Republic of Ghana, 1992).

The institution of some organisations and the obligations placed on the state to protect, respect and promote the fundamental human rights of all including women is in the right direction and could help the women and widows see the light of day in future (Adomako-Ampofo, 2008). But the question is for how long? The question is, do they really live up to their task of protecting women and children from the inequalities and discriminations in our society or they only react to issues of violence against women any time they come up and afterwards go back to sleep? According to Adomako-Ampofo (2008), Ghana's effort in addressing domestic violence and abuse only became successful in 1997 following report of by Human Right Activists organizations showed the prevalence and patterns of gender violence.

### **Effects of Widowhood Rites on the Psychological distress and Quality of life of Widows**

Several studies (example; Ojo, 2019; Azumah & Nachinaab, 2018; Kotzé et al., 2012; Kalu, 1989) have documented that the negative effects of widowhood rites far outweigh the positive outcomes. In these surveys, findings revealed that widowhood rites impose inhumane treatment on widows. The whole practice is painful and brings discomfort to widows. However, due to fear of punishment and the possible displeasure of the departed spouse, widows painfully undergo the process. According to Owen (2001), widows are seen as the devils that cause evil situations, including the death of their husbands. They are seen as witches who kill their husbands, are

deprived of their property and comfort and treated like people without dignity and sometimes beaten and left without shelter or food.

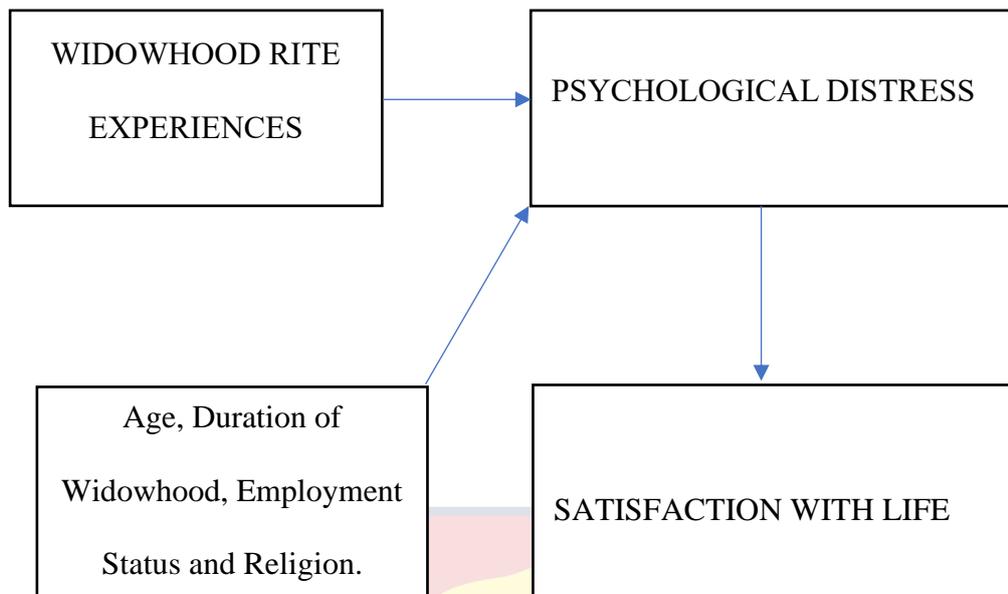
They are also subjected to hostile treatments, including forced marriage, harassment, rejection, loneliness, poverty, loss of status, restriction on social activities, fear of the unknown and alienation (Azumah & Nachinaab, 2018; Manyedi et al., 2003; Gunga, 2009; Sossou 2002). In many instances, the husband's property is usually seized from the widow and her children by the family (Korang-Okra & Haight, 2015). In addition, the practice exposes the widow to health risks. Starvation, use of an unsterilized razor, brutality and untidiness that characterize the practice may cause malnutrition, anaemia, rashes, HIV/AIDS transmission, heart disease, Mellitus, digestive disorders and even death (Edemikpong, 2005). The insults, psychological trauma, frustration and hopelessness may lead to suicide. The most disturbing part of this cultural practice is that men are not similarly subjected to such indignities when their wives die.

Traditional African Religion teaches the principles of communality, mutual respect and caring nonetheless these virtues are rarely practised. The consequences are enormous and there must be greater effort and campaign to abolish the act. It is due to the cruel nature of widowhood rites that researchers and non-governmental organisations have advocated for the end to its practice and observance (Atindanbila et al., 2014; Korang-Okrah & Haight, 2015; Sossou, 2002 & Tasie, 2013). Sometimes the consequences of failing to meet the requirements or refusing these rites lead to severe beating, and rejection or being sent on exile to the widow's parents. Sources report that widowhood rites are prohibited under Ghana's penal code (Mba, 2006). However, Ayageba, founder of Widows and Orphans Movement (WOM), mourns that

many widows are not aware of this legislation and those who know are not likely to proceed to trial because of lengthy delays and because they could face more and increased abuse (Ayagiba, 2005). Many who are conversant with the law may not pursue their case because of lack of money. Indeed, the death of a spouse is considered more devastating than others (Littlewood, 1992; Mendes de Leon, Kasl & Jacobs, 1994) and this is the more reason why widows should be given maximum support. The very purpose of widowhood rite as being necessary for healing is defeated when widows have to go through all the rituals leaving long-lasting effects on them. The extensive studies on each culture's widowhood practice will expose the hilarious nature of the practice globally so that more supportive resources can be made available for the widows.

### **Conceptual Framework**

The conceptual framework below provides a detailed relationship between the variables in the work. The main focus of the study is the effects of widowhood rites on widows who have undergone the practice of widowhood rites. The study elaborates on the two separate but interrelated effects, namely, the psychological distress and Satisfaction with Life (Quality of Life). It was assumed that widowhood rites will affect the experience of psychological distress among widows. Subsequently, psychological distress was expected to predict the Satisfaction with Life of widows. Likewise, demographic characteristics such as age, duration of widowhood, employment and religion were predicted to have a direct relationship with psychological distress which in turn will affect the experience of Satisfaction with Life.



*Figure 1*-Hypothetical model showing the expected relationships among widowhood rite experiences, psychological distress and satisfaction with life.

Source: Author's construct (2020)

### **Empirical Review**

This section reviews the empirical works done in the area by other researchers and some of the findings and recommendations made by these researchers. The review was done under the following sub-headings: Common widowhood rites practices, effects of widowhood rites on the Psychological distress and Satisfaction with Life of widows, the impact of psychological distress on the Satisfaction with life among widows, and relationship among age, duration of widowhood, religion, employment status psychological distress and satisfaction with life.

### **Common Widowhood Practises and Beliefs.**

Widowhood rites may differ from one culture to the other due to variables such as religious background, cultural background, and demographic settings (Ajayi, et al., 2019; Dery, 2016). Though there may be some

similarities, depending on the cultural norms and practices of the widow's culture, the rituals performed during widowhood may greatly differ across cultures (Korang-Okrah & Haight, 2014; Merry, 2006; Manyedi, et al., 2003). For example, Limann (2003) reports that among the Baganda people of Uganda, a widow is not allowed to have a haircut while in the Talensi culture of Ghana, the first requirement to be seen as a widow is to have your hair shaved (Dery, 2016). Besides, Atindanbila et al. (2014) indicated that during widowhood rites, widows among the people of Nadowli district of the Upper West region of Ghana are required to be taken to a crossroad at dawn for their hair to be shaved. The widow then wears a white cloth and white scarf to prove her faithfulness to the man while he was alive. Among the Konkomba people, though there is the practice of haircut, it is done right in front of the house by old ladies in the family in broad day light for all to see. Atindanbila et al. (2014) also report that among the Nadowli people, the widow neither baths nor changes her clothes for 40 days. This is however not the same for the Akans (Korang-Okrah & Haight, 2015). It is also true that in African cultures though diverse, there are many similarities about widowhood rites and practices. For example, Kotzé, et al. (2012) and Nowye, (2005) point out that the widows they interviewed claimed diverse cultural identities but that despite their different cultural affiliations, the women's experiences of mourning practices in their communities share several similarities. Similarly, Pauw (1990) identified that widows among the Botswanas (in South Africa) are secluded from public life during the mourning process.

In Botswana culture (in South Africa), widowhood is considered as a specific state of womanhood that necessitates strict taboos. The widow is the man's servant, owes her husband respect and must undergo the rituals in

honour of her husband (Pauw, 1990). There is a denial of all activities that she might have enjoyed in the past like feasting, having visitors or visiting others and anything that brings her pleasure. This deprivation of pleasurable activities continues until the end of widowhood rites (Azumah & Nachinaab, 2018). This may however differ from culture to culture.

Across many African cultures, some barbaric rituals widows go through further include; shaving the widow's hair, applying pepper to the widow's shaved hair, making a widow use a stone as a pillow, stripping the widow naked and carrying her through the town to a river to be cleansed. Others include sleeping on the bare floor and giving the widow the dirty water used to bathe the corpse to drink, including other concoctions (Atindanbila et al., 2014; Idialu, 2012; Kuenyehia, 1998). Nyongkah (2018) also reports that in Cameroon, the widow is given a pair of split calabash in which she has to eat and drink from and is not allowed to wash hands before or after meals. She is also restricted, secluded and excluded and must not indulge in certain conversations, not to laugh and to cry at the top of her voice for eight days.

In some cultures, widows are conceptualised as defiled individuals who can defile others through a handshake or touch, may have to be in a particular attire up to about a year and restricted from going to social gatherings (Atindanbila, et al., 2014). Among the Gas of Greater Accra Region of Ghana, for instance, Dery (2016) reports that widowhood rites involve confinement, cleansing and the out-dooring of the widow into her new status. Also, a report in 2005 by the United Nations (UN) Division for the Advancement of Women indicates that widowhood rites in Ghana include detaining the widow in a room, shaving hair, tying a rope around the neck and undergoing a ritual bath (United Nations, 2005). Likewise, the report stated

that 31% of widowed participants indicated that they were asked to marry their spouse brother or relative. As high as 23% of the participants reported that the forced marriage was perpetrated by their families (United Nations, 2005). In the Konkomba culture, the widow and a few relatives, usually women stay with the corpse as long as it will take for relatives to arrive for the burial to be done. Widows are also starved until the corpse is buried.

In most traditional African societies, the extended family takes complete control over the corpse. The widow and her children are obliged by the directives of her husband's family. In such instances, the family of the deceased ceased this as an opportunity to punish the widow or retaliate if they were aggrieved by the widow in the past (Edemikpong, 2005).

Though the effects are devastating, the topic has received only minimal attention from the politicians and traditional leaders. A persistent call on the opinion leaders to attend to the plight of these widows is necessary. George et al. (2016) and Sossou (2002) alleged that the challenge presented by the neglect and maltreatment of widows does not receive sufficient attention, as contemporary scholars seem reluctant to reflect on African widowhood rites and their consequences. Many other researchers have decried the lack of scholarly research on global and African widowhood rites and practices even though widows make up a large part of the female population in all societies (George et al 2016; Limann, 2003; Owen 2001; Potash, 1988 & Sossou, 2002). Owen (2001) be-mourns that studies delving into the impacts of widowhood practises is very scanty irrespective of its negative consequences

The literature points to the fact that there are negative effects of widowhood rites across many Ghanaian cultures such as Gurune, Dagaaba, Akan and Ga (Atindanbila et al., 2014; Atinga, 2006; Tei-Ahontu, 2008).

Some researchers also agree on the significance (farewell, proof of innocence and separation) of these rites. The question, however, is, how much research has gone into such effects and what is being done to help stop this barbaric act? Tei-Ahontu (2008) for example focuses on the human right implications of widowhood rites. Atinga (2006) on the other hand focused on the spirituality and the processes of widowhood rites while Atindanbila et al. (2014) focused on the socio-cultural and religious effects of widowhood rites.

In all these cases, the researchers failed to identify the adverse effects of widowhood rites on the psychological distress and the quality of life of widows. The focus of this research has been to find out how widowhood practices have affected widows' psychological distress and whether or not they are satisfied with life.

According to Tei-Ahontu (2008), widows who suffer the consequences related to widowhood are left on their own to stand against the dehumanizing treatment. Widows have little or no control over the rituals they are subjected to and there are no traditional sanctions or punishments meted out to the perpetrators of these practices. There is no doubt that every society has its belief systems and values that regulate and control the way people behave and the cultural practices they perform. Yet no known punishment is meted out to people for engaging women in dehumanizing practices. Agunwa (2011) sums it all when he observed that the heinous rituals a woman goes through as soon as her husband dies are innumerable. The current study is intended to fill in these gaps by studying the Konkomba people and the effects of their widowhood rites.

## **Effects of widowhood rites on the Psychological wellbeing and Satisfaction with Life of Widows**

According to Islam (2019), Psychological distress has been common across the world. Though no specific definition can explain psychological distress, it entails emotional suffering that occurs as a result of the stressors humans face daily. Examples of psychological stressors include depression and anxiety. It is evident that the loss of a partner brings sorrow and this leads to several psychological distresses among partners. Pudrovska and Carr (2008) in a study assessed the extent to which widowhood in one's 50s or early 60s leads to depressive symptoms as part of an objective for a study. The findings from the study revealed that widowed men and women experienced high depressive symptoms and this can persist for two years or more. This reveals that the loss of a partner is one of the painful experiences in the life of an individual and therefore there is the need to provide social support for widows.

Similarly, Onrust et al. (2007) investigated the impact of spousal bereavement on the mental health of widows. The researchers through a cross-sectional study sampled two hundred and sixteen widows. The findings from the study revealed that spousal bereavement can lead to severe stress-related illness. As revealed by Onrust et al. (2007), a study into the prevalence and incidence of Mood and Anxiety Disorders complicating bereavement shows that widows experience high depressive Disorders and several anxiety disorders especially within the first year of the death of the spouse.

Perkins et al, (2016) adopted a cross-sectional representative sample of Nine thousand six hundred and fifteen (9,615) adults over the age of 60 from different regions in India. The main aim of the study was to investigate the relationship between widowhood and psychological distress, cognitive ability

and other diseases. The findings from the study revealed that widowed men and women were more likely to experience psychological distress.

