

**Addis Ababa University
School of Graduate Studies
College of Developmental Studies
Center for Gender Studies**

**A study on Social and Economic Challenges of
Widowed Mothers; The Case of Beneficiaries
from Zer Ethiopia Foundation**

By

Tyobestya Shalemariam

July, 2019

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

**Addis Ababa University
School of Graduate Studies
College of Developmental Studies
Center for Gender Studies**

**A study on Social and Economic Challenges of
Widowed Mothers; The Case of Beneficiaries
from Zer Ethiopia Foundation**

By

Tyobestya Shalemariam

**A Thesis Submitted to the Center for Gender Studies in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts
(MA) in Gender Studies**


**July 2019
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia**

ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF DEVELOPMENT STUDIES
CENTER FOR GENDER STUDIES

This is to clarify that the thesis prepared by Tyobestya Shalemariam, titled: "A study on Social and Economic Challenges of Widowed Mothers; The Case of Beneficiaries from Zer Ethiopia Foundation" is submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for degree of masters of art in development studies (gender studies) compiles with the regulations of the university and meets the accepted standard with respect to originality and quality.

Tyobestya Shalemariam

Name of student



APPROVAL BY BOARD OF EXAMINERS

1. Advisor

Signature

Date

Emebet Mulugeeta Emebet Mulugeeta

03/09/2019

2. External examiner

Signature

Date

Ashenafi Hagos Ashenafi Hagos

03/09/2019

3. Internal examiner

Signature

Date

Rahwa Hussie Rahwa Hussie

03/09/2019

Acknowledgments

Above all, I would like to thank my father GOD. I also owe a tremendous gratitude for my loving mother Hilina Bekele, a strong courageous woman who has given all her life to make mine as pleasant as it is. I am also grateful for my friends whom I proudly call family, for their unfailing encouragement. My gratitude also goes to my adviser, Dr. Emebet Mulugeta, for her intellectual comments and substantive inputs that made the completion of this thesis conceivable. I appreciate Zer Ethiopia Foundation and the staffs, specifically Ato Yared Germa (Founder and CEO) for giving his will and encouragement with the conduct of the interviews. Finally, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to the widowed mothers who willingly participated in the research process and shared their life experiences without limit.

List of Acronyms

GBV:	Gender Based Violence
HIV:	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
NGO:	Non-Governmental Organization
UN:	United Nations

Glossary of terms

Abawera: is the husband or the male head of the family.

Balege yasadegew/ yasadegat: is an insult against the child and parent, indicating mannerlessness of a child as a result of being raised by unmannered parents.

Berbere: is a red pepper used to cook Ethiopian stew.

Birr: Ethiopian money

Edir: indigenous voluntary associations established primarily to provide mutual aid on burial matters but also to address other community matters” (Pankhurst and Damen, 2000: 36).

Geffi: is an indirect affront that denotes of someone who prompted the death of siblings.

Injera: Staple food of Ethiopians, it is a kind of pancake. Most of the time, it is made from teff (it could also be prepared from other grains such as barley, wheat, maize and sorghum) and eaten with different sauces.

Kebele: The smallest administrative unit of the local government structure in Ethiopia.

Lekso: is an Ethiopian funeral ceremony that gathers people for a minimum of three days.

Mehaber: is a small association in Ethiopian communities.

SafetyNet: is Ethiopian urban productive Safety Net project, launched in 2017, and is among the largest social projects in sub-Saharan Africa (outside south Africa) designed specifically for urban areas. Beneficiaries are selected by neighborhood committee on how poor and vulnerable they are. (The Economist, 2018)

Set yasadegat/yasadegew: is an insult that denotes mannerlessness because of being raised by a single woman.

Shiro: is a prouder prepared of beans or pea, it used to cook Ethiopian stew

Sub-city: is the second administrative tier of the City (Addis Ababa) Administration” (Proclamation for the Establishment of Sub-cities and Kebeles, Number 1/1995).

Wereda: The second administrative tier in local government in Ethiopia above the kebele. Wereda is composed of two or more kebeles.

Ye geffi lij: an indirect affront used to insult children of the widow.

Ye mut lij: in its direct translation means an orphan.

Yeset lij: in its direct translation means someone who is raised by a single mother and it denotes impoliteness and mannerlessness caused by an absence of the father, who is expected to discipline and manner the house.

Abstract

Widow refers to a woman whose husband has died and who has not married again; and widowhood is a state or period of being a widow. Especially, in the developing world, widows remain invisible and their exact numbers, ages or emotional and the socio-economic aspects of their lives remain unknown. Thus, this qualitative hermeneutic phenomenological research explored the socio-economic challenges of widowed mothers taking the case of beneficiaries from a local NGO, named Zer Ethiopia Foundation. Ten beneficiaries' and four key informants were selected through purposive sampling technique and involved in an in-depth interview. The targets experienced widowhood with their children for a minimum of three and maximum seventeen years; and non-remarried. The study set forth, exacerbating factors; emotional implications; coping mechanisms and critical intervention areas. Socio-economic challenges revealed crosscutting effects. Majorly experienced social challenge includes, stereotype and derogatory portrayals; discrimination; state of social loneliness and lack of social or familial support. Along with this, the main economic challenges fall into, lack of resource; lack of support and opportunities. Throughout the study, Poverty referred sequence of economic deprivations that accelerate widow's challenge, presenting them physical health risk including GBV and HIV; social isolation as well as emotional challenges. Gender, both as an outcome and a basis for various social arrangements; presented paramount vulnerability resulting decline in socio-economic status through economic deprivation, emotional abuse and social exclusion. The study also discussed HIV and stereotypes directed to widows and their children as exacerbating factors. Taken together, socio-economic challenges prompted emotional challenges such as; feeling of stress or depression; hopelessness and loneliness. Yet, almost all emotional challenges were found rooted in post-widowhood economic vulnerability and social loneliness than bereavement from loss of husbands love. Still, better emotional and financial coping was found reliant on familial/social support; since less support resulted them higher frustration and maladjustment. Thus, the study analyzed internal/external, positive/negative copings used; self-exclusion and spirituality being widely used to cope social stigma and destitution. Added together, the finding depicted how socio-economic challenges of widowhood are predominantly influenced by socializations of gender which resulted poverty after loss; hindering emotional wellness, economic empowerment and human rights violation (the right to live free from violence & discrimination). Surly, such problems develop a vicious circle of poverty thus, the study recommends for policies that address systemic inequalities, as it is an ideal way to holistically empower women to support themselves in the face of a marital ending.

Key terms: *Widowed mothers, social and economic challenges*

Table of Content

Acknowledgments.....	iv
List of Acronyms	ii
Glossary of terms	iii
Abstract.....	iv
Table of Content	v
Chapter One	1
1. Introduction.....	1
1.1. Background of the study	1
1.2 Statement of the problem.....	3
1.3 Objective of the study	7
1.4 Research Questions.....	7
1.5 Scope and limitation of the study.....	7
1.6 Significance of the study.....	8
Chapter Two	9
2 Literature Review and theoretical framework	9
2.1 Literature Review.....	9
2.1.1 The Gender dimension of Poverty: Issues and Problems.....	10
2.1.2 Widowhood and poverty.....	11
2.1.3 Widowhood: gender inequality and gender-based violence	12
2.1.4 Widowhood: The Widow and Widower	15
2.1.5 Widowhood and socio- cultural and economic vulnerability	17
2.1.6 Widowhood and their invisibility	19
2.1.7 Differentiating widowhood, its correlates and coping	21
Chapter Three	24
3 Research Method	24
3.1 Research Design.....	24
3.2 Description of Study Site	25
3.2.1 Sampling Method.....	26
3.2.2 Inclusion Criteria of Participants	26
3.2.3 Selection of target population	27
3.3 Data Collection Procedure	27
3.4 Tools for Data Collection.....	28
3.5 Research Ethics.....	29

3.6 Trustworthiness of the Study	29
3.7 Method of data Analysis	30
Chapter four	32
4 Data presentation and Analysis.....	32
4.1 Backgrounds of Research Participants.....	32
4.2 Social and economic challenges	34
4.2.1 Factors accelerating socio-economic challenges	37
4.2.1.1 Poverty	38
4.2.1.2 Gender.....	51
4.2.1.3 Cultural stereotypes (derogatory terms/ comments) towards widows and their children	64
4.2.1.4 HIV/AIDS	70
4.3 The Emotional challenges of widowhood.....	75
4.3.1 Stress or feeling of Depression	75
4.3.2 Emotional challenge from feelings of loneliness.....	81
4.3.3. Emotional challenge in relation to loss of hope	86
4. 4 Coping strategies of the widows	90
4.4.1. Internal coping strategies	91
4.4.2. External coping strategies	98
5. Critical needs of the participants.....	101
Chapter five.....	105
Summary, Conclusion and Recommendations	105
5.1 Summary	105
5.2 Conclusion	109
5.3 Recommendations.....	110
Annex I	125
Annex II.....	128
Annex III.....	130

List of tables

Table 1: Profile of key informants	33
Table 2: Back ground information of interview participates	33

List of Annexes

Annex I: Consent form to participate on the study

Annex II: Interview guide for in-depth interview

Annex III: Questions for Key informants

Chapter One

1. Introduction

This chapter introduces the research subject with six subsections. The first section discussed the background of the study. The following section rationalizes the topic by highlighting on social problems and literature gap identified. The third one identifies general and specific objectives of the study; followed by the fourth section that list out the questions the research attempts to address. The fifth section identifies the scope and limitation of the study. The sixth section outlines the literature gap and described the significances of the research.

1.1. Background of the study

A widow refers to a woman whose husband has died and who has not married again. Widowhood is the state or period of being a widow or a widower (Oxford dictionary, 2017). Widowhood is generally assumed to be one of the most stressful experiences that people encounter during the course of their lives (Holmes & Rahe, 1967). Because the nuclear family is expected to be socially and economically autonomous, spouses may have few alternative sources of social, emotional, or instrumental support (Lopata 1973). Consequently, when a spouse dies, the survivor must not only adjust to the loss of a close relationship, but also manage the daily decisions and responsibilities that were once shared by both spouses (Carey 1979–80; Wortman, Kessler, and Umberson 1992).

Despite the gender, death of the partner results in the transition of identity from wife/husband to widow/ widower. Thus, adjustment to the new identity ‘widow’ by itself requires a huge process (Lopata, 1973). However, there are marked differences in how much and for how long the survivor grieves (Bonanno & Kaltman, 1999, 2001; Wortman & Silver, 1989, 2001).

Worldwide widows comprise a significant proportion of all adult women, ranging from 7 to 16 %. However, in some countries and regions the proportion is far higher (Global Widows Report, 2015). Widows are usually, but erroneously assumed to be elderly.

Yet, widowhood as it exists in the Western nations and its implications in Asia and Africa are hugely different. In developed countries, widowhood is experienced primarily by elderly women, while in developing countries it also affects younger women, many of whom are still rearing children (UN, 2001).

On this regard, African Countries Demographic and Health Survey implied, of all women between the ages of 15-49, there are about 3% widows across the region, and from this, about 72% are much more likely to head their own households (Borwankar & Sommerfelt, 2008). The incident of widowhood occurs predominantly due to patriarchal practice of men marrying younger women, couples with men's shorter life expectancy on average (Lopata, 1973). Regardless of the likely relevance of widowhood in the lives of African women, overwhelmingly, little is known about their well-being. In fact, their exact numbers, ages and other social and economic aspects of their lives are unknown (Dominique, 2016).

Socio-economic challenges infer to such factors that have negative influence on an individuals' economic activity including: lack of education, cultural and religious discrimination or unemployment (Mark, 2009). Despite the efforts made to include women in all sectors for sustainable development, democratization and peace, Ethiopian women have many barriers that hinder their active participation in the economic and social spheres, including; persistent gender inequalities at all levels; deep rooted gender based stereotypes and traditional gender roles including unpaid care work; lack of access to education; unemployment and rampant gender based violence among other hindrances (UN Women, 2012).

As such, socio-economic challenges in this study referred, the economic situation of a widow in a society, which has a potential to contribute to the risk after their loss. Hence, the research took the case of beneficiaries from Zer Ethiopia Foundation as an approach to understand the taken for granted meanings and the essences of an experience of widowhood. Within this context, it examined how widowhood is affected by the socioeconomic aspects of their life.

1.2 Statement of the problem

Widowhood is a stressful life event with wide range of consequences that demand practicable support system that suggests for a wide range of social interventions (Holmes & Rahe, 1967). Although the severity differs, widow's deprivation is an issue not exclusive to only one culture, society or region. It presents a myriad of economic, social and psychological problems. It leads to social stigmatization, economic vulnerability, and humanitarian injustices. Most importantly it leads to invisibility (Khanna, 2016). In addition, results gendered violence doubly as women and as widows in the form of discrimination that seriously inhibits their ability to enjoy rights and freedom based on equality with men (IPPF, 2008). Thus, exploring the challenges and strength of widowhood is a vital component of understanding and assisting a widow, however, studies seem to overlook or totalize the issue.

The 2015 widow's report, which is said to be the first global definitive data source about widow's destitution, estimates the total number of widows at the global level to be 258,481,056. The report stated, despite their magnitude, it was very difficult to find both qualitative and quantitative data that inform about their social, economic and legal situation in societies, thus it concluded; this groups remained invisible to researches, and consequently to social policy, international human rights activists, the women's movement, governments and the international community (Global Widows Report, 2015). Hence, discourse about widows is often narrow and with limited empirical research. In fact, research on widows is a recent phenomenon. This invisibility explains the lack of evidence surrounding this issue and the lackluster goals directed towards this issue in the Millennium Development Goals (Khanna, 2016).

A study by Hoonard (2001) pointed; the first major study on widowhood was published in 1973. Since invisible, their life condition is often totalized with other poor single parent categories and is commonly referred as 'female heads of household' (Niswade, 2015). As a result of this, they are totalized and overlooked just as impoverished women; causes of community stigma, seclusion, human rights violence, sexuality and other aspects of their life needs rarely noticed.

With the transformation to the new identity the role, relation and emotion as well as internal identity of the widow also changes. Although an important topic, relatively few studies have distinguished and saw the different needs and life trauma between widowed, divorced and married mothers (Nelson, 1982).

Given this situation, studies on African widowhood criticize the absence of literatures and often recommend for exploration of this “dry” area. A research done by Lambert and Pauline, (2015) assessed the effect of widowhood in Senegalese women and how fertility choices are partly driven by women's needs for widowhood insurance. In addition, Sossau (2002), Akujobi (2006), Bond (2010), Chirwa (2006), Tamale, (2004), Senyenjo (2007) Durojaye, (2013) and Dominique, (2016) can be mentioned as one of the few researchers who related and studied the gendered dimension of African widowhood and the significance it has on the violation of their human rights. Especially, Chirwa (2006), Bond (2010) and Durojaye (2013) argue, despite the existence of CEDAW (1997) and the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa, that intended to protect African women from socio-cultural practices that deny them of their rights, little has been done. This certainly oversteps widows and their children's right to dignity and non- discrimination.

Potash (1986), argued, absence of a diachronic research on the issues of widowhood makes the practice very difficult to assess. According to this researchers , the fact that the widow remained hidden added with patriarchic nature of African societies and poverty, entrenched the issue from gaining attention and subjected these women to experience high level of exclusion; which has negative impact on their economic, social and health support systems that ultimately determine their overall well-being.

Even though the above mentioned studies pointed correlated factors of widowhood, other aspects of widowhood life remain understudied. For instance, Western researchers argue, despite their diversity, widows habitually experience decrements in mental and physical health following the loss of their spouses (Bloom, Asher, & White, 1978; Greenblatt, 1978; Menaghan & Lieberman, 1986). However, less research has prospectively examined the impact of their life transition on mental health, and even fewer studies have focused on its health outcomes.

As such, psychosocial correlates of widowhood, her view towards the phenomenon, her emotional responses, coping strategies and related mental and physical health problems that were resulted from this life transition, have been overlooked in African researches on widowhood, since much of the emphasis was on raising the issue as an issue of poverty or human rights concern.