On the wellbeing of widows, Li et al., (2016) assessed the relationship between widow's changes in social participation after the death of their spouse and their reported life satisfaction. The researchers' employed two-wave (2000-2006) national representative data from China. The findings from the study showed that increased social participation of widows leads to higher levels of life satisfaction. This implies that the more widows participated in social gatherings and have the needed human support, the higher their level of satisfaction in life and vice versa. Kang and Ahn (2018) also researched into the impact of the death of relationships with relatives and friends on life satisfaction among widows. By employing data from the National Social Life, Health, and Aging Project (NSHAP), the researchers used survey studies for the study. 57 to 85 years of age widows were selected among a population of 3005. The researchers adopted the Structural Equational Modeling technique to analyse the data and the findings from the study revealed that widows supported by families and relatives with genuine engagements have higher satisfaction levels than those who do not have such engagements.

In a related study, Nnodim, Albert, and Isife (2012) explored the impact of widowhood on the wellbeing of rural widows in Nigeria. The study determined the livelihood of widows, income generation and the level of satisfaction with life and wellbeing. The comparative study engages 300 rural women (155 widows and 145 married women) using multiple sample techniques. Data was gathered using a questionnaire and a structured interview guide. Data analyses were performed using both descriptive and inferential statistics and the findings revealed that widowhood affects livelihood

opportunities, reduced income earning capacity and as a result, the wellbeing of widows are greatly affected. Among the widows, when compared with married women, perceived satisfaction with life was very low.

Ude and Njoku (2017) examined widowhood practices within Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA). Their study revealed that across several tribes and cultures within Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), widows are subjected to stress and other oppression following the death of their partners. The researchers described widowhood practices as a serious social problem. According to them, widowhood rites predispose widows to various forms of oppression, stigmatization, discrimination and deprivation. These abuses render widows powerless and this has an impact on the mental and general wellbeing of widows. Such abuses generally affect the life satisfaction of widows.

Mezieobi, Mezieobi & Iyamu (2011) studied widowhood practices among Igbos of South Eastern Nigeria as a betrayal of the fundamental human rights of women. They used a survey research design to study 250 widows who were randomly selected from the five Igbo states and concluded that widowhood practice still exist among the Igbo people. The findings also revealed that religion, education and modernisation has not been able to stop such a practice though the widows are not comfortable with the widowhood practice and have experienced its negative impacts in various aspects of their lives.

Antwi (2015) on the other hand through a case study design under qualitative research method examined the widowhood rites in the Akuapem traditional society with Akuapem-South Municipality as the case study. Through the use of snowballing sampling method, thirty (30) respondents were selected. The participants included fifteen (15) widows, five (5) queens,

five (5) women who had catered for a widow through widowhood rites and five (5) heads of the family. The conversational interview was employed in soliciting for the data. The findings from the study suggested that no aspect of the widowhood practices were inhumane, rather, the rites provided emotional and psychological support for widows.

The above pieces of evidence prove that widowhood in itself negatively affect the psychological distress of individuals. Though there are reports on the positive impact widowhood practices plays on the life satisfaction of widows, the majority of scholars have the opinion that widowhood practices are inhumane and this affect the overall wellbeing of widows. The above-stated levels of satisfaction were achieved with the support from family and friends. This asserts that, if widowhood rites are performed in such a way as pointed out by Antwi (2015) among the Akuapem people in Ghana, it will have a positive impact on widows and there will be an increase level of life satisfaction among widows as they engage in these rituals. However, as seen from other studies, many of these widowhood practices are inhumane and this generally affects the wellbeing of the widows and lowers the level of life satisfaction of widows even in moments of sadness.

### **Impact of psychological distress on the satisfaction of life of widows engaged in widowhood rites**

The death of a marital partner is viewed as one of the most stressful events in human life (Wilcox et al., 2003) and it is in such period that the other spouse needs the comfort and support from friends and lovely ones. However, widowhood rites in some parts of Ghana performed for widows who lose their husbands rather burdens widows and add to their stress which later affects

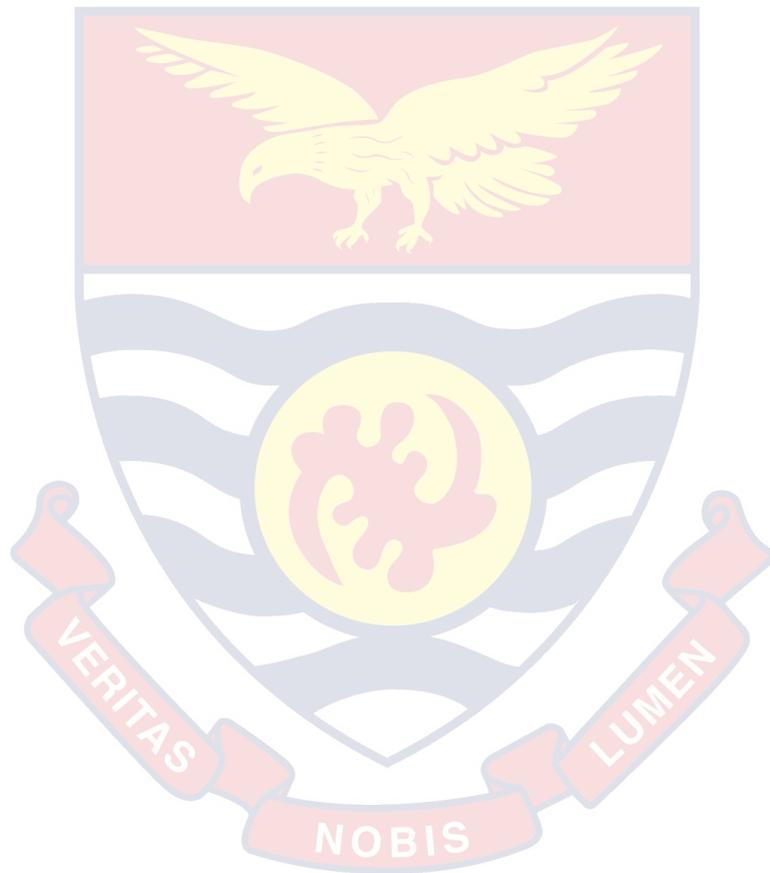
their wellbeing. Atindanbila et al. (2014) researched the effect of widowhood rites on the psychosocial well-being of widows. The researchers employed Nadowli District of the Upper West Region in Ghana as the case study. The objectives of the research were to assess the psychological, economic and social wellbeing of widows who have been through widowhood rites. In collecting the data, the psychosocial Well-being Scale (PSWS) was used to collect data from eighty widows from Nadowli District. T-tests analysis was predominantly used in analyzing the data and findings from the research revealed that widows experience some level of psychological effects after the widowhood rites. Such an effect has an impact on the psychosocial wellbeing of the widow and their life satisfaction.

Manala (2015) examined the impact of widowhood rites and their benefits or how detrimental these rites are to widows in the contexts of African Christianity. The findings were clear that many of the widowhood practices were disrespectful, impolite, unjust treatment to widows, uncaring and very disrespectful to womanhood. Moreover, the researcher pointed out that most of these practices such as forcing widows to drink water from the bath of the husband corpse are detrimental to the health of widows. These findings reveal that many widowhood rites in Africa tend to dehumanize widows and this has a toll on their life satisfaction.

A study conducted by Atindanbilla et al. (2014) reveals that widows, during and after performing widowhood rites, go through financial stress that burdens their lives. This is usually the plight that widows go through because according to Korang-Okra and Haight (2015) after burial, family members of the dead husband cease all properties from the widow and the widow and the children are left to fend for themselves. These widowhood practices are

dehumanizing and have a way to cause psychological stress among widows which will in the long run affect their life satisfaction.

In summary, psychological stress experienced by individuals has a toll on their life satisfaction. In this same vein, a widowhood practice that creates psychological distress among widows will eventually bring unhappiness and this will influence their life satisfaction.



## CHAPTER THREE

### RESEARCH METHODS

#### Introduction

The study investigated the effects of widowhood rites on the psychological distress and satisfaction with life of Konkomba widow in the Saboba District of the Northern Region of Ghana. The chapter focused on the scientific research procedures used for conducting the study. Specific areas of the discussion were the research design, study area, population, inclusion and exclusion criteria, sampling procedure, and data collection instruments. The validation of the instrument, pilot testing of the instrument, ethical consideration, data collection procedures, data processing and analysis procedures were also considered.

#### Research Design

A research design is a general strategy which guides a researcher in data collection and analysis. It provides the structure that identifies the type of data to be gathered, the sources, data collection procedure and the statistical tools for analysis (Tobi, & Kampen, 2018). According to Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2007) the design of a study provides a direct objectives obtained from the study's questions and hypothesis. It thus specifies where data should be collected, the possible challenges as well as the ethical issues to consider.

This study is a quantitative study which made use of the cross-sectional descriptive survey design. According to Wang and Cheng (2020) in a cross-sectional study, the researcher assesses and describes the distribution of the phenomenon as they occur in the population at a single point in time.

Fraenkel and Wallen (2007) opined that cross-sectional study design gathers data from a sample chosen from a population of interest to determine the prevailing characteristics at a given period. In sum, Carlson and Morrison, (2009) described a cross-sectional study as a type of observational study that takes a snapshot of a group of people in a specific area. In other words, the survey gathers data to describe the current status of a phenomenon being studied in a given period.

The cross-sectional survey method was considered appropriate for the study because in this study the aim was to investigate widowhood rites as practiced currently in the Saboba District and determine the prevalence of psychological distress and level of satisfaction with life among widows who have undergone these rites. The study also examined the association among demographic characteristics of respondents with regards to psychological distress and satisfaction with life. Also, the influence of psychological distress on life satisfaction was to be explored. As a requirement for a cross-sectional survey, this study drew a sample from a population of widows in the Saboba District.

Satia (2016) argued that a cross-sectional survey design has the advantage of being easy and faster to conduct and thus it is useful for planning, monitoring and evaluating public policies on a particular issue. Another advantage of this research design is that it allows prevalence of outcome of interest can be estimated and many risk factors and outcomes can be assessed at the same time. Nonetheless, there are associated disadvantages to cross-sectional survey. Zangirolami-Raimundo, Echeimberg, & Leone (2018) revealed that because the data in this survey method are collected in a specific moment, it is difficult to analyse associations and establish possible

cause and effect relationship. Levin (2006) indicated that causal inference cannot be established because the population is influenced by the time frame of the study.

### **Study Area**

The study area for this research is the Saboba District. Saboba is one of the thirteen (13) districts in the Northern region of Ghana. The District is made of five subzones namely Wapuli, Sanguli, Kpalba, Sanboli, and Saboba. A report by USAID, Ghana (SADA Districts' investment opportunities) on the 2010 Population and Housing Census (PHC) indicates that the total population of the district is 71,620 with a total land area of about 3,439km<sup>2</sup> (1328 square miles). Out of the total population, 33,386 are females, representing about 50.82%, and 32,320 are males, representing 49.19%. People within 18 and older forms 28,482, representing 43.35%. Out of this (18 and above), 13,337 are males and 15,145 are females. The natives are predominantly farmers with a few traders amongst them. The district is baffled with poverty, economic hardship, poor road infrastructure and poor academic performance among others. The situation is made worse by the untold hardships because of some cultural practices such as betrothal marriages, early marriage (child marriage), teenage pregnancy, chieftaincy issues, conflicts and widowhood rites.

### **Population**

A study's population is the total number of items or people with similar characteristics that interest a potential researcher (Popoola, 2011). Neumans and Dickinson (2003) described a population as the entire cases or group of individuals from which a sample is chosen by the researcher to represent the population.

In this study, the targeted population was Konkomba widows in the Saboba District who have gone through widowhood rites (about 500 widows may have gone through widowhood at some point in time). Saboba district was selected as the study area because it is one of the districts in Ghana where widowhood rites are still practised. Also, it is a Konkomba populated area in the Northern Region and the hometown of Konkombas. Since no study has been conducted on Konkomba widows it was deemed appropriate to conduct the study to ascertain the effects of widowhood rites on women in this area. Saboba District is one of the thirteen (13) districts in the Northern region of Ghana. A report by USAID, Ghana (SADA Districts' investment opportunities) on the 2010 Population and Housing Census (PHC) indicates that the total population of the district is 71,620 with a total land area of about 3,439km<sup>2</sup> (1328 square miles). Out of the total population, about 33,386 are females, representing about 50.82%, and 32,320 are males, representing 49.19%. People within the ages of 18 and older represent 28,482 of the population (representing 43.35%). Out of this (18 and above), 13,337 are males and 15,145 are females.

The natives are predominantly peasant farmers with a few traders amongst them. The district is baffled with poverty, high rate of school dropout, economic hardship, poor road infrastructure and poor academic performance among others. The situation is made worse by the untold hardships that are as a result of some cultural practices such as betrothal marriages, early marriage (child marriage), conflicts and widowhood rites. An interview with the district gender officer reveals that there are about 1000 widows in the district (representing about 3% of women in the District). Out of this number, it is estimated that about 500 widows have gone through

widowhood rites (Interview with the Gender Officer of Saboba District, January 2020). These statistics show that about 50% of widows have been subjected to widowhood rites at some point in time (Interview with the Gender Officer of Saboba District, January 2020). This also shows that a large number of widows are being subjected to widowhood rites in the Saboba District.

### **Inclusion and exclusion Criteria**

In this study, respondents were widows in Saboba District who had undergone widowhood rites after the death of their husbands. All participants were widows from the Konkomba tribe. Although other tribes reside in the area, they were excluded from the study because the focus was on the Konkomba people unless the widow was married to a male from the Konkomba tribe and is a resident of the Saboba District. The target group comprised of widows of 18 and above years. Widows above 18 years were used because constitutionally it is at age 18 that an individual is seen as an adult and can make decisions for him or herself with less interference. The study participants were also persons who could effectively communicate in Likpakpaaln (Konkomba language), and/or the English language.

### **Sample and Sampling Technique**

A sample of a study refers to a selected few that represent the population in a study. According to Frey, Carl and Grey (2000) a sample is a subgroup of a population. It can be said that the sample unit represents possesses the characteristics similar to the population and thus generalization of findings is valid. According to Leedy and Omrod (2010), sampling describes the method adopted in choosing a sample to represent the general population.

Based on the statistics from the District Gender Officer, 217 participants were estimated given a population of 500 widows who have gone through widowhood rites, in line with the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) sample size determination. However, given the inclusion and exclusion criteria (A widow must be a member of the Konkomba clan, must have undergone widowhood rites and must be 18 and above years), as well as the number of widows who volunteered to participate in the study, an actual sample size of 120 widows was obtained.