Like many of the other African countries, Ethiopia has ratified CEDAW and signed the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa in 2004. Furthermore, promising new laws and policies prohibiting various types of gender-based violence have come into effect (Helina, 2015). The adoption of the 2005 Criminal Code has also criminalized several harmful traditional practices including widow inheritance (Article, 650).

Despite the efforts, Social Institutions and Gender Index ranks Ethiopia 64 out of 86 countries, suggesting that there is still much to do to improve girls' capabilities (Nicola, Gupta and Bekele, 2015). Ethiopian women are economically, socially, culturally and politically disadvantaged in the enjoyment of equal rights, in accessing opportunities, decision-making processes, and basic resources. Furthermore, unequal distribution of domestic responsibilities, limited decision-making power over social relationships; socially accepted notions of masculinity; limited control over sexuality and fertility) and limited authority in the family (Boyden, Pankhurst and Tafere 2013; Jones et al. 2014). In other words, although several policies are emerging that support and encourage women's participation in development, a lot remains (Genzebe et.al, 2016). Thus, Ethiopian women remain the poorest of the poor and as such, face multidimensional challenges; violence, discrimination and marginalization (Zewdu, 2002).

Given the overall situation of women Ethiopian, (Pankhurst (1992), Amsalu, 2007, Damte, 2010, Meron, 2017) conducted a research to bridge the gap on early marriage, divorce and the psycho-social impact of traditional marriage on women. Anthropological research by Kelemework (2011), states the northern Afar culture on widow inheritance and how the practice is said to be for the sake of the children of the widow. Thewodros (2014), explored the resilience of widows who lost their partners to HIV, in fact this study is the only academic research on the issue.

This indicates there is a gap in literature that explores the experience of widowhood. In fact, widowed women received little attention; thus, their deprivation has been discounted and invisible to the public and policy makers. Accordingly, the data in welfare and monitoring 2016 stated that, female-headed households in the country are about 3,466,795 (23.5%) and among poorest. In fact, the 2015 Global report, a census done in 2007, shows that there are about estimated 7% widows in Ethiopia but their exact numbers is unknown. Hence, disaggregated data on widowed or widowed mothers; their ages and other socio- economic aspects of their lives are neither documented nor presented on the national data record till present day. Thus, the unavailability of research or disaggregated data points how the issue has been overlooked.

Though some of the issues lay beyond the scope of this paper, giving due attention and peruse analysis is needed to extrapolate the factual difficulties that this widowed mothers stumble upon. Given the overall lack of research on widowhood or its correlated effects, the study used hermeneutic phenomenological research method to holistically explore the social, economic as well as emotional experiences, along with coping strategies of widows. As such, the research seeks to position the issue at the forefront so that it gains the recognition required as the first step to action. By doing so, the issue will be brought to light and stockholders will be provided with tangible concerns; and will be able to improve the existing situation and more importantly fill in the research gap.

1.3 Objective of the study

The general objective of this study is to examine the socio-economic challenges of widowed mothers in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, taking the case of beneficiaries from Zer Ethiopia Foundation. More specifically, the study attempts to:

- ✓ Find out the economic challenges of widowed mothers,
- ✓ Understand social and emotional aspects of their life;
- ✓ Learn about their coping mechanisms;
- ✓ Identify practical implications for further interventions

1.4 Research Questions

1. What are the social, economic and emotional challenges of widowed mothers?
2. What factors contribute for the challenges?
3. What are the coping strategies they use? And what do they think would have been helpful for them to have a better life condition?
4. How do we address the gap, what's expected?

1.5 Scope and limitation of the study

To study the challenge as well as coping mechanism of widowed mothers in Addis Ababa, the research participants were selected from beneficiaries of Zer Ethiopia Foundation; destitute widowed mothers living in different sub cities of Addis Ababa. Using this central topic, the study explored and understood lived experiences of widowed mothers. The research did not generate data from those widows that have high and middle income, or those whose widowhood status is changed due to remarriage at time of interview. Furthermore, it only considered those widows who have experienced widowhood for at least three years.

The study primary identified respondents, based on purposive sampling, however, there was a rejection and withdrawal of participants during data collection; hence, triangulation (through FGD) did not go according to the plan.

Thus, because of time constraint, the research was limited to an in-depth-interview with fourteen respondents; four key informants and ten target groups. Regardless of this, to ensure quality of data, their subjective views are carefully captured.

1.6 Significance of the study

This study examined and set forth the lived experiences, daily encounters, difficulties, copings, and critical needs of respondents. Combined with literatures, their narratives were analyzed to explore gaps and point out intervention areas. Hence, this study contributes to having a research-based information on the socio-economic conditions of widowed mothers; as such kind of studies are the benchmarks for this groups to get an opportunity for effective policy representation, gender equality, socio-economic stability, change in social attitudes so that they become agents of growth and development.

Thus, the study demonstrated the findings with an aim to fill in knowledge gaps or give insights for other researchers who wish to conduct (gender, social work, psychology or human rights) related study on the same issue. Hence, it will contribute a new perspective to the existing knowledge by setting forth the social, emotional and economic conditions of destitute widowed mothers.

Chapter Two

2 Literature Review and theoretical framework

This chapter first presents the review of literatures under the major issues of the study; gender dimension of poverty, widowhood and poverty, widowhood and GBV, gender inequalities faced by widows, widowhood to the widow and widower, socio-cultural and economic vulnerability, widow's invisibility. Due to the literature gap, most of the literatures reviewed are from abroad. Afterwards, two theories that are relevant to the study are discussed.

2.1 Literature Review

So far, plenty of research has been conducted to understand the challenges of vulnerable women and yet, widows have been overlooked. There are hardly any studies that focused on resilience of widows following the death of spouse in general and in Ethiopia in particular (Theodros, 2014). The first major study on widowhood was published in 1973. Helena Lopata's books, *Widowhood in an American city* (1973) and *Women as widows* (1979), until early 2000 GC, stood as virtually the only books that provide a comprehensive exploration of widowhood. After 1980's, there have been studies focused on smaller aspects of widowhood, with limited focal areas such as; psychological process of coping, the process of loss associated to widowhood and the role and nature of social support (Hoonard,2001).

According to United Nation Division for advancement of Women report, the *Global widows report 2015*, offered the first definitive global guide to widow's issue and established the deprivation of widows as global human rights, social and economic development problem. Thus, Loomba Foundation's *World Widows Report* is the only authoritative comprehensive data source about the discrimination and injustice faced by widows and their dependents country by country and worldwide, informing SDG-era policy formulation by the United Nations and national governments (WUNRN, 2016).

2.1.1 The Gender dimension of Poverty: Issues and Problems

Gender refers to the widely shared expectations and norms within a society about appropriate male and female behavior, characteristics, and roles. As well, it is a social and cultural construct that differentiates women from men and defines the ways in which women and men interact and behave. Women have less access over and control of productive resources than men - resources such as income, land, credit, and education. While the extent of this difference varies considerably from one culture to the next, it almost always persists (Sivard et al.1995; Buvinic 1995).

Thus, socio-cultural dependence of women is one of the key detrimental factors for their poverty. Although, both women and men face the challenge of poverty, women are more disadvantaged and burdened compared to their male counterparts. Household responsibilities such as food processing, childcare, household managements consumed women's time and energy; as a result, face difficulties in involving in income-generating activities (Haddad, 1991). Furthermore, women's poor health status decreases their ability in the involvement of productive work and devalues their position. Most of all, women's limited access to formal education restrain their involvement in productive work. In addition, most of women's time is spent on unpaid activities, such as household work and caregiving for the elderly or for children, leaving little time for paid labor or social and leisure activities. Such, scarcity of discretionary time is referred to as 'time poverty' (Akshay, 2017). Generally, women experience unequal treatment in political, social and economic matters in every nation (Wirth, 2001).

In 1970's women and economic development came to be the core of the international discourse and gave birth to the notion of feminization of poverty. The term "feminization of poverty" was first used by Diana Pearce to call for an analysis into the definition of poverty and an understanding of the way it is experienced by women. According to this approach, the high visibility of poor women because of changing demographics (migrants, single parent families, divorced, widows and female-headed households) makes it easier for women to be counted although the extent of their poverty remains hidden. Conceivably, feminization of poverty is closely linked to feminization of household heads.