The stratified, purposive, snowball and convenience sampling techniques were used for the study. The population as given by the District Gender Officer was grouped under five zones. By the stratified sampling technique, the sample was calculated based on the estimated number of widows in each zone and the estimated sample size in terms of 100%. The procedure is presented in table 1.

Next, the purposive sampling technique was used for selecting the sample from the accessible population for the study. By this survey technique, respondents were selected for the study based on the fact that they were widows from the Konkomba tribe who have undergone widowhood rites as practiced by the Konkomba tribe, and above 18 years were engaged. Participants were also widows who could effectively communicate in Likpakpaaln (Konkomba language), and/or the English language.

Subsequently, Snowballing was used to select participants. In the snowball sampling, I began by identifying individuals who met the criteria for inclusion in the study with the help of an appointed member of each community visited. After identifying a participant, they were then asked to recommend others who they know also met the criteria. Because of the

dehumanizing nature of widowhood rites, some widows were not willing to be identified in public for fear of being tag as a traitor. In this case, snowballing was the best technique to identify and reach out to them.

Lastly, the convenience sampling technique was used to select the final sample for the study. By this survey method, participants were chosen for the fact that they are willing to participate in the study. A total of 120 participants were obtained based on their willingness to volunteer in the study. The obtained sample was also affected by the purposive sampling technique.

The distribution of samples from 5 zones in the district namely Wapuli, Sanguli, Kpalba, Sanboli, and Saboba are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1: Distribution of widow samples by zones.**

Zones	Population	Widows who have undergone Widowhood Rites		
		Proportionate computation sample	Estimate Sample	Actual Sample
Wapuli	100	$(100 \div 500) \times 217 = 43.4$	43	21
Sanguli	120	$(120 \div 500) \times 217 = 52.08$	52	35
Kpalba	80	$(80 \div 500) \times 217 = 34.72$	35	17
Sanboli	50	$(50 \div 500) \times 217 = 21.7$	22	13
Saboba	150	$(150 \div 500) \times 217 = 65.1$	65	34
Total	500		217	120

Source: Saboba District Gender Officer (2020) & Krejcie and Morgan (1970)

#### Data Collection Instrument

The instrument was made up of four (4) sections namely demographic characteristics, widowhood practices, The Brief Distress Inventory, and the Satisfaction with Life Scale.

## Demographic Characteristics

This part of the questionnaire used self-designed questions to gather information on respondents' demographic characteristics such as age, length of widowhood experiences, employment status and religion. Participants indicated as each of this variable apply to them.

## Widowhood Practices among the Konkomba Tribe

Based on reviewed literature (Ojo, 2019; Nyongkah, 2018; Korang-Okra & Haight, 2015; Idialu, 2012; Edemikpong, 2005; United Nations, 2005; Kuenyehia, 1998), some items (section B of the questionnaire) were outlined to assess some common widowhood practices performed by the Konkomba tribe. The statements were also discussed with the District Gender Officer to verify their relatedness to the Konkomba culture. This was because of her experience as a gender officer working in the Saboba District for over a decade. In all, a 10-item statement was selected for the study.

Some items include “*I was made to stay with my husband’s corpse for hours alone or together with others*”, “*I walked barefooted during the widowhood rites*”, “*I was given some concoctions to drink.*”. The items were measured on a dichotomous scale where 1 = *Yes* and 2 = *No*. Analyses of data were conducted using frequencies and percentages. The idea was to find in terms of distributions the number of participants who experienced each of the practices as identified in the literature review. A reliability coefficient was computed for this scale. The results indicated a good coefficient (Cronbach alpha = 0.70)

**The Brief Distress Inventory (TBDI) (Ritsner, Rabinowitz, & Slyuzberg, 1995)**

The Brief Distress Inventory (TBDI) was used to measure the experiences of psychological distress among widows who have undergone widowhood rites in the Saboba District. The self-reporting scale is made up of 24-item questions and measures global psychological distress of persons with traumatic experiences. It has six subscales namely obsessiveness (item 1, 9, 23), hostility (item, 2, 5, 10), sensitiveness (item 7, 8, 12, 13), depression (item 15, 17, 19, 20, 21, 22, 24), anxiety (item 14, 16, 18), and paranoid ideation (item 4, 6, 11). The first 13 items are ranked on a 5-Likert scale ranging from 0 (not at all) to 4 (extremely). The next 10 items which measure the experiences of psychological distress over the past month is also ranked on a 5-Likert scale and ranges from 0 (never) to 4 (Very often). Lastly, item 24 is graded on a 5-Likert scale where 0=very satisfied and 4 = very dissatisfied. Participants were expected to indicate the extent to which each item corresponds to their psychological distress after experiencing widowhood rites.

A criterion mean ( $m=2.0$ ) was determined for the items. An item mean below the criterion mean is an indication that no psychological distress is experienced while a mean score above the criterion measure indicates that a significant level of psychological distress is experienced. To find the overall level of psychological distress, a criterion mean of 48.0 was determined. This was done by multiplying the number of items by the item mean. An obtained mean greater than the overall criterion mean indicates that a significant level of psychological distress was experienced while a score below the criterion mean shows that significantly less psychological distress was experienced.

According to Ritsner et al (1995), an overall score can be computed to determine the level of psychological distress. The instrument demonstrated a good reliability coefficient. Cronbach's alpha ranges from 0.60 – 0.89. In this study the TBDI (the instrument) yielded a good reliability coefficient (Cronbach's alpha = 0.74)

### **Satisfaction with Life Scale (Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985)**

The Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS) was used to assess the quality of life of widows in the Saboba District. The scale contains five (5) items that assess the general satisfaction of people with their life (Diener et al. 1985). It is rated on a 7 Likert scale type ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 7 (Strongly Agree). The sum of scores gives an individual's total satisfaction or dissatisfaction with life.

The highest score is 35 and the lowest score is 5 with the following interpretation: The 30– 35 score range: Very high score (highly satisfied). Persons in this range are regarded as having optimum happiness because most things in their lives are going the way they want it. The 25- 29 score range (High score): individuals who score in this range like their lives and feel that things are going well. They believe their lives are not perfect, but they feel that things are mostly good. The 20 – 24 score range (Average score): the majority of people here are generally satisfied, but have some areas where they very much would like some improvement. Participants within the 15 – 19 score range are below average in life satisfaction. People who score in this range usually have small but significant problems in several areas of their lives or have many areas that are doing fine but one area that represents a substantial problem for them. Again, participants who score 10 – 14 are seen to be dissatisfied. People who score in this range are substantially dissatisfied with

their lives. Persons in this category experience a significant defect in several areas of their lives. Nonetheless, if the dissatisfaction is as results of adverse life events, it is likely that the individual with time will bounce back to his or her earlier level of wellbeing. Extremely dissatisfied individuals score 5 – 9. A score within this range indicates that a person is tremendously affected and unhappy with the course of his life.

Diener et al. (1985) found that the scale had a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.87. A two-month test-retest was high, with an estimated correlation coefficient of 0.82 and a coefficient alpha of 0.87. According to Pavot and Diener (1993), the SWLS can be used as an adjunct scale for questionnaires that assess psychological disorders and psychological wellbeing. For this study the SWL resulted in a good reliability coefficient (Cronbach's alpha = 0.72).

### **Pilot Testing of the Instrument**

A pilot testing of the instrument on thirty (30) widows in the Tatala/Sanguli District of the Northern region was conducted. This district was chosen because it has similar socio-economic and cultural characteristics to that of the study area. The people are predominantly Basares and Konkombas and speak a similar language. They also have similar ways of performing most socio-cultural practices such as widowhood rites, marriage rites, funeral rites and festivals. The purpose of the pilot testing was to help discover weaknesses, ambiguities, inadequacies and problems that the instrument could have so that they could be corrected before the actual data collection. It was also to determine the reliability of the instrument before its usage.

Reliability of the scales were established by computing the Cronbach's Alpha of each section (0.70, 0.74 and 0.72 respectively). In Cronbach's Alpha

model when a tested scale yields consistent results, the scale or inventory is reliable. Cook and Beckman (2006) revealed that a reliability coefficient equal to or above 0.7 is considered appropriate for a study.

### **Ethical Consideration**

Modern research demands that researchers consider and adhere to legal and ethical issues (Yip, Han & Sng, 2016). This ensures the safety of participants and guides researchers to adopt safe and accurate practices during the conduct of a study. This study was submitted to the University of Cape Coast Institutional Review Board (IRB) for approval before data collection. An Ethical clearance letter for the study was issued by the Institutional Review Board of the University of Cape Coast after careful study of the intention of the study. Additionally, an introductory letter from the Department of Guidance and Counselling was given to the “Bitindam”. The documents provided detailed account on the goals of the study, the importance of participation, and the need for individual participation, anonymity as well as confidentiality of respondents’ responses.

Due to the sensitive nature of the questions and to ensure confidentiality, I ensured that the privacy and anonymity of each participant were strictly taken into account. In this regard identity of participants was concealed. Neither names nor any identifiable information from respondents will be taken. Assigned index and numbers were used to identify questionnaire. Confidentiality of participants was ensured and participants’ responses were kept confidential. Participants were also assured that under no instances will their information be given to a third party without their approval.

Informed consent was sought from each participant. This was done by explaining the purpose and benefits of participation in the study to each participant. They were also educated on the voluntary nature of the study. Those who agreed to participate in the study were given an informed consent form to sign or thumbprint. Others also gave verbal consent to participate.

Finally, I ensured that personal perceptions, beliefs and values that could influence the decision-making process during data collection were avoided.

### **Data Collection Procedures**

An introductory and clearance letters from the Department of Guidance and Counselling were sent to the Department of Gender of the Social Welfare, Chiefs and 'Bitindam' (Landlords) of the various communities to introduce myself and the purpose of my visit to their communities. This was in line with the customs of the Konkomba clan. Upon approval from the authorities, participants were visited in their respective homes by the help of an elected member of the area. After explaining the purpose of our visit, eligible widows who voluntarily consent to partake in the study were engaged.

The items on the questionnaire were translated by an expert of the Konkomba language (Mr. James Kunji) and the reliability coefficients of each section were obtained (0.70, 0.74, and 0.72 respectively). The questionnaire was administered with the help of three (3) trained research assistants (teachers of the local language). They are teachers who could read, write and speak the local language (Likpakpaaln language). This was done to avoid different interpretations of the items and also taking into consideration the educational level of the people in the study area (most of whom are illiterates and a few first and second cycle school leavers). The research assistants were

also trained on ethical issues, issues of confidentiality and anonymity. This enabled them to respect the ethical guidelines of the research. Approximately participants used 30 minutes to 45 minutes to complete the questionnaire. Data were collected within a space of three months. Participants were contacted at a different range of time.

### **Data Processing and Analysis**

First, the questionnaires were edited and pre-coded by assigning numbers to pre-determined responses to avoid descriptive responses which make it difficult to manage quantitative data. The editing procedure was to check whether participants had followed directions correctly and whether all items were been responded to appropriately. The questionnaires were numbered for easy identification during data entry. Operations from questionnaires were tabulated and processed using SPSS version 25. Section A, which gathered data on demographic characteristics was analysed descriptively using frequencies and percentages. These included the respondents' age, sex, religion, and employment status. Research question 1 was analysed using frequencies and percentages. Research questions 2 and 3 were analysed using means and standard deviations. Hypothesis 1 was tested using standard multiple regression analysis. Hypothesis 2 was tested using simple linear regression analysis. 3 and 5 were tested using a Kruskal-Wallis H test, hypothesis four was tested using a One Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) and hypothesis six was tested using independent sample t test.

#### **Research question 1:**

The research question demanded that participants indicate the widowhood practices they have experienced. 10 widowhood rites were listed for participants to indicate which rites they were subjected to. The data was

analysed using frequencies and percentages. This was to rate in terms of number and percentages of the experiences of the widows with regards to widowhood practices that they were subjected to.

### **Research Question 2 and 3:**

The objective of this research question was to determine the level of psychological distress and satisfaction with life among widows who have undergone widowhood rites respectively. The analysis was done using means and standard deviations. This was because criterion mean was used as a benchmark against which the obtained mean was compared. The direction of the obtained mean indicated the level.

### **Research Hypothesis 1:**

Research hypothesis one evaluated the impact of psychological distress on the satisfaction with life of widows. The scale of measurement was interval scale. The Hypothesis 1 was tested using standard multiple regression analysis. This is because the statistical tool is used to predict outcome of a variable (satisfaction with life) on the basis of multiple distinct predictor variables (Sub-dimensions of psychological distress). This method was used because I wanted to find out the magnitude of the influence and relationship between the independent variables (obsessiveness, hostility, sensitiveness, depression, anxiety and paranoid ideation) on the dependent variable (satisfaction with life) of participants. In other words, the multiple regression analysis is suitable for explaining variances in satisfaction of widows based on the different subscales of psychological distress. Assumptions were checked before I ran the test. These assumptions were normality (scatter plot) and multicollinearity.

### **Research Hypothesis 2:**

The Research Hypothesis two sought to test whether widowhood rites as practiced by Konkomba tribe impact the life satisfaction of widows in Saboba District. The independent variable was widowhood rites and the dependent variable was the satisfaction with life. To test this hypothesis, simple linear regression was deemed appropriate. This statistical tool is used to show the predicting relationship between two variables. It helps to determine the extent of impact of the independent variable (widowhood rites) on the dependent variable (life satisfaction). However, before running the regression analysis test, the linearity assumption between the independent variable and dependent variable was also checked.

### **Research Hypothesis 3 and 5:**

The objective of hypotheses 3 and 5 were to test for differences in age categories and religious affiliation of Saboba widows respectively in terms of their psychological distress levels. The Kruskal Wallis-H test was adopted to test for these hypotheses. The statistical tool is a non-parametric version of one-way analysis of variances (ANOVA) and is used to determine whether there are statistical significant differences in two or more independent variables when compared with a dependent variable. The assumptions that warrant the use of ANOVA (a parametric test) were not met. This is why Kruskal Wallis H test was adopted.

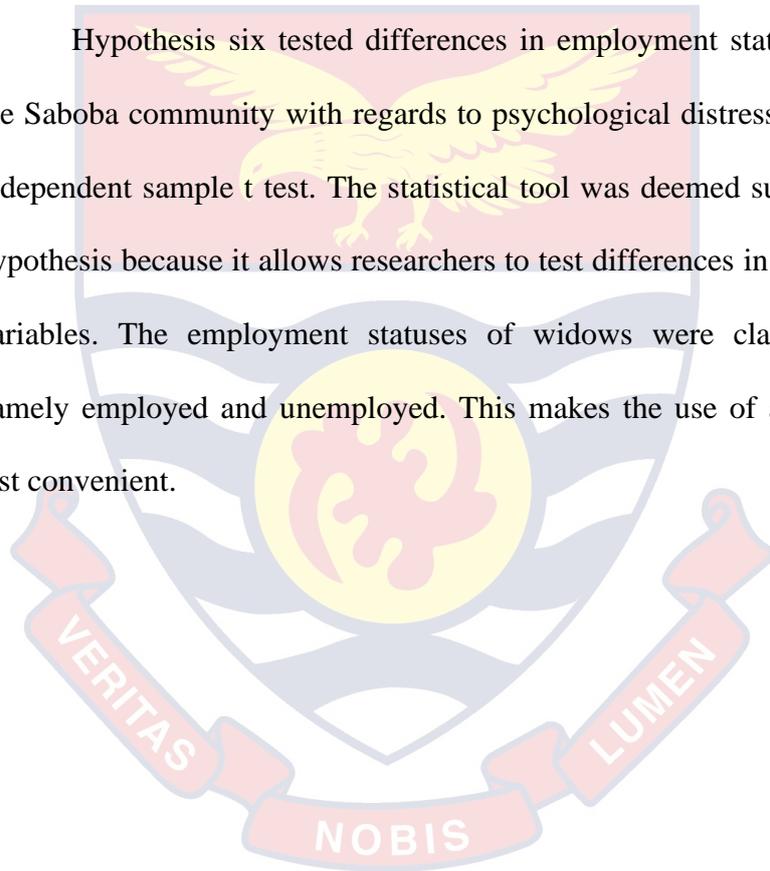
### **Research Hypothesis 4**

Hypothesis four sought to find out whether a significant difference existed between the duration of widowhood rites among widows in Saboba District who have gone through widowhood rites in terms of psychological distress. The statistical tool adopted a One Way Analysis of Variance

(ANOVA). Just like the Kruskal Wallis H test, the One-Way analysis of variances (a parametric tool) test for differences in two or more independent variances when compared to a dependent variable. Homogeneity test was conducted to confirm the assumption that justifies the use of ANOVA and since the sig. value (.595) was greater than .05, variances were assumed equal so ANOVA was used for the test.

### **Research Hypothesis 6**

Hypothesis six tested differences in employment status of widows in the Saboba community with regards to psychological distress levels using the independent sample t test. The statistical tool was deemed suitable to test the hypothesis because it allows researchers to test differences in two independent variables. The employment statuses of widows were classified into two namely employed and unemployed. This makes the use of an Independent t test convenient.



## CHAPTER FOUR

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### Introduction

The study sought to investigate the effects of widowhood rites on the psychological distress and quality of life (life satisfaction with life among Konkomba widows in the Saboba District in the Northern Region of Ghana.

Specific objectives of the study were to:

- i. determine common widowhood rites practices that widows in the Saboba District undergo.
- ii. determine the level of psychological distress among Konkomba widows who have undergone widowhood rites in the Saboba district.
- iii. assess the level of life satisfaction among the Konkomba widows who have undergone widowhood rites in the Saboba district.
- iv. evaluate the effects of psychological distress on the life satisfaction of Konkomba widows.
- v. explore the effects of widowhood practices on the life satisfaction of Konkomba widows.
- vi. explore the relationship among age, duration of widowhood of Konkomba widows in terms of psychological distress.
- vii. explore the relationship between religion and the employment status of Konkomba widows in terms of satisfaction with life.

This chapter presents the results of the analyses and discussions of the findings of the study. Data was collected using questionnaires and the

statistical tools used for the analysis included frequency distributions, means and standard deviations, regression analysis, one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) and Kruskal Wallis H-Test. The tests were conducted for significant differences at a significance level of 0.05.

### Background Data of Participants

The study was carried out in the Saboba District in the Northern Region of Ghana, with a sample size of 120 participants.

#### Age of Participants

Table 2 presents the age distribution of participants involved in the study.

**Table 2: Age Distribution of Widows**

Age (Years)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
18 - 29	5	4.2
30 - 39	19	15.8
40 - 49	55	45.8
50 - 59	25	20.8
60 – 65	16	13.4
Total	120	100.0

Source: Field Survey (2020)

Table 1 shows that 55(45.8%) of the participants were between 40 to 49 years. It was followed by 25(20.8%) who were between 50 to 59 years whilst 5(4.2%) were between 18 to 29 years. It could be concluded that the majority of the study participants were between 40 to 59 years.

#### Period of widowhood

Table 3 presents the length of experience of the participants involved in the study.

**Table 3: Period of widowhood**

<b>Length</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent (%)</b>
Less than 1	20	16.7
1 year	27	22.5
2 years	24	20.0
More than 2	49	40.8
Total	120	100.0

Source: Field Survey (2020)

The results in Table 3 shows that 49 (40.8%) had more than 2 years' experience as a widow whilst 20 (16.7%) had less than 1-year experience.

#### **Employment Status of widows**

Table 4 presents the employment status distribution of participants involved in the study.

**Table 4: Employment Status of widows**

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent (%)</b>
Self-employed	48	40.0
Unemployed	72	60.0
Total	120	100.0

Source: Field Survey (2020)

Table 4 indicates that 72(60.0%) were unemployed whilst 48(40.0%) were self-employed. It is worth noting that the majority of study participants were unemployed. None of the participants was a public worker as indicated on the questionnaire.

### Religion of Participants

Table 5 presents the religion distribution of participants involved in the study.

**Table 5: Distribution of Participants by Religion**

Religion	Frequency	Percent (%)
Christian	58	48.3
Moslem	3	2.5
Traditionalist	59	49.2
Total	120	100.0

Source: Field Survey (2020)

Table 5 reveals that 59(49.2%), representing the majority of participants, were Traditionalist whilst 3(2.5%) were Moslems.

### Analysis of Main Data

**Research Question One:** What are the common widowhood rite practises that widows in the Saboba District undergo?

The purpose of Research Question one was to find out some common widowhood rite practices that widows in the Saboba District experience. Participants were requested to respond to 10 items. The responses were measured using a dichotomous scale “Yes” and “No”. The results of data analysis are presented in Table 6.

**Table 6: Distribution of Common Widowhood Rites Practices**

Item	Yes		No	
	Freq	(%)	Freq	(%)
1. I was made to stay with the corpse for hours alone or together with others.	117	97.5	3	2.5
2. I walked barefooted during the widowhood rites.	90	75.0	30	25.0
3. I was not allowed to eat for several hours when my husband died.	110	91.7	10	8.3
4. My head was shaved during the widowhood rites.	120	100	0	0.0
5. I was not allowed to bathe for three days.	60	50.0	60	50.0
6. I always carry calabash wherever I go.	111	92.5	9	7.5
7. I was given some concoctions to drink	72	60.0	48	40.0
8. I was assaulted physically by men as instructed by oracles.	21	17.5	99	82.5
9. I was forced to marry my husband's brother/relatives.	80	66.7	40	33.3
10. I was not allowed to bath nor change pant (kiyook) throughout the widowhood rite.	86	71.7	34	28.3

Source: Field Survey (2020)

The results from Table 6 shows that 120 (100%) of the participants indicated that their heads were shaved during widowhood. It was revealed that 117 (97.5%) mentioned that they were made to stay with the corpse for hours alone or together with others. Also, 111 (92.5%) indicated that they always

carried calabash wherever they went. Moreover, 110 (91.7%) opined that they were not allowed to eat for several hours when their husband died.

Additionally, it was found that 90 (75.0%) walked barefooted during the widowhood. Furthermore, 86 (71.7%) indicated that they were not allowed to bath nor 86 change pant (kiyook) throughout the widowhood rite. It was also found that 80 (66.7%) were forced to sleep with their husband's brother/relatives. It is evident from the findings of the study that widows in the Saboba District undergo so many widowhood ritual practices.

**Research Question Two:** What is the level of psychological distress among Konkomba widows who have undergone widowhood rites in the Saboba District?

Research question two sought to discover the level of psychological distress among Konkomba widows with widowhood rites experiences in the Saboba District. Participants were requested to respond to twenty-four items measured on a 5-Likert scale. The instrument for data collection measured 6 psychological disorders namely, Obsessiveness, Hostility, Sensitiveness, Depression, Anxiety, and Paranoid. A one-sample t-test was conducted to test the statistical significance of the means at 0.05 level of significance. A test value of 2 was used as a cut-off point for each item. The cut-off point of 2 was obtained by summing the weight of the responses divided by the total number of responses. Similarly, a cut-off point was calculated for the sub-scales. This was done by multiplying the number of items in each sub-scale to the cut-off point of an item (2.0). The means of the subscales are as follows: obsessiveness = 6.0, Hostility = 6.0, Sensitiveness = 8.0, Depression =, Anxiety = 14.0 and Paranoid = 6.0. The result is presented in Tables 7.

Furthermore, an overall mean score was computed on the general level of psychological distress by transforming the individual psychological distress into a general level of psychological distress. This was done by combining all the individual psychological distress into single psychological distress termed general psychological distress. The cut-off point for the items was calculated by multiplying the number of items (24 items) by the cut-off point value (2). This gave a value of 48 as the criterion mean. The 48 was then compared with the overall obtained mean score for the level of psychological distress. Table 8 presents the general level of psychological distress.

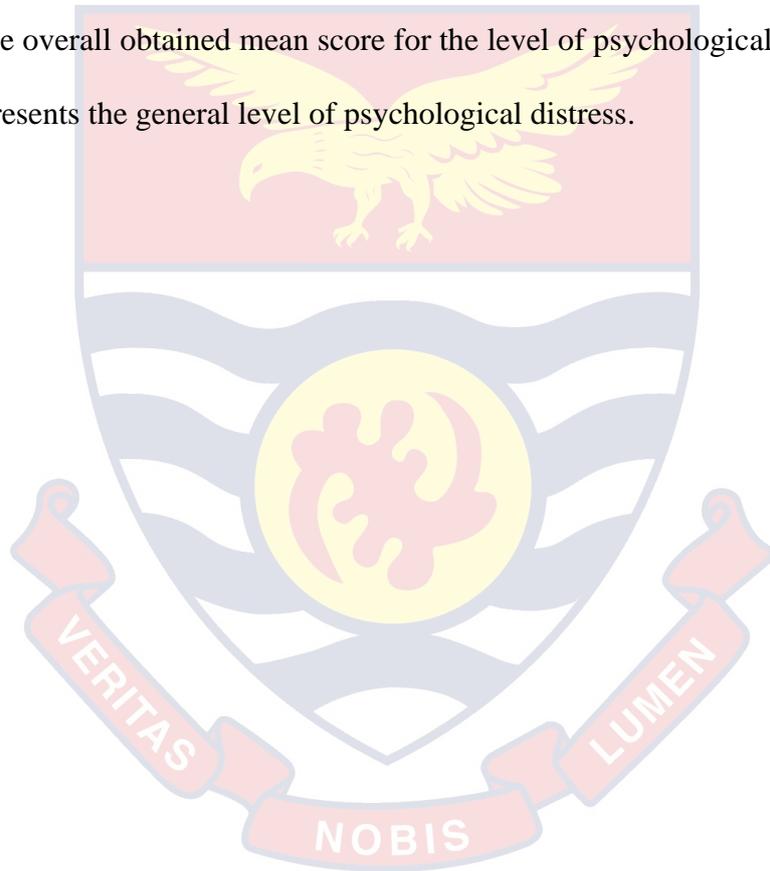


Table 7: One-Sample t-test of Level of Psychological Distress among Konkomba Widows

Variable	M	SD	t-value	df	p-value
<b><u>Obsessiveness</u></b>					
1. Trouble remembering things	2.17	1.27	18.464	119	.000
9. Difficulty making decisions	2.33	1.12	22.505	119	.000
23. During the past month, how often have you have trouble concentrating or keeping your mind on what you were doing?	1.13	.90	13.641	119	.000
<b>Overall mean</b>	<b>5.69</b>	<b>2.27</b>	<b>27.412</b>	<b>119</b>	<b>.000</b>
<b><u>Hostility</u></b>					
2. Feeling easily annoyed or irritated	1.16	1.34	9.415	119	.000
5. Temper outbursts that you could not control	1.25	1.16	11.577	119	.000
10. Getting into frequent arguments	.75	.84	9.645	119	.000
<b>Overall mean</b>	<b>3.20</b>	<b>2.62</b>	<b>13.360</b>	<b>119</b>	<b>.000</b>

**Table 7: Continued**

<b><u>Sensitiveness</u></b>					
7. Your feelings being easily hurt	3.23	1.23	19.584	119	.000
8. Feeling that people are unfriendly or dislike you	2.69	1.29	22.559	119	.000
12. Feelings of worthlessness	2.53	1.40	19.591	119	.000
13. Feelings of guilt	.59	.96	6.682	119	.000
<b>Overall mean</b>	<b>9.04</b>	<b>3.08</b>	<b>28.804</b>	<b>119</b>	<b>.000</b>
<b><u>Depression</u></b>					
15. During the past month, how often have you been bothered by feelings of sadness or depression-feeling blue?	1.20	1.18	11.080	119	.000
17. During the past month, how often have you felt useless?	1.10	1.02	11.767	119	.000
19. During the past month, how often have you felt that nothing turns out for you the way you want it to, would you say...	1.10	.95	12.602	119	.000

**Table 7: Continued**

20. During the past month, how often have you felt completely hopeless about everything, would you say...	.94	.97	10.605	119	.000
21. During the past month, how often have you felt completely hopeless?	1.03	1.00	11.232	119	.000
22. During the past month, how often have you had times you couldn't help wondering if anything was worthwhile anymore?	.98	1.00	10.684	119	.000
24. In general, how satisfied have you been with yourself during the last year?	1.03	.79	14.151	119	.000
<b>Overall mean</b>	<b>7.65</b>	<b>5.49</b>	<b>15.263</b>	<b>119</b>	<b>.000</b>
<b><u>Anxiety</u></b>					
14. During the past month, how often have you had attacks of fear or panic?	2.66	1.15	12.636	119	.000
16. During the past month, how often have you been bothered by nervousness, being fidgety?	2.45	1.23	13.521	119	.000
18. During the past month, how often have you felt anxious?	1.98	.93	13.868	119	.000
<b>Overall mean</b>	<b>7.09</b>	<b>3.31</b>	<b>15.169</b>	<b>119</b>	<b>.000</b>

**Table7: Continued**

**Paranoid ideation**

4. Feeling that most people cannot be trusted	3.47	1.42	18.808	119	.000
6. Feeling lonely even when you are with people	2.71	1.33	22.08	119	.000
11. Others not giving you proper credit for your achievements	2.54	1.33	13.940	119	.000
<b>Overall mean</b>	<b>8.72</b>	<b>2.99</b>	<b>25.434</b>	<b>119</b>	<b>.000</b>

Source: Field Survey (2020)

Significant at p<



**Table 8: One-Sample t-Test of General Level of Psychological Distress**

Psychological distress	Overall Mean	t-value	Df	p-value
General level of psychological distress	56.26	17.772	119	.000

Source: Field Survey, (2020) Significant at  $p < .05$

As shown in Table 8, the t-value of 177.772 was statistically significant at 0.05 level of significance. The idea was to find out the level of psychological distress (dependent variable) that is experienced by widows who have gone through widowhood rites (independent variables). The findings revealed that generally widows who observed widowhood rites in the Konkomba tribe experienced a significantly high level of psychological distress. This is evident from the result of the one-sample t-test which indicated significant differences between criterion mean (48.0) and the obtained mean of 56.26;  $t(119\text{ df}) = 17.772, p < .05$ . The overall mean score for the level of psychological distress is greater than the mean score for the items (48). This implies that the level of psychological distress among Konkomba widows who underwent widowhood rites in the Saboba district is significantly high.