In fact, in most patriarchal societies the largest number of households are headed or supported by women (Goldberg& Kremen, 1990).

On the contrary, female household headship can also be positive and empowering (Chant, 2003:29). Baden (1999:13 as cited in Chant, 2006:206) reflects, ‘The processes which lead women to head households are many and, in some cases, this may represent a positive choice, so that...connotations of powerlessness and victim hood are inappropriate’. Referring to a comprehensive review of studies by Buvinic and Gupta (1997), Chant (2003:46) summarizes that studies have been productive insofar as they have drawn attention to the problems of generalizing about women’s poverty.

2.1.2 Widowhood and poverty

Although poverty is a national and an international social impediment, it is multi-dimensional, and it is affected by gender, age, cultural, social and economic factors (Spicker, 1999). Identifying the most tangible element of this provides the perfect vantage point or locus for change.

According to Heather Ibrahim-Leathers, co-founder of the Global Fund for Widows, cyclical nature of poverty creates an epidemic of poverty to the widow. According to him, widowhood is closely tied to cultural stigmatization across culture and this cycle begins with the death of the husband. Upon his death, the woman loses all her income and, due to social cultural barriers, fear, or shame, she is bereft of her right to claim her husband’s estate. Her economic vulnerability heightens the social stigmatization attached to the event of widowhood and her social exclusion and lack of skills due to fewer educational opportunities as a woman combined with her continued responsibilities towards her children provides her with minimal economic opportunities and she becomes dependent on others for her livelihood because she does not have enough for proper means of survival (Commission on the status of women, 2016).

This is an indication that widowhood practices may not only perpetuate gender inequality but may also deny women access to economic resources and lead to poverty (COHRE, 2002). According to Owen (1999), who studied the status of widows in ten countries, widowhood is the root cause of poverty across generations.

With this she confirmed, cyclical phenomenon of poverty, propelled by cultural disempowerment and cultural stigma directed to women. Accordingly, quoting Haddad (1991) and other researches in Ghana, Joyce (2016) and Sossau (2002) argue, traditional injustice presented to African widows is a major concern because stigmatization and cultural norms are critical factors that contribute to the economic vulnerability of widows. Khanna (2016), also provided similar argument about widows in India, and sates the issue qualifies as economic and human rights issues that can be impacted legally through governmental policy making processes.

Also, different studies in Africa by Bond, (2010), Chirwa, (2006), Mukasa, (2008) and Samuel, (2011) indicated interventions aimed at widows should primarily be directed toward increasing levels of personal well-being and that the United Nations and international agencies need to focus on widow supported as active agents in poverty eradication measures.

There are an estimated 38,261,345 widows in the world living under extreme poverty. This indicates that widowhood as a cause of poverty is a serious concern and has inter-generational consequence (United Nations, 2001). Hence, if we assume that economic vulnerability underscores the violation of human rights, then it makes pragmatic sense to place widows squarely in the discourse on poverty or else the negative impact on societies that widows deprivation has, cannot be addressed with the current lack of focus and understanding of the widows' issue. Becoming a widow under such conditions can therefore lead to a fall into poverty or deepening of existing poverty (WUNRN, 2016).

2.1.3 Widowhood: gender inequality and gender-based violence

Gender relations of power constitute one of the root causes of gender inequality and are among the most influential of the social determinants (Cook et al, 2003). Gender inequality is more pervasive than other forms of inequality, within those widows are more unequal. Such inequality mostly manifests itself in economic vulnerability (Donnelly, 2003). In addition, gender inequality may lead to human rights violations, gender-based violence, perpetuation of stereotypes, and exclusion of women from political and economic participation (Mukasa, 2008). Inequality in the enjoyment of rights by widows throughout the world is deeply embedded in tradition, history and culture, including religious attitudes (Global Widows Report, 2015).

While all women are unable to own land or property, inheritance laws by tradition and custom discriminate against widows. Although, most women may not own their homes, expulsion of widows and their children from a marital home leads many to homelessness, migration, refugee or displacement camps and increased physical insecurity. Even though all women are likely to be underemployed and less well paid in comparison to men, widows are additionally constrained from pursuing education, job training or employment by grief rites requiring widows remain inside for up to one year or more. While most women are given secondary status in patriarchal societies, social isolation and avoidance of widows often leads widows to miss training, employment, healthcare, education and other information and opportunities (WUNRN, 2016).

Gender-based violence in this context is thus, to indicate prevalence of domestic violence and other forms of violence's perpetuated against widows. Gender based violence encompasses but is not limited to physical, sexual, psychological violence occurring in the family, traditional practices harmful to women and violence related to exploitation (Watts and Zimmerman, 2002). Akujobi (2006) argues, gender as a recognized phenomenon, makes it determinant for one to apply the principles in the analysis of widowhood. In applying these principles, one must first and foremost look at the place of widows in societies. Accordingly, Sossau (2002) states the situation of African widows as silent victims who suffer cruel and dehumanizing cultural and ritual practices as a mourning process for their dead spouses. Widowhood practices in Africa are practices which are only limited to women. In some areas, women are still treated like minors and sometimes as second-class citizens that are only to be seen and not to be heard (Tamale, 2004; Senyenjo 2007).

A widow is subjected to various degrees of dehumanizing practices or rites all in the name of customs and traditions. These may include denial of inheritance rights, shaving of hair, sleeping in the same room with their husbands' corpses during this mourning period, drinking from the water used in bathing the deceased spouse to sitting and sleeping on the floor (COHRE, 2002). Worse still, a widow may be dispossessed of the property left behind by her late husband. Such practices are especially harmful, inhuman and constitute a form of sexual exploitation and gender-based violence (Oyeniya & Ayodeji, 2010).

These practices range from widow cleansing in Eastern Africa, levirate marriage in Southern Africa, to shaving of the widow's hair or sleeping in the same room with their husbands' corpses during this mourning period and other degrading treatments (Armstrong et al, 1993). Whatever form they may take, widowhood practices are not only tools to perpetuate gender inequality but are also barbaric, atrocious, unethical, and a gross violation of women's fundamental rights and freedom (Sossou, 2002; Nyanzi et al, 2009: 13). Further, in some African countries, property and inheritance rights are protected by law and adequately enforced for widows and widowers. In some cases, equal inheritance rights are protected by law, but cultural and religious customs can override rights for widows.

Or in some country's inheritance rights are not equally guaranteed under the law, and widows have no inheritance rights (Peterman,2012).

It has also been noted that 'forced eviction may arise where a woman has been compelled to leave her home due to actual or presumed acts of violence or discriminatory customary laws that deny women rights of inheritance' (COHRE, 2002). As described by Ede (2007), these women experience socio-psychological trauma, are subjected to harmful health practices, economic exertion and deprivations.

On this regard, widows are subjected to rough treatment by close relatives of the late husband. And are shorn of property or inheritance right and subjected to other harmful cultural or customary practices damaging to women such as rape by husband's relatives (IPPF, 2008). Gender-based violence not only has negative consequences for those who suffer it, but also their families, the community and society at large and it comes at a high cost (UN Women,2012). Accordingly, widows face gendered violence doubly as women and as widows in the form of discrimination that seriously inhibits their ability to enjoy rights and freedom based on equality with men (WUNRN, 2016).

2.1.4 Widowhood: The Widow and Widower

Widowhood is a reality for as long as people are born, and people die. Losing a partner at any age is a painful experience. No matter what the age or gender the person is, death of the partner results in the transition of identity from wife/husband to widow/ widower. Adjustment to the new identity 'widow/er' by itself requires huge process. Several aspects of widowhood have been specifically identified as stressful including being single again, loss of income and feeling isolated from friends (Lopata, 1973).