Furthermore, Psychological Distress subscales namely Sensitiveness ( $M=9.04, SD= 3.08, t(119) = 28.804, p < 0.05, 2\text{-tailed}$ ), Anxiety ( $M=7.09, SD= 3.31, t(119)= 15.169, p < 0.05, 2\text{-tailed}$ ), and Paranoid behaviour ( $M=8.72, SD= 2.99, t(119) = 25.434, p < 0.05, 2\text{-tailed}$ ) were significantly high. This is because when compared with the criterion mean for each subscale, the obtained mean scores for these three subscales were greater.

**Research Question Three:** What is the level of satisfaction with life among the Konkomba widows who have undergone widowhood rites in the Saboba district?

Research question three determined the level of satisfaction with life among the Konkomba widows who underwent widowhood rites in the Saboba district. Participants were requested to respond to 5-item related assessing general satisfaction with life. The items were ranked on a 7 Likert scale namely (1) 'Strongly Disagree', (2) 'Disagree', (3) 'Slightly Disagree', (4) 'Neither Agree nor Disagree', (5) 'Slightly Agree', (6) 'Agree' and (7) 'Strongly Agree'. Participants were expected to indicate the extent to which they agree or disagree with each item that measures their life satisfaction. A one-sample t-test was conducted to test the statistical significance of the means at 0.05 level of significance. A test value of 4.0 was used as a cut-off point. The cut-off point of 4 was obtained by summing the weighted responses and dividing by the total number of responses.

An overall mean score was further computed on the general level of satisfaction with life by transforming individual satisfaction with life into a general level of satisfaction. This was done by combining all the individual satisfaction with life items into a single satisfaction with life termed general satisfaction with life. The cut-off point for the items was calculated by multiplying the number of items (5 items) by the cut-off point value (4). This gave a value of 20. The 20 was then compared with the overall mean score for level of satisfaction with life. Table 9 presents the results.

**Table 9: Means and Standard Deviation for satisfaction with life among widows.**

Items	M	SD
1. In most ways my life is close to my ideal.	2.21	1.27
2. The conditions of my life are excellent.	1.88	1.18
3. I am satisfied with my life.	2.08	1.24
4. So far, I have gotten the important things in my life.	2.15	1.07
5. If I could live my life over, I would change almost nothing.	3.13	1.87
General Satisfaction with life	11.50	6.63

Source: Field Survey, (2020)

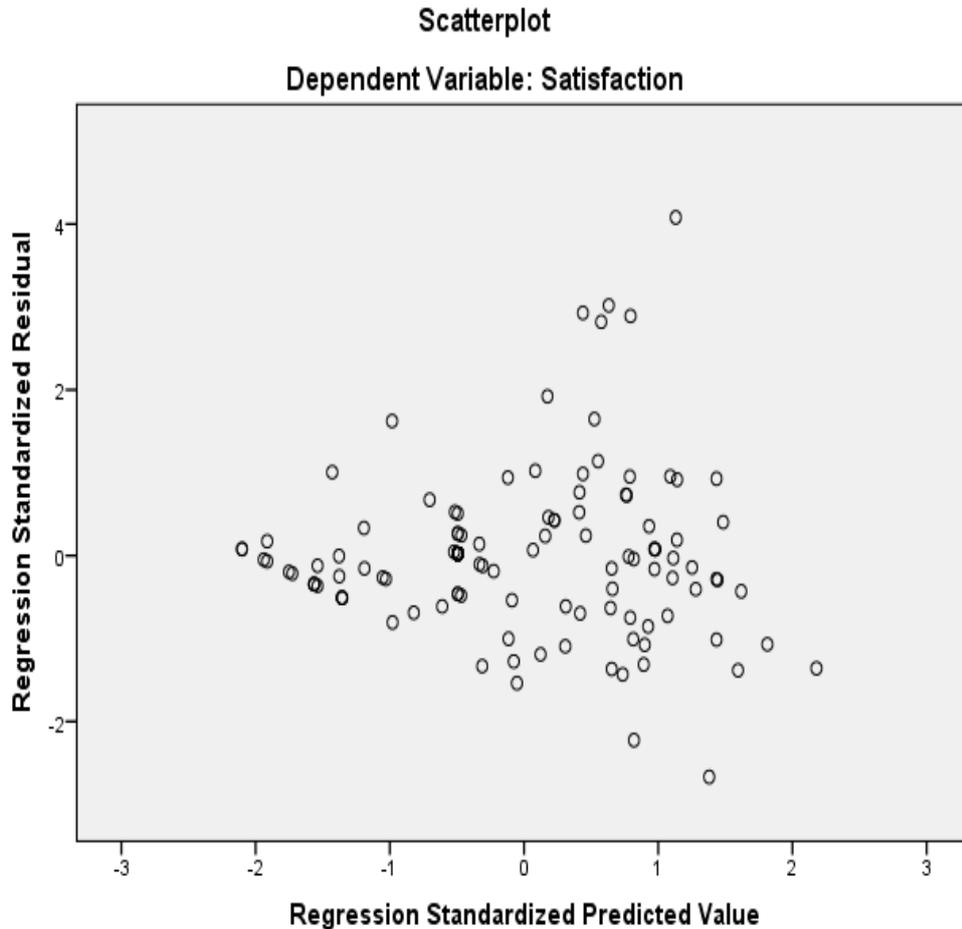
\*Significant,  $p < .05$ 

Results from Table 9 shows that generally, Konkomba widows in the Saboba District have significantly low satisfaction with life. Evident from the one sample t-test, the overall (obtained mean) ( $M = 11.50$ ,  $SD = 6.63$ ) is statistically lower than the criterion mean of 20. According to Diener et al (1985), a means score between 10 and 14 is said to be dissatisfied with life. This is because participants in this classification have several areas of life that is not going the way they expected. From the table, it was obvious that participants' mean score on all the domains (items) were below the criterion mean (4.0). The results of the study imply that the quality of life of Konkomba widows was affected due to the death of their spouse and the severe widowhood rites they underwent.

### **Hypothesis One**

H<sub>1</sub>: There is a statistically significant influence of psychological distress on the satisfaction with life of Konkomba widows.

The focus of this hypothesis was to find out the extent to which psychological distress of widows who have gone through widowhood rites in Saboba District influence their satisfaction with life. The independent variables were obsessiveness, hostility, sensitiveness, depression, anxiety and paranoid ideation. The dependent variable was the satisfaction with life. The standard multiple regression was used to test this hypothesis. Standard multiple regression helped show the magnitude of the influence and relationship between the independent variables on the dependent variable (satisfaction with life) of participants. This approach allowed me to identify the respective contribution of each independent variable to the dependent variable. However, before running regression analysis test, assumptions were checked. These assumptions were normality (scatter plot) and multicollinearity. Figure 2 presents the scatter plot normality test of the study variables.



*Figure 2-Scatter plot of normality*

Source: Field Survey, (2020)

From Figure 2, it was observed that most of the scores were reasonably close and quite concentrated in the centre. Pallant (2016) asserts that observation is normal when most of the scores are concentrated in the centre. Multicollinearity (tolerance and variance factor) test was conducted to support the scatter plot normality assumption. Table 10 presents the multicollinearity results.

**Table 8: Multicollinearity Test for the influence of Psychological Distress on Satisfaction with Life**

Variables	Correlations		Multicollinearity	
	Life satisfaction	Tolerance	VIF	
Obsessiveness	.01	.55	1.81	
Hostility	.25	.67	1.47	
Sensitiveness	-.08	.37	2.63	
Depression	.06	.35	2.79	
Anxiety	.09	.40	2.50	
Paranoid ideation	-.17	.41	2.38	

Source: Field Survey, (2020)

Although multicollinearity test revealed low correlations between the independent variables (Obsession, Hostility, Sensitiveness, Depression, Anxiety and Paranoid ideation) and dependent variable (Satisfaction with life) which was less than 0.3 suggesting the independent variables did not correlate substantially with the dependent variables, the results from tolerance figures were not less than 0.10 which, according to Pallant (2016), was appropriate. Furthermore, the variance inflation factor (VIF) results (1.81, 1.47, 2.63, 2.79, 2.50 and 2.38) met the acceptable standard which stipulates that VIF values must be less than .10. From Table 10, it is evident that there is no problem of multicollinearity since both the tolerance and variance inflation factor results met the acceptable cut-off points. Standard multiple regression analysis was therefore conducted to ascertain the unique contributions of independent variables.

**Table 9: Regression Analysis of Psychological Distress Influence on Satisfaction with Life**

Model	Unstandardized		Standardized		
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t-value	p-value
(Constant)	12.573	1.473		8.537*	.000
Obsessiveness	.035	.224	.015	.158*	.875
Hostility	.612	.175	.308	3.495*	.001
Sensitiveness	-.225	.199	-.133	-1.129*	.261
Depression	.104	.115	.110	.904*	.368
Anxiety	.303	.239	.146	1.269*	.207
Paranoid ideation	-.467	.195	-.269	-2.395*	.018

Source: Field Survey, (2020) \*Significant, p<.05

Dependent variable = Satisfaction with life

It can be seen from Table 11 that with the exception of hostility and paranoid ideation, the rest of the six subscales (independent) are not statistically significant at 0.05 level of confidence. This is because the sig. value for all the factors is greater than 0.05. As regards the standardized beta values, (correlation) among the factors, it was revealed that the significant predictor upon the dependent variable are hostility (beta=.308, p = .001) and paranoid ideation (beta=-2.395, p = .018). Anxiety was a predictor of satisfaction with life of widows but was not significant (beta=.146, p = .207), sensitiveness (beta=-.133, p = .261), depression (beta=.110, p = .368) and obsessiveness (beta=-.015, p = .875). Table 12 presents the results of the contributions of each of the independent variable.

**Table 10: Analysis of Results of Contributions of Each Independent**

Variable	R	R <sup>2</sup>	Percent (%)
1. Hostility	.31	.23	23.0
2. Paranoid ideation	-.22	.08	8.0
3. Anxiety	.11	.07	7.0
4. Sensitiveness	-.10	-	-
5. Depression	.08	-	-
6. Obsessiveness	.01	-	-
7. Overall	0.83	.38	38.0

Source: Field Survey, (2020)

Table 12 contains how each of the predictors contributed to satisfaction with life. The hostility R<sup>2</sup> result of .23 representing 23% contributed the highest to satisfaction with life. Paranoid ideation contributed R<sup>2</sup> results of .08 representing 8% indicating the second contributor and Anxiety contributed R<sup>2</sup> value of .07 representing 7% showing the third contributor. The result of this research hypothesis is that hostility was identified as the best predictor of satisfaction with life. Overall, it was identified that psychological distress among widows explained 38% variance of satisfaction with life. Hence, the Alternative hypothesis (H<sub>1</sub>) which states that there will be a significant influence of Psychological Distress on the Satisfaction with the life of widows in the Saboba District is supported against the null hypothesis (H<sub>0</sub>).

## Research Hypothesis Two

H<sub>1</sub>: There is a statistical significant effect of widowhood rites on the Satisfaction with Life of Konkomba widows who underwent widowhood rites in Saboba District.

Hypothesis two sought to test whether widowhood rites as practiced by Konkomba tribe impact the life satisfaction of widows in Saboba District. The independent variable was widowhood rites. The dependent variable was the satisfaction with life. To test this hypothesis, simple linear regression was deemed appropriate. However, before running the regression analysis test, assumptions were checked. The linearity assumption between the independent variable and dependent variable was checked and the results showed a moderate positive relationship ( $R=.42$ ). Table 12 presents the result of the data analysis.

**Table 11: Regression Analysis of influence of Widowhood Rite on Satisfaction with Life**

Model	R	R <sup>2</sup>	t-value	p-value
(Constant)			-1.520	.131
Widowhood rites	.42	.17	5.043*	.000

Source: Field Survey, (2020) \*Significant,  $p<.05$

The results from Table 13 revealed a significant influence of widowhood rites on satisfaction with life ( $R = .42$ ,  $p= .000$ ). This implies that widowhood rites of participants explain 17% of the variation in satisfaction with life of participants. Hence, the null hypothesis was rejected in favour of the alternative hypothesis which states that there is a significant effect of

widowhood rites on the life satisfaction of Konkomba widows who have gone through widowhood rites in Saboba District.

**Hypothesis Three**

Ho: There is no statistically significant difference between the ages of Saboba widows in terms of psychological distress.