Widowhood presents a myriad of economic, social and psychological problems, particularly in the first year or so after the death of the spouse (Trivedi J.K., Sareen H & Dhyani M., 2009). But a major problem for both men and women is economic hardship. Widowhood for the women often causes financial stress because a major income source is lost with the death of a husband (Trivedi J.K., Sareen H & Dhyani M., 2009). When the husband was the principal bread winner, his widow is now deprived of his income and the nucleus of the family is destroyed (Fasoranti *et al.*, 2007). However, different studies (Amoran *et al.*, 2005; Abdallah and Ogbeide, 2002) have concluded that a higher rate of mental illness exists among the widowed than their married counterparts. A study conducted by Chen *et al.*, (2000) concluded that widows had higher mean levels of traumatic grief, depressive and anxiety symptoms (compared to widowers).

Another problem associated with widowhood is that it is gendered. Many widows live by themselves and they suffer from fear of being alone and loss of self-esteem as a woman, in addition to the many practical problems related to living alone. Widowed women also note how little social support (formal and informal) they receive compared with their widower friends (Bennett, Hughes, & Smith, 2003). Thus, they feel the loss of personal contact and human association. Therefore, they tend to withdraw and become unresponsive (Fasoranti *et al.*, 2007). On various studies, transitioning to being unmarried (widowed/ divorced) has been associated with weight loss (Umberson, 1992) and increased alcohol consumption in women (Temple *et al.*, 1991).

Particularly, becoming a widow has been associated with an increase in psychological distress (Avis, Brambilla, Vass, & McKinlay, 1991; Harlow, Goldberg, & Comstock, 1991; Schulz et al., 2001), weight loss (Schulz et al., 2001) higher rates of health care use (Avis et al., 1991). On the other side, the situation of widows in Africa is disturbing due to the harrowing experiences they encounter. In addition to the common experience of loss, they have had to put up with other challenges such as poverty, deprivation, helplessness, and hopelessness brought about by harmful cultural practices that limit their contribution (Durojaye, 2013). Widowers are more likely both to desire remarriage and to remarry than widowed women (Bennett et al., 2003). On the other hand, for many widowed women there is no desire to remarry.

The greatest problem in widowhood is also emotional, even if it had been a bad marriage, the survivor feels the loss. The role of spouse is lost, social life changes from couple-oriented to association with other single people; and the widowed no longer have the day-in, day-out companionship of the other spouse that had become intrinsic part of their lives. A study conducted in Norway on Systematic review of the emotional state and self-management of widows and they showed that in the first phase of their loss, the widows seemed overwhelmed by the need for courage and strength to overcome an unbearable emotional state. Some widows tried to survive by hiding their suffering and struggling with physical, psychological, and social problems (Holm & Stivenson, 2012).

On the literatures, there has been considerable controversy as to whether widowhood is a more difficult experience psychologically for men or for women. Widowhood is generally a greater problem financially for women than men, and economic difficulties can lead to lower psychological well-being. Several studies (e.g., Schuster and Butler, 1989; Thompson et al., 1989; Davar, 1999; Reddy, 2004) have indeed found that widowhood has a greater adverse impact on the psychological well-being of women than men. Other studies, however (e.g., Lee et al., 2001; Umberson et al., 1992; Jason et al., 2002), have reported stronger effects on men. Still others have found no gender differences at all (Li et al., 2005).

2.1.5 Widowhood and socio- cultural and economic vulnerability

In societies, there are customs, traditions and beliefs which have over the years helped to keep women under subjugation and for them to feel generally inferior to men and incapable of operating at the same level as men in the society (Florence, 1991).

As a result, widows go through a lot of hardship that stems them from the society, the husband's family and from tradition. Though the concept is relative and dynamic, The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) defines vulnerability as the diminished capacity of an individual or group to anticipate, cope with, resist and recover from the impact of a natural or man-made hazard. Vulnerability is most often associated with poverty, but it can also arise when people are isolated, insecure and defenseless in the face of risk, shock or stress.

Widows are found in every community, but some societies and traditions prescribe harsh injunctions on them (Akujobi, 2006). So far, the economic literature on vulnerability has paid little attention to the situation of widows in Sub-Saharan Africa. Yet, a few papers highlight that women are extremely vulnerable to the loss of their husbands: households headed by widows are significantly poorer than male-headed and other female-headed households (Appleton, 1996 in Uganda; Horrell and Krishnan, 2007 in Zimbabwe). In Mali, Walle (2013), finds that widowhood has a strong, lasting impact on women's living standards and welfare indicators: the detrimental effects persist over time, and the disadvantage is passed on to children. Historians have also documented that women who lack male support, like widows, are more vulnerable to famine.

Generally, the vulnerability of widows stems from women's subordinate status regarding legal protection, individual endowments, social norms and access to and control over resources (Sylvie & Pauline, 2015). Summing up on how cultural practices perpetuate the subordinate position of women, Williams (2004) opines that; a woman is defined in terms of her role as a mother and a wife and that her worth depends on her marital status since her legal and social status are tied to her husband.

The lives of widows in Africa run through several unimaginable phases. According to Beale, (1986), the focus on them is very negative with questions directly interrogating their total being. Such questions are asked;

“How are we sure she has no hand in the husband’s death by any means? Is she involved in any conjugal relationship? Or how much is she entitled to from her late husband’s estate?” (Akujobi, 2006, p.5).

In some other societies, traditions prescribe harsh injunctions for widows, they are denied the use of ornaments, perfumes, flowers, fine clothing, no making of hair, in most cases, widows are shaved as a mark of respect for their departed husbands and they are denied all other beautiful things women cherish. In other societies still, widows are denied the three basic meals a day, they are to sleep on the bare floor and are to observe celibacy and other untold hardships (Chakravarti & Preeti, 2001).

Recent studies compiled by World Bank report 2016, with disaggregation by marital status indicated; in Mali, widows are found to disproportionately head the poorest households. They also have lower levels of nutritional status and are five times more likely than women who are married (and never widowed) to be HIV positive. This disadvantage persists and spills over to their children’s health and education outcomes. In Nigeria, worse nutritional status for widows is linked to inheritance practices and cultural attitudes and norms towards widows. While in Senegal, and elsewhere, some protection for widows may be provided by the opportunity to remarry. The evidence indicates that among widows in Senegal half marry a relative of their deceased husband. There is also evidence that Senegalese women excluded from inheritance after the death of the husband; the inheritance is to be shared among the husband’s children, sons inheriting more, and more frequently, than daughters (Lambert et.al, 2014). Such case increases the number of pregnancies to potentially dangerous levels in their desperation to have a son as insurance against widowhood.

In addition, report by United Nations indicated, socio-economic gender bias against women in patriarchal societies places the widow at a greater risk of poverty and disease. Widows in patriarchal societies of Asia and Africa are exceptionally vulnerable to social marginalization and stigmatization rites and are unable to access the right to a life of dignity free from violence; restricted mobility, forced remarriage

and pregnancies, lack of access to education and training, inequitable inheritance laws, lack of social security, restricted access to financial resources and economic avenues, while exacerbating her poverty, leaves the widow vulnerable to physical, emotional psychological violence both by acts of omission and commission. Overwhelmingly, when widows turn in to the law to battle abuse and property grabbing, the odds against them is formidable (United Nations, 2001).

Such evident of cultural discriminations result in economic dependency and economic dependency exacerbates cultural discrimination, thus, socio-cultural discrimination of widows is directly proportional to their economic dependency. The more economically vulnerable a widow is the higher the violation of her human rights through cultural stigmatization. Such structural inequalities of patriarchy manifest itself most crucially in the economic vulnerability which gets underscored by cultural stigmatization, social marginalization and individual vulnerabilities (Peterman,2012).

Therefore, widowhood entails a loss of economic means that are conditional on marriage, including access to productive assets, such as land, as well as the loss of protection and status previously derived from a husband. This leaves aside the still-common (in places) imposition of extended periods of seclusion, degrading rituals and accusations of having caused the death to which, it goes without saying, widowers are not subjected to (Durojaye, 2013).

2.1.6 Widowhood and their invisibility

Studies on widows are heavily focused on the conceptualization of widowhood as an event and subsequent social, economic and new identity related challenges emanated from partner's loss are surprisingly absent. Most literatures on widowhood (Hoonard, 2001, Lopata, 1973 & Haase, 2008) indicated widowhood particularly related to old age and the role of social support in adjusting the widows. The phenomenon is of great attention as evidences of their vulnerability, both socioeconomic and psychological challenges, are growing as invisible group of women (Burdan, 1985). Still there is striking lack of concern for the deprivation experienced by millions of widows on a day-to-day basis (Chakravarti, 2013).

Because of gender inequality, widowed women are visible culturally but invisible in the discourse on violation of human rights. Amazingly, there exists very

little empirical evidence on widows. Reasons for this invisibility on the horizon of international regional and national platforms are not hard to find but this invisibility itself underscores their value in the discourse for change (Global Widows Report, 2015). Widows make up to about half of the adult female population in many African societies, as Potash (1986) reveals, but very little is said about them and their situation or plight in any discourse. Most of the materials gathered on widowhood practices in African societies can be said to be “raw” and “unprocessed” (Akujobi, 2006).

Widowhood as it exists in the western nations and its implications in Asia and Africa are hugely different. But it sounds like as if the vulnerability of a widow is just a cultural issue that gives states to provide a legitimate reason for the invisibility of widows from policy and programs (Sylvie & Pauline, 2015). According to the World Bank African poverty report, this is partly because poverty and vulnerability are typically measured with the household as the basic unit of observation. Potentially disadvantaged individuals such as remarried widows, young or elderly current widows, and their children are then largely hidden from view in standard data sources (World Bank, 2016).

Since there was no comprehensive qualitative data (at the country, regional and global levels), the 2015 report of widows and their children poverty has taken widows' living standards measured by proxy measures using existing data on poverty. Thus, number of widows per country was calculated by taking the most recent data available (census and survey data) and using 2010- and 2015-women's population data per country, to calculate the 2010 and 2015 widows and child estimate.

Generally, widow's deprivation has been comprehensively ignored for too long, yet the conditions that many widows are forced to live in out of economic necessity or social norms qualify as humanitarian emergency and as significant human rights violations. It can be said that there is no group more affected by the sin of omission than widows. They are painfully absent from the statistics of many developing countries, and they are rarely mentioned in the multitude of reports on women's poverty, development, health or human rights published in the last twenty-five years (United Nations, 2001).

Widows and their children are largely hidden from view in the data used to inform social policy discussions in Africa (World Bank, 2016). In the international agendas of Gender Equality and Women Empowerment, which is expected to bring a higher importance to widows, and women at all stages of their life cycle, it is not possible to accept the current wording if we apply and not to have it with a specific mention of “widows cleansing” and other widows traditional practices that have harmful health effects and hope to make a significant improvement. Dominique (2018), taking the cases of 20 countries cautioned, research on the effectiveness of policies is limited and thus, the fate of widows and divorcees may depend on the willingness of African countries to invest in their most vulnerable people by evaluating whether these policy options notably improve the financial stability and social standing of their widows, divorcees, and their families.

2.1.7 Differentiating widowhood, its correlates and coping

Current studies on psychological adjustment of widows argue that it is important to distinguish between the effects of bereavement and widowhood in understanding the lives of widowed people. Especially, Bennett and Soulsby (2012), argue that, often the terms spousal bereavement and widowhood are used interchangeably, not only by people in everyday conversation, but also by researchers and practitioners. Spousal bereavement is the state of having experienced the death of one’s spouse. Its consequences are generally short-term (though not always) and have personal consequences and meanings. Widowhood, on the other hand, is a long-term and ongoing state which not only has personal consequences but carries with it social consequences and meanings (Mahraban, Pienta & Franks, 2006).

Both bereavement and widowhood can affect psychological and physical health and can have substantial influences on widow’s interactions with the social world. Bennett and Soulsby (2012) stated that many researches indicate, the circumstances that precede the bereavement can influence how well people can adapt to being widowed and cope with their bereavement. Factors such as age and gender influence the ways in which people adapt. It is also clear that there are different ways in which people confront their lives as widowed people and these can influence how people live their lives as a widow.

The Dual Process Model of bereavement of Stroebe and Schut (1999), was developed with widowhood in mind. The model identifies two types of coping experiences, loss-oriented and restoration-oriented. Loss-oriented coping, focus on those experiences and behaviors which are associated with a focus on the deceased. Stroebe and Schut (1999) identified four types of experiences: grief work, intrusion of grief, denial/avoidance of restoration changes, and breaking bonds/ties/relocation. Restoration-oriented coping includes attending to life changes, doing new things, denial/avoidance of grief, new roles/identities/ relationships, and distraction from grief. Richardson (2007) confirmed that both types of coping were important during bereavement. Thus, argued that widowed people needed to balance out loss oriented and restoration oriented activities.

Bonanno (2004, p. 20), argued that resilience is the “ability to maintain a stable psychological equilibrium following the loss, without long-term consequences.

Mackenzie-Smith (2010) presented two analyses. First they identified that both loss- and restoration-oriented coping was associated with poor psychological adjustment. Those people who engaged in denial/ avoidance of restoration or who engaged in distraction from loss were more likely to be coping poorly. On the other hand, those who experienced intrusion renamed continuing bonds or who had new identities/roles/ relationships were more likely to be coping well. But, there is evidence to suggest that the negative impact of becoming widowed on psychological health may recover over time (Lopata, 1996; Stroebe, & Hansson, 1993; Wilcox, Evenson, Aragaki, Wassertheil-Smoller, Mouton, & Loevinger, 2003).

Recently attention has been turned to research which focus not only on the factors that support widowed people in coping or adjusting to their bereavement but on factors which allow widows to, for want of a better word, excel at being widowed. Thus, researchers have focused on resilience in bereavement and widowhood. On this regard, Bennett (2010) considers the nature of agency in achieving resilience. According to her, resilience might be achieved passively, either by the active intervention of another person, as in the case of social support, Thewodros (2014), has also founded this; or it could also be achieved by an unidentified or unnoticed, external agent. In other cases the widow was the agent of change, either through

personal characteristics; personality or life view; or through engaging in social activity or the marshaling of social or instrumental resources.

To sum up, the analytical framework for the betterment of widows is currently believed to be best if their poverty and social problems are contextualized (localized) and seen from gender perspective since holistic view of the scenario provides comprehensive information than a single perspective.

Chapter Three

3. Research Method

Research methods involve the forms of data collection, analysis, and interpretation that researchers propose for their studies (Creswell, 2014). This section describes the methods used, the design and approach; subjects included in the study; the instruments and procedures used for data collection and the techniques employed for data analysis.

3.1 Research Design

If the study problem calls for the identification of factors that influence an outcome, or the utility of an intervention, or for understanding the best predictors of outcomes, then a quantitative approach is best (Bryman, 2008). If a concept or phenomenon needs to be explored because little research has been done on it, then it merits a qualitative approach (Morse, 1991). Thus, due to the nature of the research problem, this study used a qualitative, hermeneutic phenomenology research method. Through this method, the research studied what individual participants experienced and their description of the context and situations that has influenced their experience of the phenomena.

Langdrige (2007) defines phenomenology as a discipline that aims to focus on people's perceptions of the world and what it means to them. It is also a philosophical discipline which focuses on consciousness and essences of phenomena towards elaborating existential and hermeneutic (interpretive) dimensions (Finlay, 2009). Grbich (2007) states, phenomenology has the potential to penetrate deep to the human experience and trace the essence of a phenomenon and explain it in its original form as experienced by the individuals. In such type of study participants are asked to describe their experience with the phenomenon; how they perceive, judge, describe or feel about it, make sense of it, the process and trend as well as how they remember the experience. Hermeneutics is the theory, art and practice of interpretation in the interest of specific subjects (Kafle, 2011).

Also, hermeneutic phenomenology is concerned with illuminating details and seemingly trivial aspects within experience that may be taken for granted in our lives, with a goal of creating meaning and achieving a sense of understanding (Wilson & Hutchinson, 1991).

Sharkey (2001), the goal of this type of research is to invite the reader to enter the world that the texts would disclose and open in front of themselves. This gives the research an advantage of giving emphasis on the inductive collection of large amounts of data, represent unheard voices and more likely pick up factors that were not part of the original research focus (Creswell, 2014).