H<sub>1</sub>: There is a statistically significant difference between the ages of Saboba widows in terms of psychological distress.

The purpose of research hypothesis three was to find out whether a significant difference exists between the ages of Saboba widows in terms of psychological distress.

**Table 12: Test of Normality variances for Age and Psychological Distress among Widows**

	Age (Years)	Shapiro-Wilk		
		Statistic	Df	Sig.
Psychological distress	18 - 29	.921	5	.535
	30 – 39	.860	19	.010
	40 - 49	.823	55	.000
	50 – 59	.980	25	.877
	60 and above	.893	16	.062

Source: Field Survey, (2020)

From Table 14, the result for “18 to 29”, “50 to 59” and “60 and above” group the dependent variable “psychological distress” was normally distributed. This is because the Sig. value of the Shapiro-Wilk Test is greater than 0.05. However, for “30 to 39” and “40 to 49” group the dependent

variable “psychological distress”, was not normally distributed. This is because the Sig. value of the Shapiro-Wilk Test is less than 0.05.

A test of Homogeneity of Variances was conducted to confirm the assumption that justifies the use of the parametric statistical tool *ANOVA*.

**Table 13: Test of Homogeneity of Variances for Age and Psychological Distress among Widows**

Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
7.071	4	115	.000

Source: Field Survey, (2020)

From Table 15, the sig. value is less than 0.05, therefore, variances are not assumed equal. This result denies the use of ANOVA. Hence, Kruskal Wallis H test was used for the test.

**Table 14: Kruskal-Wallis H Test of Ages in Terms of Psychological Distress among Widows**

	Age	N	Mean Rank	Chi-Square	Df	p. value
Psychological distress	18 - 29	5	52.70	1.641	4	.801
	30 – 39	19	68.61			
	40 - 49	55	60.79			
	50 - 59	25	57.22			
	60 and above	16	57.44			
	Total	120				

Source: Field Survey, (2020)

The Kruskal-Wallis H test showed that there was no statistically significant difference in psychological distress between the different ages ( $\chi^2(4) = 1.641, p = .801$ ), with a mean rank psychological distress result of 52.70 for 18 to 29 years, 68.61 for 30 to 39 years, 60.79 for 40 to 49 years, 57.22 for 50 to 59 years, and 57.44 for 60 and above years. The results imply that regard to the different category of Konkomba widows age, there are no differences in the experienced of psychological distress. In other words, being a young or old widow is associated with a similar experience of psychological distress.

**Hypothesis Four**

Ho: There is no statistically significant difference between the duration of widowhood Saboba widows in terms of psychological distress.

H<sub>1</sub>: There is a statistically significant difference between the duration of widowhood Saboba widows in terms of psychological distress.

Hypothesis four sought to find out whether a significant difference exists between the duration of widowhood rites among Saboba widows in terms of psychological distress.

**Table 17: Test of Normality variances for Duration of Widowhood and Psychological Distress among Widows**

Duration (Years)	Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	Df	Sig.
Less than 1	.825	20	.002
1 year	.951	27	.225
2 years	.943	24	.190
More than 2	.780	49	.000

Source: Field Survey, (2020)

From Table 17, the result for “1 year” and “2 years” group the dependent variable “psychological distress” was normally distributed. This is because the Sig. value of the Shapiro-Wilk Test is greater than 0.05. However, for “less than 1” and “more than 2” group the dependent variable “psychological distress”, was not normally distributed. This is because the Sig. value of the Shapiro-Wilk Test is less than 0.05.

**Table 158: Test of Homogeneity for Duration of Widowhood and**

<b>Psychological Distress among Widows</b>			
Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
.636	3	116	.593

Source: Field Survey, (2020)

From Table 18, the sig. value is greater than 0.05, therefore, variances are assumed equal. Hence, one-way analysis variance (ANOVA) was used for the test.

**Table 19: ANOVA results for Duration of Widowhood Rites in**

<b>Psychological Distress</b>					
	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	p-value
Between Groups	1218.665	3	406.222	1.227	.303
Within Groups	38412.802	116	331.145		
Total	39631.467	119			

Source: Field Survey, (2020)

From the one-way ANOVA,  $F(3, 116) = 1.227$ ,  $p = .303$ . The result shows that there is no significant difference within the duration categories of widowhood rites in terms of psychological distress. The results indicate that

the length of widowhood does not determine the experience of psychological distress among widows. Thus, the experience of high psychological distress among Konkomba widows is not determined by the number of years of being a widow.

**Hypothesis Five**

Ho: There is no statistically significant difference between the religious affiliations of Saboba widows in terms of psychological distress.

H<sub>1</sub>: There is a statistically significant difference between the religion Saboba widows in terms of psychological distress.

The purpose of this hypothesis was to explore whether a significant difference existed between the religions of Saboba widows in terms of psychological distress.

**Table 16: Test of Normality variances for Religious Affiliation and Psychological Distress among Widows**

		Shapiro-Wilk		
Religion		Statistic	Df	Sig.
Psychological distress	Christian	.945	58	.011
	Moslem	.750	3	.000
	Traditionalist	.788	59	.000

Source: Field Survey, (2020)

From Table 20, the result for “Christian”, “Moslem” and “Traditionalist” group the dependent variable “psychological distress” was not normally distributed. This is because the Sig. value of the Shapiro-Wilk Test was less than 0.05.

**Table 17: Test of Homogeneity for Religion of Widowhood and Psychological Distress among Widows**

Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
8.434	2	117	.000

Source: Field Survey, (2020)

From Table 21, the sig. value is less than 0.05, therefore, variances are not assumed equal. Hence, Kruskal Wallis H test was used for the test.

**Table 18: Kruskal Wallis H-Test of Religion on Psychological Distress**

Religion	N	Mean Rank	Chi-square	df	p-value
Christian	58	63.13	.825	2	.662
Moslem	3	66.33			
Traditionalist	59	57.62			
Total	120				

Source: Field Survey, (2020)

The Kruskal-Wallis H test showed that there was no statistically significant difference in psychological distress between the different religious affiliation of participants,  $\chi^2 (2) = .825$ ,  $p = .662$ , with a mean rank psychological distress result of 63.13 for Christian, 66.33 for Moslem and 57.62 for Traditionalist. The findings imply that no significant difference exists in the religious affiliation of widows with regards to psychological distress. In other words, Christians, Traditionalists, and Moslems experienced a similar level of psychological distress.

**Hypothesis Six**

Ho: There is no statistically significant difference between the employment status of Saboba widows in terms of psychological distress.

H<sub>1</sub>: There is a statistically significant difference between the employment status Saboba widows in terms of psychological distress.

Hypothesis six determined whether a significant difference existed between the employment status of Saboba widows in terms of psychological distress.

**Table 19: Independent Sample T-test Employment Status on Psychological Distress among Widows**

Psychological Distress	N	Mean	SD	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
Self-Employed	48	66.34	7.53			
				3.215	119	.132
Unemployed	72	56.60	7.28			

Source: Field Survey, (2021) Significant,  $p < 0.05$

The results from Table 23 shows that psychological distress of self-employed (M = 66.34, SD = 7.52) were significantly higher than the unemployed (M = 56.50, SD = 7.28). However, the differences were not statistically significant ( $t(376) = 3.215, p < 0.01$ ). The result implies that there is no statistical significance difference in the employment status of widows of Soboba with regards to their psychological distress. This connotes that both the employed and the unemployed experience the same level of psychological distresses.

## Discussion of Findings

The purpose of Research Question One was to find out the common widowhood rites practices that widows in the Saboba District experienced. Results revealed that during widowhood, Konkomba widows experienced hair shavings, staying with corpses for many hours, carry calabash wherever they went, fasting for hours, denial of basic personal hygiene for days, forced marriages to deceased relatives among others. The findings from the analyses suggest that widowhood rites as practised by the Konkomba tribe of Northern Ghana share many similarities with practices in Ghana and the African sub-region. From the findings, the major widowhood practises in this area include the shaving of the widow's hair (all widows in the study experienced this), stay with the husband's corpse for hours, and carrying calabash where ever the widow goes. Others include fasting for hours, denial of personal hygiene, forceful marriage to husband's relative, walking barefooted, and drinking concoctions.

Consistent with the findings of the study, Atindanbila et al (2014) revealed that in the Nadowli District in the upper west region of Ghana, a widow's hair is shaved at a cross road, she is required to tie a rope around her waist and marry either the husband's brothers or relatives. In their study, it was shown that refusal to obey will lead to being disowned by in-laws and family as well as denial of inheritance from the spouse property. Atindanbila et al. (2014) also report that among the Nadowli people, the widow neither baths nor changes her clothes for 40 days.

Among the Ga tribe in Ghana, widows are confined in separate rooms, they are cleansed by taking a bath at a refuse dump and the seashore. They are

forbidden to talk to other individuals during the period of seclusion (Tei-Ahontu, 2008, Atinga, 2006). Ansotinge (2002) discovered that in the Dagaaba tribe widows undergo fidelity testing to their husband when he was alive. They are also required to cover some parts of their bodies with clay or ashes, wearing a rope for identification and having their hair shaved. Atinga (2006) and Anafo (2010) observed similar practises among the Frafra clan in Ghana. Konkomba widows also wear a rope (*Nkpopiigmin*) around their neck and wrist.

Similarly, Idialu (2012) studied the treatment widows undergo during widowhood rites in Africa. In the study, varied practices were observed across the continent. These include swearing innocence on the husband's corpse, chewing cola nut, eating with left hands from a broken plate, marrying a relative of her deceased husband, exposing her nakedness, going into the bush in the middle of the night, drinking water used for washing the corpse, staying with the body of her late husband, dispossession of properties, hair shaving, being deprived of basic personal hygiene, and forcing to wail continuously. In the study, Idialu observed that the practices may differ depending on the beliefs of the community or tribe. Nonetheless, it must be noted that as observed from the Konkomba tribe, the widowhood rites share many similarities.

In the same way, Ajayi, Olanrewaju, Olanrewju, and Nwannebuife (2019) evaluated the association of widowhood rites with gender violence and human rights of widows in Nigeria. In their study, the authors found that widows were subjected to harmful practises such as consumption of water used for bathing the corpse, staying with the corpse in a room, forced marriage

to the deceased brothers or relatives, isolation in a room for days, wailing aloud, and prohibition to have a conversation with others. Similar observations were made by (Ohiage, 2017; Pemunta & Alubafi, 2016; Merry, 2006).

It could be observed from this study and the discussion based on the literature reviewed that similarities exist in the practices of widowhood rites among the various tribes in Africa and Ghana. However, the beliefs and notion behind each culture, the intensity and the procedure may differ. The findings of this study provide an insight into widowhood rites as practised by the Konkomba tribe.

Research Question Two sought to discover the level of psychological distress among Konkomba widows with widowhood rites experiences in the Saboba district. The findings revealed that generally widows who observed widowhood rites in the Konkomba tribe experienced a significantly high level of psychological distress. It was also found that specific psychological distresses of widows include Sensitiveness, Anxiety and Paranoid Ideations. Widows in the study reported a significantly low level of depression. Overall, the findings of Research Question 2 implies that widows from the Konkomba tribe experienced significant psychological distress in the form of being sensitive to issues and people, feeling anxious and became paranoid after undergoing widowhood rites.

According to the measurement of psychological distress, Sensitiveness among widows was manifested in the form of being emotionally hurt, the feelings that people dislike them, and feeling worthless, and having a sense of guilt. Anxiety was experienced in the form of panic attacks, being nervous, and anxious. Also, paranoid ideation included mistrusting people, loneliness

despite the presence of friends and family, and feeling unappreciated. Similarly, Kalmijn (2017) found that the experiences of traumatic and stressful events (divorce or bereavement) are associated with episodes of depression. In this study, widows experienced paranoid ideation, sensitiveness and Anxiety. No significant level of depression was observed. Yu, Kahana, Kahana, and Han (2019) reported that widows have suffered extreme consequences of widowhood rites which led them into depression and anxiety disorders (Yu et al., 2019). With reference to the results of the study, it could be established that among the Konkomba tribe, widows who undergo widowhood rites experience adverse effect on their psychological distress. In other words, the practice of widowhood rites adversely affects the psychological wellbeing of widows.

Atindanbila et al (2014) reported that widowhood rites significantly affect the psychosocial wellbeing of widows. This was realized during their study on the effects of the practices among widows in the Nadowli District in the Northern Region. In a related study, Perkins et al (2016) adopted a cross-sectional representative sample of Nine thousand six hundred and fifteen (9,615) adults over the age of 60 from different regions in India. The overall purpose of study was to examine the association between widowhood and psychological distress, cognitive ability and other diseases. The findings from the study revealed that widowed men and women are at a greater disadvantage of experiencing psychological distress. Likewise, Ojo (2019) reported that the treatment of widows during widowhood observance is very dehumanising and often is associated with long term psychological disorders. Azumah and

Nachinaab (2018) also indicated that widowhood causes pain and discomfort to widows since they are mostly accused of causing the death of their beloved.

Consistent with my findings, Ohiaege (2017) found that the harmful and dehumanizing nature associated with widowhood rites impose negative effects on the psychological and emotional health of widows. According to Saluun, Timin, Sokpo and Shittu, (2019), the loss of a spouse is a traumatic experience for the living partner, especially the women. Consequently, the practice of widowhood rites increases the already stressful experience and thus the psychological health of such widows is affected. It was not surprising to observe in the current study that widows who underwent widowhood rites in the Konkomba tribe experienced a significantly higher level of psychological distress.

Contrary to this study findings, Amlor and Owusu (2016) argued that widowhood ritual is rather a mental enhancement to help the widow take up a single parent's roles rather than causing any mental health challenges. This line of argument is also supported by Pazzack and Imam (2015). In a study of widowhood rites among the Dagombas' Pazzack and Imam argued that the practice is harmful, though traditional practises not instituted to devalue women. Several studies (Nyongkak, 2018; Okoro & Nkama, 2018; Tasie, 2013; Oyeniya & Ayodeji, 2010; Gunga, 2009) have also explored the benefits and justification of widowhood rites. According to these studies, widowhood rites accord the deceased partner a peaceful and befitting burial, opportunity for widows to show their love and respect for the departed husband, to fulfil the cultural beliefs of a community, as well as pacify the spirit of the dead and

to separate them from the affairs of the living wife, child, family and the society at large.

In conclusion, the essence of widowhood rites was not to devalue and embarrass women. It was not to harm the widows but to show that the gruesome nature of the practice is causing more harm than good. The practice has been taken to an extreme by relatives of the deceased partner to avenge, punish, and exploit grieving widows for reasons best known to them may be because women are the weaker sex. In such instances, widows' psychological and general wellbeing will be adversely affected.

Research Question Three determined the level of satisfaction with life among the Konkomba widows who underwent widowhood rites in the Saboba district. Analyses of data revealed that generally, Konkomba widows in the Saboba District have significantly low satisfaction with life. The results of the study implied that the quality of life of Konkomba widows was affected due to the death of their spouse and the severe widowhood rites they underwent. Diener et al (1985) cautioned that if the responses are related to a current event such as bereavement, individuals are more likely to return to his/her previous level of quality of life. This is because the unhappiness to the ensuing event serves a distraction to life.

Ranjan (2001) investigated the factors that determine the well-being of widows. The exploratory study identifies that cultural practises, social and economic deprivations affect widows' psychological and physical health. Gunga (2009) also revealed that the restraints from social activities and the treatment of widows are often dehumanising. Such activities lead to loss of their dignity as women and thus their quality of life is decreased substantially.

Jamadar, Melkeri and Holkar (2015) reported that the impact of widowhood transcends to financial and emotional distresses that limits widows' quality of life. Several studies (Ajayi et al., 2019; Ohiaegbe, 2017; Pemunta & Alubafi, 2016; Korang-Okrah & Haight, 2014) found that widowhood rites in Africa lead to economic hardship especially when the property of the man is forcibly taken from the widow and she is left with nothing to take care of herself and children. Widowhood rites also restrict and limit women's access and control over resources (Korang-Okrah & Haight, 2014).

Consistently, Peterman (2012) observed that after the demise of a husband, most women (widows) are discriminated, deprived of the property they toil and acquired with their husbands, dehumanized, abuse and are often exploited by their in-laws. Kalmijin (2017) opined that bereavement causes psychological disorders and it takes a long period for an individual to overcome the loss of a partner. This he posits greatly impact the quality of life. The United Nations report in 2001 indicated that globally widows form a substantial part of poorest people.

Although, empirical studies related to the assessment of the quality of life (satisfaction with life) of widows exist, the pieces of evidence discussed shed light on the extent to which the quality of life of widows are affected after the demise of their husbands. For instance, Kang and Ahn (2018) established that when widows are supported by family and relatives with genuine engagements they experience higher levels of satisfaction with life. Based on this it can be argued that because widows are mostly ostracised and exploited by their in-laws, coerced to observe inhumane cultural rituals and

deprived of their deceased husbands' property, their quality of life is significantly affected.

The focus of Hypothesis One was to test the extent to which psychological distress of widows in Saboba District influences their satisfaction with life. It was found that Psychological Distress significantly influence or predicted satisfaction with life of widows. Again, specific predictors of satisfaction with life were Hostility, Paranoid Ideation, and Anxiety. The findings of the study provides support for the notion that psychological distress impacts the quality of life among individuals. For instance, Arango-Lasprilla et al (2018) found that psychological disorders adversely impact the quality of life of children. In the study children with high scores of anxiety, depression and low social functioning had lower quality of life. The authors recommended that social and clinical interventions that improve psychological distress could improve the quality of life of children. Similarly, Sharpe et al (2016) explored the association between quality of life and mental health problems. Findings revealed that quality of life was optimum in individuals without any psychological disorders. Persons with mental health challenges experienced significantly reduced quality of life. Although the study of Arango-Lasprilla et al and Sharp et al were not conducted on widows with widowhood rites experiences, their findings help to understand that there is an association between psychological distress and satisfaction with life.

As already noted, the loss of a husband causes severe grief and becomes very traumatic to widows in Africa (Amlor and Owusu, 2016; Azumah & Nachinaab, 2018). This is because apart from grieving for the

departed spouse, widows in this part of the world are also required to undergo cultural rituals. These rituals are often without respect and dignity (Kotzé, Lishje, & Rajuili-Masilo, 2012), cause pain and discomfort with its associated long term psychological ramifications (Ojo, 2019) and dehumanizing (Edemikpong, 2005; Atindanbila et al., 2014; Dery, 2016). Rendall et al (2011) found that widows experience decline in physical health, psychological problems and increased level of mortality.

Aside from the harsh treatment meted to widows in this part of the world, widows are also deprived of their rights to inherit the possession of the departed husband (Peterman, 2012). Several studies have found that widows are harassed, rejected, felt lonely, predisposed to poverty, loss social status and are restricted from social activities (Azumah & Nachinaab, 2018; Manyedi et al., 2003; Gunga, 2009; Sossou 2002). According to Hooyman, Kawamoto and Kiyak (2015), social support can help improve the life satisfaction of widows during the loss of their spouse. Schafer and Fisher (2011) found that traumatic experiences are associated with mental health problems. In this regard, the demands of widowhood rites which often devalue widows contribute to psychological disorders and thus can reduce the perceived low satisfaction with life.

In this study, it was found that Konkomba widows were subjected to rites such as hair shaving, denial of basic personal hygiene, force marriages as well as confinement. Likewise, the findings revealed that Konkomba widows experienced significantly high psychological distress and low life satisfaction. Judging from the findings of the study and from empirical studies, it can be asserted that psychological distress of widows who underwent widowhood

rites adversely influenced their wellbeing. The association between psychological distress and satisfaction with life of widows as identified under this hypothesis help to highlight the need for proper intervention to help widows in the Saboba District.

Hypothesis Two sought to test whether widowhood rites as practiced by Konkomba tribe impact the life satisfaction of widows in Saboba District. Results indicated a statistically significant influence of widowhood rites on satisfaction with life. The null hypothesis was rejected in favour of the alternative hypothesis which states that *there is a significant effect of widowhood rites on the life satisfaction of Konkomba widows who have gone through widowhood rites in Saboba District.*

Consistent with this finding Trivedi, Sareen and Dhyan (2009) posited that widowhood is a traumatic event and is highly associated with psychological distresses and reduced wellbeing. Equally, Qarshiyev (2020) examined the impact of widowhood rites on the psychological, physical and social wellbeing of widows in some selected states of South-Eastern, Nigeria. Findings from the study revealed that widows were forced to engage in certain inhumane practices. Such practices negatively impact on the life satisfaction of widows.

In a related study, Nnodim, Albert, and Isife (2012) explored the impact of widowhood on the wellbeing of rural widows in Nigeria. The study determined the livelihood of widows, income generation and the level of satisfaction with life and wellbeing. Findings revealed that widowhood rites affect the livelihood opportunities, reduced income earning capacity and as a result, the wellbeing of widows are greatly affected. Among the widows, when

compared with married women, perceived satisfaction with life was very low. In the same vein, the World Bank (2000) reported that factors associated with widowhood rites such as confinement and restriction from social activities, long period of mourning, cultural rituals, and disinheritance and resource deprivation of widows affect their income generation and their satisfaction with life.

The current study did not explore the economic and social effects of widows who underwent widowhood rites. However, widows in the study experienced devaluing treatment. Additionally, the majority (60%) were unemployed. Overall, widows in the study experienced a significantly high level of psychological distress. Regarding these findings and the studies reviewed, the findings that widowhood rites among Konkomba tribe of the Saboba District affect widows' satisfaction with life makes empirical sense. This is because empirical studies identified a strong relationship among grieving, traumatic events, mental disorders and reduced wellbeing or quality of life (Kalmijn, 2017; World Bank, 2000).

Hypotheses 3, 4, 5, and 6 sought to identify the differences in ages, Length of Widowhood, Religion, and Employment status in terms of Psychological Distress of widows in the Saboba District respectively. Results of the individual hypothesis showed that no significant differences among the various demographic variables with regards to Psychological Distress exist. Contrary to these findings Lane (2000), observed that ages of widows are significantly associated with psychological distress. The researcher opined that with time the psychological burden associated with the demise of a spouse declines. This is because with time widows may receive support from family

and relatives to lessen the experiences of emotional disturbances. Similarly, Omonona (2001) established that employment of widows determines their wellbeing and psychological distress. According to this researcher, a widow who has a source of income is in a better position to manage psychological problems after the death of her husband. Gunga (2009) also reported that the employment status of widows greatly determines their wellbeing.

According to Ajayi et al (2019), employment status, education level, and financial stands of a widow can affect the requirement and engagement in widowhood rites. In related studies, it was reported that economic status and educational background of widows mediates and regulates the observance of cultural practices especially, widowhood rites (Nwogu, 2015; Genyi & George-Genyi, 2013). The discussions revealed that the socio-demographic characteristics of widows can influence their involvement in widowhood rituals. It is assumed that in such instances the experience of psychological distress will differ depending on the status of the individual. In this study, no association was found among the demographic characteristics of widows and the experience of psychological distress. Further studies are required to bridge this gap.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### Overview of the Study

The study adopted the cross-sectional survey design to investigate the effects of widowhood rites on the psychological distress and satisfaction with life of Konkomba widows. Specific objectives of the study were to: determine common widowhood rite practices that widows in the Saboba District undergo, determine the level of psychological distress and satisfaction with life among Konkomba widows who have undergone widowhood rites in the Saboba district, evaluate the influence of psychological distress on the life satisfaction of Konkomba widows, and explore the effects of widowhood practices on the life satisfaction of Konkomba widows.

The study was conducted in the Saboba District. The District is made of five subzones namely Wapuli, Sanguli, Kpalba, Sanboli, and Saboba. The target population of the study was widows from the Konkomba tribe residing in the district and above 18 years. Participants were selected using the stratified, purposive, snowball and convenience sampling techniques. Data was collected using questionnaires. The data were analysed mainly by frequency distributions, means, standard deviations, Independent Sample t-test analysis, regression analysis, one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) and Kruskal Wallis H-Test. The tests were conducted for significant differences at a significance level of 0.05.

### Summary of Key Findings

The following were the main findings from the data analysis. The results revealed that:

- i. During widowhood observances, Konkomba widows experienced hair shavings, stay with corpses for many hours, carry calabash wherever they went, fast for hours, and are denied basic personal hygiene for days, and forced into marriages with deceased's relatives.
- ii. Konkomba widows who observed widowhood rites experienced a significantly high level of psychological distress.
- iii. Specific psychological distress experienced by widows includes Anxiety, Sensitiveness, and Paranoid Ideations.
- iv. Konkomba widows in the Saboba District who have gone through widowhood rites have significantly low satisfaction with life.
- v. Psychological Distress and its subscales (Anxiety, Paranoid Ideation, and Hostility) significantly influence or predicted satisfaction with life of widows.
- vi. Widowhood rites significantly predicted satisfaction with life of Konkomba widows.
- vii. No significant differences were found among demographic variables (ages, Length of Widowhood, Religion, and Employment status) with regards to Psychological Distress.

### Conclusions

The study highlighted the fact that the psychological distress and wellbeing of Konkomba widows are significantly affected as they mourn the

death of their husbands and observe widowhood rites. Based on the findings, the following interpretations were made:

- i. Widowhood rites as practiced by the Konkomba tribe in the Saboba District of the Northern Region shares many similarities with practices in Ghana and the African sub-region but still have some consequences on the widows.
- ii. Widowhood rites are harmful and are associated with high levels of psychological distress.
- iii. The general wellbeing or quality of life of widows is affected by the death of their spouse and the harsh inhumane widowhood rituals they endure.
- iv. The findings of the study provide support for the notion that mental health wellbeing has a strong relationship with the quality of life of widows.

### **Recommendations**

Given the findings and the conclusions arrived at, the following recommendations are made.

- i. The government of Ghana, Ministry of Gender and Children Affairs, Traditional councils and other stakeholders of women empowerment should intensify education for the Konkomba tribe on the effects of widowhood rites. This way, changes can be made in the performance of the rituals to be devoid of inhumane practices or abolished altogether.

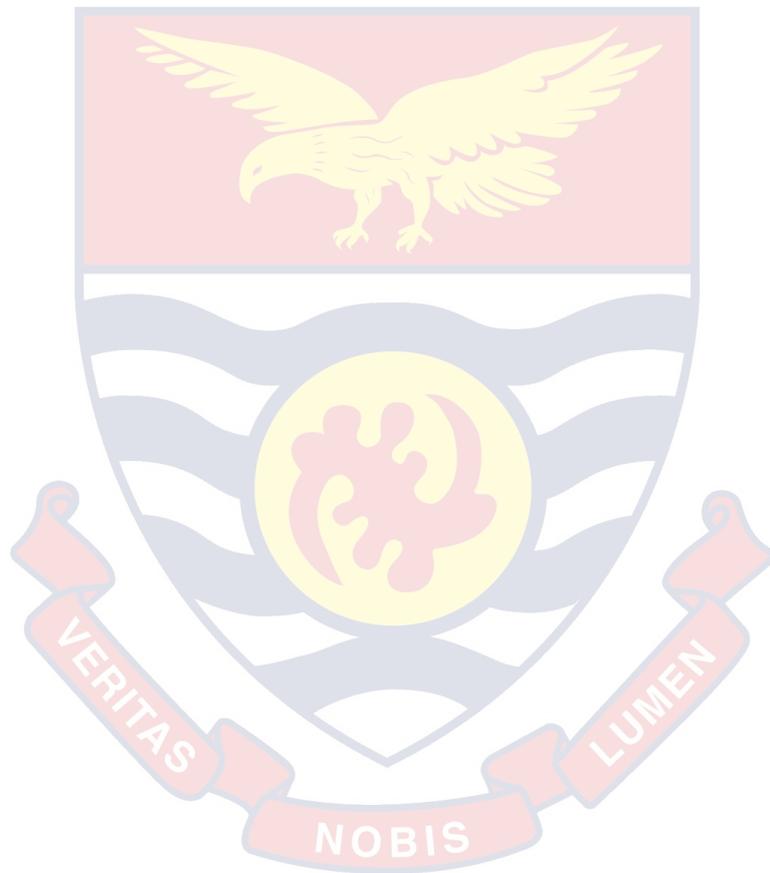
- ii. It is also recommended that government institutions, NGOs, counsellors and health practitioners should incorporate a more comprehensive approach where the attention is given to widows' physical needs, psychological needs and social wellbeing which are all affected by widowhood practices. This will optimize the services and aid what widows receive.
- iii. The Ministry of Health and the Mental Health Authority are entreated to set up easily accessible counselling and psychological services centres in areas with incidents of widowhood rites to attend to the psychological effects of the rites on widows.
- iv. There should be media and community education on the negative effects of widowhood rites. The traditional leaders, community members and family members who encourage the practice of widowhood rites should be educated on the negative effects of widowhood and should be advised to abolish the practice.
- v. I also recommend that the widows should form an association where they can meet periodically to share ideas or receive counselling on how to manage the psychological trauma of widowhood rites.