3.2 Description of Study Site

The selected NGO Zer Ethiopia is a legally registered local NGO currently working with 230 destitute mothers. This organization was selected due to several reasons. Firstly, since it is the only charitable organization that selectively supports widowed mothers in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Secondly, the closeness it has with destitute mothers, particularly widowed mothers by its stated vision, mission, and objectives under project title Movement against Poverty (MAP) that aims to alleviate the challenges of poor women. Thirdly, the organization has a firsthand data that can be used by the researcher as a basis for further study. Lastly, the researcher has worked as project coordinator at the organization and is familiar with basic issues and challenges.

The researcher has been involved in the first-round intervention project at different level or in study that involves background assessment of beneficiaries in 2017. However, to maintain the trustworthiness of the data, selection of widowed mothers for this study has not involved first round beneficiaries. Thus, all participants are taken from the new round project (2018), this second round project is an extension of the first round which the researcher is not familiar with. This is done on purpose to minimize biases that arise from researcher as well as participants of the study power relationship.

3.2.1 Sampling Method

In choosing a sampling method for informant's selection, the question the researcher intended to answer is of utmost importance (Creswell, 2014). Purposive sampling technique, also called judgment sampling, is the deliberate choice of an informant due to the qualities the informant possesses. Simply the researcher decides what needs to be known and sets out to find people who can and are willing to provide the information by knowledge or experience (Bernard 2002, Lewis & Sheppard 2006).

One of the situations in which purposive sampling is appropriate is when the researcher wants to identify types of cases for in-depth investigation or when the purpose is less to generalize to a larger population than it is to gain a deeper understanding of participants (Kreuger & Neuman, 2006). The purpose of this research is not to make generalization about research participants, rather to gain a deeper understanding of the experiences of each.

Thus, the research adopted purposive sampling method. As has been mentioned, the research participants have been selected from Zer Ethiopia purposely. However, this has been done without compromising on the quality of data as well as jeopardization of the rights of the study participants.

3.2.2 Inclusion Criteria of Participants

The selection criteria considered; homogeneity (regarding age, education and health status); currently supported by Zer Ethiopia and whose Woreda has witnessed their widowhood and the fact that they are destitute; those who are selected from the new round beneficiaries (those who has never been in contact with the researcher); widows (who aren't currently remarried) and with children; those who experienced widowhood for at least three years; both in good health status and currently taking medical treatment; and those who are willing to share their experience with the researcher.

3.2.3 Selection of target population

Phenomenological studies tend to have small sample size. Sample size is determined depending on fading the occurrence of new information from the subsequent participant. Thus, the sample size of this study was limited to fourteen. Priory, from their background assessment form, beneficiaries of the project was sorted with the help of project coordinators. Screened by the set above criteria, initially 30 widowed mothers were selected. From the 30, only 21 were available for contact and from those 18 agreed to get involved. But finally, only 10 targets took part in the in-depth interview; while the rest refused to get involved after they were contacted and scheduled for an interview and FGD.

In addition to the ten participants, four interviews with key informants were conducted. The first two were with staff members of Zer Ethiopia Foundation. Both have worked at the foundation for more than 3 years. The second two key informants are from Arada & Kirkos Sub city, Small scale business enterprise; both have the knowledge about the situation of the research targets as they are closely working with Zer Ethiopia (especially in the process of assessing their destitution).

3.3 Data Collection Procedure

Three weeks prior to data collection a meeting was held with project coordinators of Zer Ethiopia, briefed the research objective and the steps that will be followed. As mentioned above, list of participants was reviewed for selection. Participants who have given their willingness were called for an interview. The researcher has gone to participant's most convenient area for an interview (mostly their houses), this also helped the researcher observe their living conditions. Before the interview, the researcher made sure that participants were briefed of the procedures and signed on the consent form (see the Annex). For communication purpose, throughout the data collection process, mode of communication was Amharic. Following that, key informants were interviewed.

3.4 Tools for Data Collection

The study consumed both primary and secondary data. Interview, observation, and documented data (books, journals, and official internet documents) were used. Hermeneutic phenomenology has strong philosophical underpinnings and typically involves conducting interviews to collect data and answer the research question (Giorgi, 2009; Moustakas, 1994). Interviews are very useful when they are applied to explore complex phenomena. According to Kumar (2005), interview data is an appropriate inter- subjective way for participants and researchers to exchange meanings and interpretations of events or actions.

In-depth interview is less formal and the least structured, in which the wording and questions are not predetermined. It is more suitable method of data collection when a researcher needs to gain insight into things like opinions, feelings, emotions, and experiences (Denscombe, 2007). Thus, to obtain vivid description and answer the research questions, ten in-depth-interviews with participants were conducted. Questions and guiding rules are attached (see Annex). To make sure that the questions were clear, it was pre-tested among respondents before the actual data collection. Interview with key informants was also conducted to triangulate the data.

Phenomenology makes use of a variety of methods including interviews, conversations and participant observation (Moustakas, 1994). Additionally, this study used observation as a tool of data collection, as it enables researchers to have comprehensive meaning of interview responses through noticing the body language, gestures and facial expression of the respondents (Denzin, 2003). The study type requires the researcher to look at all aspects of the experience as described by the participants. This includes physical surroundings, objects, other people present, type of activity, outcome, social and personal interactions, time frame, emotions, belief or value systems, attitudes. While conducting the interviews the researcher went to observe the living conditions of participants and paid attention to nonverbal communications. Since the interviews were emotionally sensitive, the researcher captured facial expression, action and gesture. Thus, notes from the observation were taken.

3.5 Research Ethics

Ethical issues are equally important in hermeneutic phenomenology like any other research paradigm (Kafle, 2011). To assure that participants are fully informed about process and risks of the research, prior to data collection, letter of consent have been provided indicating that participants understood the scope and objectives of study and that they agree to partake in the research. More importantly, the researcher is aware of the responsibility to be sensitive and respectful of research participants and their basic human rights. Thus, participants have been informed that the research requires them to discuss some sensitive topics, such as loss of husband or any other challenge that has happened to them and this might initiate reflections that could be painful. As such, the researcher made sure that participants are aware that any time in the process of the study, can be interrupted or ended.

For confidentiality and anonymity, each participant is assigned pseudonyms. Such approach was used to give participants the freedom to express themselves without fear of their identities being detected. Likewise, the research followed constant reflectivity, which according to Anderson (1989), means a process of considering inter alia the researcher's constructs and ideological biases – not to over-emphasize the researcher's role in the study, but to reflect ideas that the researcher believes might impact the way of collecting and interpreting the data.

3.6 Trustworthiness of the Study

To eliminate threats to trustworthiness, the researcher properly documented the data gathered. Fake names of respondents were used in analyzing the data to keep the privacy of the participants. To minimize respondent bias, good relationship was established before and during the interview. Plus, the objective of the research was illustrated to participants (in a group or individual interviews) to increase the likelihood of getting genuine information. Further, participants were informed about the confidentiality of the information they provide and about the significance of their information.

Additionally, using probing, paraphrasing and other necessary interviewing skills, the researcher tried to maximize the probability of getting genuine information. To minimize threat of researchers' bias, bracketing is used to put away the researcher's prior bias from interfering in the research. Bracketing is a mental exercise in which the researcher identifies, and then sets aside, taken-for-granted assumptions used in a social science (Kreuger & Neuman, 2006).

Accordingly, during data collection and subsequent procedures the researcher put a side personal assumption. Moreover, confirmability, which is neutrality in the research study's findings have been used. In other words, the finding involved making sure that researcher bias does not twist the interpretation of what the research participants said to fit a certain narrative. To establish confirmability, the researcher provided an audit trail, which highlights every step of data analysis that was made to provide a rationale for the decisions made.

3.7 Method of data Analysis

Qualitative data analysis is the process in which the researcher moves from the raw data that have been collected as part of the research and use it to provide explanations, understanding and interpretation of the phenomena, people and situation which we are studying (Creswell, 2013). In phenomenological studies, process of analyzing data involves the researcher becoming full immersed into the rich, descriptive data and using processes such as coding and categorizing to organize the data. The goal is to develop themes that can be used to describe the experience from the perspective of those that lived it (Moustakas, 1994). The codes that researcher use is based on certain topics that the researcher identified as being relevant to the study, they can be based on ideas, concepts, terms or phrases (Fade, 2004).