### **Suggestions for Further Research**

The following are suggestions for future research:

- i. Future research should examine the economic effects of widowhood practices on widows and their children.
- ii. Also, the impacts of sociodemographic characteristics on the wellbeing of widows should be further explored.

- iii. The study used only questionnaires to gather data from participants. In future studies, it would be appropriate to collect the data using alternative data collection methods such as qualitative sources and clinical observations.



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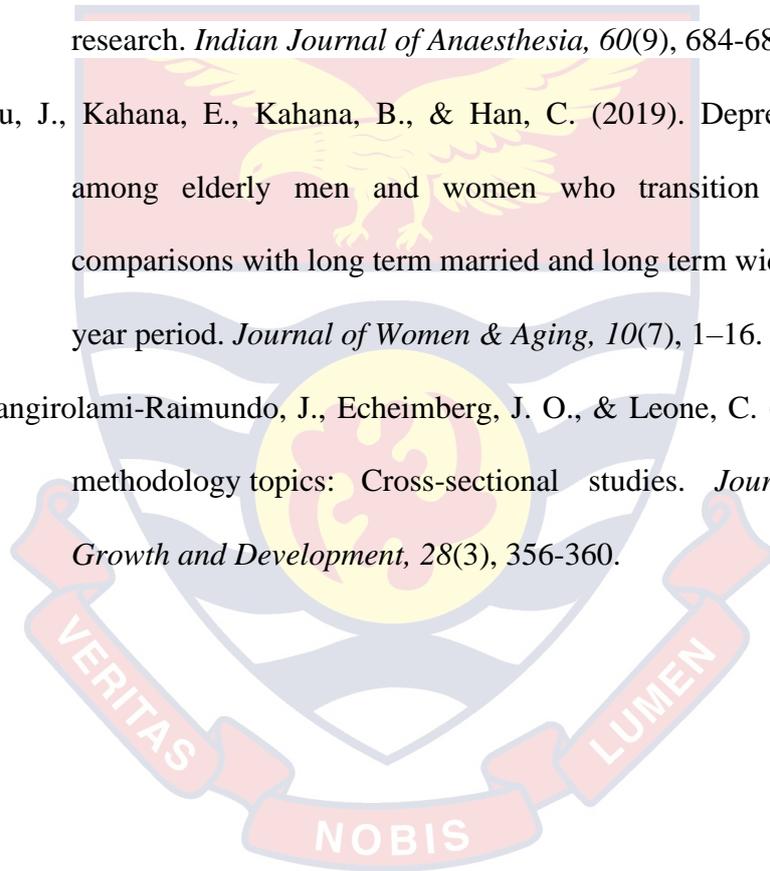
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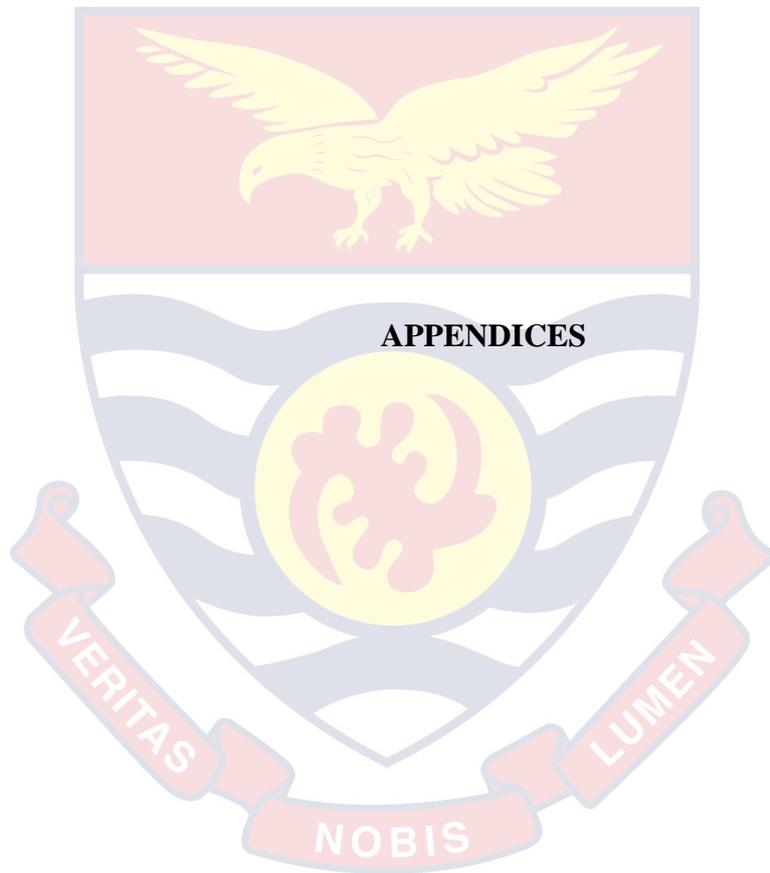
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## APPENDIX A

### QUESTIONNAIRE FOR PARTICIPANTS

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION STUDIES

FACULTY OF EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATIONS

DEPARTMENT OF GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING

#### Research Questionnaire

My name is Gladys Barkei Djankpa, an MPhil. Guidance and Counselling student. This questionnaire has been developed to investigate the psychological and socio-economic effects of widowhood rites on Konkomba women in the Saboba District of the Northern Region. You are kindly requested to complete this questionnaire by ticking only one of the options for each item describing your view about widowhood rites. Please be open and honest in your responding. The information you provide will be confidential and your identities will be anonymous. The information provided will also be used strictly for academic purposes.

#### SECTION A: Demographic Data

Please tick below the responses that best correspond with your demographic information.

1. Age: 18 – 23 { } 24 – 29 { } 30 – 35 { } 36 – 41 { }  
42 – 47 { } 48 – 53 { } 54 – 59 { } 60 – 65 { }
2. Length of widowhood experience: Less than 1 year { } 1 year { } 2 years { } More than 2 years { }
3. Employment status: Public Worker { } Self Employed { }  
Unemployed { }
4. Religion: Christian { } Moslem { } Traditionalist { }

### SECTION B: WIDOWHOOD PRACTICES

Below are some practices that widows go through during widowhood rites (Atindanbila et al., 2014; Idialu, 2012; Kuenyehia, 1998). Nyongkah (2018). Kindly indicate your experiences by ticking either Yes or No.

	ITEMS	YES	NO
5.	I was made to stay with my husband's corpse for hours alone or together with others.		
6.	I walked bare footed during the widowhood rites.		
7.	I was not allowed to eat for several hours when my husband died.		
8.	My hair was shaved during the widowhood rites.		
9.	I was not allowed to bath for three days.		
10.	I always carry a calabash wherever I go.		
11.	I was given some concoctions to drink.		
12.	I was assaulted physically by men as instructed by oracles		
13.	I was forced to marry my husband's brother/relative.		
14.	I was not allowed to bath nor change my pant (kiyok) throughout the widowhood rite.		

**SECTION C: PSYCHOLOGICAL DISTRESS INVENTORY**

Below is a list of phrases that describe certain feelings that people have. Please rate yourself by ticking the answer which best describes the extent to which you have these conditions. Select one of the five responses for each of the first 13 questions to indicate your level of agreement, where 0 = NEVER, 1 = ALMOST, 2 = SOMETIMES, 3 = OFTEN and 4 = VERY OFTEN. Question 14 – 24 are ranked as follows 0 = Very Dissatisfied, 1 = Dissatisfied, 2 =Somewhat satisfied, 3 =Satisfied, 4 =Very Satisfied.

SN	STATEMENT	0	1	2	3	4
1.	Trouble remembering things					
2.	Feeling easily annoyed or irritated					
3.	Pains in heart or chest					
4.	Feeling that most people cannot be trusted					
5.	Temper outbursts that you could not control					
6.	Feeling lonely even when you are with people.					
7.	Your feelings being easily hurt					
8.	Feeling that people are unfriendly or dislike you					
9.	Difficulty making decisions					
10.	Getting into frequent arguments					
11.	Others not giving you proper credit for your achievements					
12.	Feelings of worthlessness					
13.	Feelings of guilt					

14.	During the past month, how often have you had attacks of sudden fear or panic?					
15.	During the past month, how often have you been bothered by feelings of sadness or depression-feeling blue?					
16.	During the past month, how often have you been bothered by nervousness, being fidgety or tense?					
17.	During the past month, how often have you felt useless?					
18.	During the past month, how often have you felt anxious?					
19.	During the past month, how often have you felt that nothing turns out for you the way you want it to, would you say ...					
20.	During the past month, how often have you felt completely hopeless about everything, would you say ...					
21.	During the past month, how often have you felt completely helpless?					
22.	During the past month, how often have you had times when you couldn't help wondering if anything was worthwhile anymore?					
23.	During the past month, how often have you had trouble concentrating or keeping your mind on what you were doing?					
24.	In general, how satisfied have you been with yourself during the last year?					

**SECTION D: SATISFACTION WITH LIFE SCALE**

**Instructions:** Below are five statements that you may agree or disagree with.

Using the 1 - 7 scale below, indicate your agreement with each item by placing the appropriate number on the line preceding that item. Please be open and honest in your responding.

7 = Strongly Agree      6 = Agree      5 = Slightly Agree      4 = Neither Agree Nor Disagree      3 = Slightly Disagree      2 = Disagree      1 = Strongly Disagree

SN	STATEMENT	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1.	In most ways my life is close to my ideal.							
2.	The conditions of my life are excellent.							
3.	I am satisfied with my life.							
4.	So far I have gotten the important things I want in life.							
5.	If I could live my life over, I would change almost nothing.							

## APPENDIX B

### INTRODUCTORY LETTER

# UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION STUDIES

FACULTY OF EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATIONS

## DEPARTMENT OF GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING

Telephone: 0332091854  
Email: [dgc@ucc.edu.gh](mailto:dgc@ucc.edu.gh)

UNIVERSITY POST OFFICE  
CAPE COAST, GHANA



Our Ref: DGC/L.2/VOL.1/123

May 22, 2020

Your Ref:

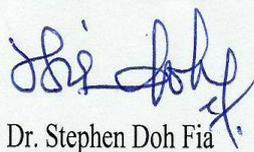
TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

### LETTER OF INTRODUCTION

We introduce to you, Gladys Barkei Djankpa a student pursuing an M.Phil Programme in Guidance and Counselling at the Department of Guidance and Counselling of the University of Cape Coast. As a requirement, she is to submit a Thesis on the topic: *“Effects of Widowhood Rites on the Psychological Health and Life Satisfaction of Konkomba Widows in the Saboba District”*. We are by this letter affirming that, the information she will obtain from your Institution will be solely used for academic purposes.

We would be most grateful if you could provide her the necessary assistance.

Thank you.



Dr. Stephen Doh Fia  
HEAD OF DEPARTMENT

## APPENDIX C

### LETTER OF INTRODUCTION FOR ETHICAL CLEARANCE

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST  
COLLEGE OF EDUCATION STUDIES  
FACULTY OF EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATIONS  
DEPARTMENT OF GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING

Telephone: 0332091854  
Email: [dgc@ucc.edu.gh](mailto:dgc@ucc.edu.gh)



UNIVERSITY POST OFFICE  
CAPE COAST, GHANA

22, 05, 2020

The Chairman  
Institutional Review Board  
U. C. C.  
Cape Coast

#### LETTER OF INTRODUCTION

We introduce to you, Gladys Barkei Djankpa a student from the Department of Guidance and Counselling, University of Cape Coast. She is pursuing M.Phil in Guidance and Counselling.

As part of her requirement, she is expected to work on a thesis titled:

Effects of widowhood Rites on the psychological health and life satisfaction of Konkomba widows in the Saboba District of Northern Ghana.

She has successfully defended her proposal and is seeking for ethical clearance to collect data for the study.

We would be most grateful if you could provide her the necessary assistance for ethical clearance for her study.

Thank you.

Dr. Stephen Doh Fia  
HEAD OF DEPARTMENT

APPENDIX D

ETHICAL REQUIREMENTS CLEARANCE FOR RESEARCH STUDY

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST  
COLLEGE OF EDUCATION STUDIES  
ETHICAL REVIEW BOARD

UNIVERSITY POST OFFICE  
CAPE COAST, GHANA

Our Ref: CES-ERB/ucc.edu.gh/4/20-44

Your Ref: .....

Date: 22<sup>nd</sup> June, 2020

Dear Sir/Madam,

ETHICAL REQUIREMENTS CLEARANCE FOR RESEARCH STUDY

The bearer, Gladys Barkei Djankpa, Reg. No EF/CCP/18/0006 is an M.Phil. / ~~Ph.D.~~ student in the Department of Guidance and Counselling in the College of Education Studies, University of Cape Coast, Cape Coast, Ghana. ~~He~~ / She wishes to undertake a research study on the topic:

Effects of widowhood rites on the psychological health and life satisfaction of Konkomba widows in the Saboba District of Northern Ghana.

The Ethical Review Board (ERB) of the College of Education Studies (CES) has assessed ~~his~~/her proposal and confirm that the proposal satisfies the College's ethical requirements for the conduct of the study.

In view of the above, the researcher has been cleared and given approval to commence ~~his~~/her study. The ERB would be grateful if you would give him/her the necessary assistance to facilitate the conduct of the said research.

Thank you.  
Yours faithfully,

  
Prof. Linda Dzama Forde  
(Secretary, CES-ERB)

*Chairman, CES-ERB*  
Prof. J. A. Omotosho  
[jomotosho@ucc.edu.gh](mailto:jomotosho@ucc.edu.gh)  
0243784739

*Vice-Chairman, CES-ERB*  
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[kedjah@ucc.edu.gh](mailto:kedjah@ucc.edu.gh)  
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*Secretary, CES-ERB*  
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0244786680