Hermeneutic phenomenology holds, interpretations are all we have and description itself is an interpretive process (Kafle, 2011). Description is the last phase of the process, in which the researcher will use his or her understanding of the data to describe and define the phenomenon and communicate it to others. Organizing the data and using codes to assist in developing themes may make the process more objective (Giorgi, 2012).

On this research, initially, the recorded interviews were transcribed in to English without changing the meanings of respondents' words and eliminating components of stories. Then the researcher looked to identify commonalities among these aspects between the accounts from different participants. The goal is to use these observations to identify themes. The themes are elements of the described experience.

Aside from the notes taken from observation, from the respondent's description; highlighted sentences that described their experience of the phenomenon and developed clusters of meanings in to the teams. Finding patterns among the collected stories and identifying the shared and unique experiences of respondents. Hence, the researcher organized related segments of data into categories; identified key themes; created connection between different themes; generated a description of the context and interpreted the larger meaning of the data without altering the meanings. The main categories reflect the focus of the research questions.

To conclude, the study followed the four steps the phenomenological study requires. The first one is bracketing, which involves a process of identifying, and keeping in check, any preconceived beliefs, opinions or notions about the phenomenon being researched. In this process, the researcher "brackets out" any presuppositions in an effect to approach the study of the phenomenon from an unbiased perspective. The second step which is intuition was followed; this requires that the researcher become totally immersed in the study and the phenomenon and that the researcher remains open to the meaning of the phenomenon as described by those that experienced it. The process of intuition results in an understanding of the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). Thirdly, during the analysis, the researcher has involved in the process, after becoming fully immersed into the rich, descriptive data and using processes such as coding and categorizing to organize the data. On the last phase, which is description, the researcher used self-understanding of the data to describe and define the phenomenon and communicate it to others.

Since the initial focus of the research was to find out meaning and the way in which meaning arises in experience, the analysis gave much emphasis for identification of experiences which describe perceptions and core meaning of an individual's experience that makes it what it i

Chapter four

4 Data presentation and Analysis

This study in general is set to examine the socio-economic challenges of widowed mothers in Addis Ababa, taking the case of beneficiaries from Zer Ethiopia Foundation. This chapter in its first part presents the background characteristics of the study participants. In the subsequent subsection, it demonstrates the findings along with discussions analyzed in line with the specific objectives of the study. First, social and economic challenges were discussed along with challenge accelerating factors categorized in to four major themes. Following that, emotional challenges resulted from widowhood are discussed and analyzed under three major themes. Thirdly, coping strategies are discussed under two major themes. Finally, critical needs and areas of intervention is analyzed and discussed.

4.1 Backgrounds of Research Participants

As mentioned above, ten target respondents and four key informants took part in the in-depth interview. In terms of age, the participants were between the ages of 17 and 47 years. All of them are currently living in Addis and are beneficiaries of Zer Ethiopia. With an exception of two respondents all the rest came from the regions. All have been widowed mothers not for at list 3 years and maximum of 17 years, none of them remarried. They all have children with minimum age of 2 and maximum 20. Two of them have female children only and one have a boy, while the rest have both. In addition, five are raising children of their relatives. Eight are Orthodox Christians, and two Protestants. The majority of them are illiterate except for three of them; two are at high school level while one has completed grade 12. Similarly, majority of them are working in small businesses and few are employed. A profile of the research targets and key informants is summarized in the tables below;

Table 1: Profile of key informants

No	Name of Key informant (pseudonyms)	Sex	Educational status	Organization
1	Hilu	M	Masters	Zer Ethiopia
2	Rahma	F	Masters	Zer Ethiopia
3	Asheber	M	BA	Kirkos sub city, small scale business enterprise
4	Asmelash	M	Currently enrolled, BA	Arada, Sub city, small scale business enterprise

Table 2: Back ground information of interview participates

No	Pseudonym of Respondent	Year since spouse died	Age	Family size	Ages of children	Education	Employment/ occupation Pre-Widowhood	Employment/ occupation Post-widowhood	Religion
1	Saron	17	47	2	11	Illiterate	Home maker	Safety net	Orthodox
2	Tenbit	6	38	6	19,16,15,11 &11	Illiterate	Small business	Daily laborer& Safety Net	Orthodox
3	Ewnet	6	34	6	15,13,10,8,7	Illiterate	Home maker	Small market	Orthodox
4	Bethlehem	8	33	4	9,15,17	Illiterate	Home maker	Cooking	Orthodox
5	Iyda	9	38	3	15,11	Illiterate	Home maker	Cleaner	Orthodox
6	Wengel	13	45	5	20,16,14	12 complete	Home maker	Cooking	Protestant
7	Hewan	12	40	5	2,6, 14,15	Illiterate	Cleaner	Sex worker/ Small market	Orthodox
8	Megnot	6	32	2	9	Illiterate	Own business with her husband	Safety Net & small market	Orthodox
9	Ruth	8	38	5	9,13,15,20	High school	Small business	Safety Net& cleaning	Protestant
10	Abigail	3	40	4	10,15&3	High school	Singer	Cleaning and small business	Orthodox

4.2 Social and economic challenges

Loss of husband resulted two interrelated common experiences; loss of social status and economic vulnerability. In fact, the social and economic challenges were found highly intertwined, and one significantly contributes to the other. Analyzing the lived experiences and viewpoints of widowed mothers, three themes were identified from their social challenges. These are social discrimination and stereotypes, derogatory portrayals towards the widow or her children and social loneliness (Lack of support). While the general economic challenges fall into; lack of resource, opportunity and support.

As such, this study assumed socioeconomic challenges encompasses not just income but also educational attainment, financial insecurity, and importantly subjective perceptions of social status; including physical and psychological health. It has also been witnessed in the findings that economical vulnerability when added to the social situations of widowhood heightened social stigmatization. As well, the social discrimination and lack of skills due to fewer educational or training opportunities as a woman combined with their continued responsibilities towards their children provided them with minimal economic opportunities. According to Diemer (2009), socioeconomic status includes quality of life attributes as well as the opportunities and privileges afforded to people within society. Further, it is a consistent and reliable predictor of a vast array of outcomes across the life span, including physical and psychological health (Diemer & Ali, 2009).

The economic challenges:

The data from the interview and observation depict that participants are currently living in critical economic conditions. Mainly, their current economic challenges are sourced from lack of husband's income. In addition to this, unavailability of inheritance such as housing or land, and lack of support became a second reason for the escalation of their challenge. Such reality added to illiteracy, lack of marketable skill, large family size and poor health situation of the widow heightened their economic challenges through; lack of basic needs such as food and clothing; limited opportunity and information to access economic resources; limited access to credit and loan; minimal time (to get better earnings or formal job).

This, in turn lead the widow to engage in labor intensive, health risky and low paying jobs, which had subsequent effect on her economy.

In the same manner, key informant from Kirkos Sub city says he was engaged in the selection process of the widows and asserted,

“These women are left with nothing and have no means to provide for themselves or their families. Zer Ethiopia works with us to help fight their economic challenges by implementing programs to help these women learn skills and develop saving culture so they can move forward with their lives, and not be stuck in this cyclical system of neglect that society puts on them. This issue is something that needs to be brought out into the light.”

The interviewees have also informed that their economic challenges were the initial reasons for them to get introduced with Zer Ethiopia Foundation. According to the background data from Zer, the mothers don't afford to feed their children, therefore, the children are registered to get involved in a school feeding program. In addition to this, they take annual school stationaries including uniform and bags. Not only this, but the mothers lead the family's life with an income that is less than 2000 Ethiopian birr (this will be discussed under the bellow section). Over all, the widows are subjected to innumerable miseries not due to their fault but due to the social custom followed by the patriarchal society. Meaning, the disempowerment of the women from birth leads to economic instability. In fact, widows with children further feel the impacts of disempowerment as resources required to sustain their families become scarce. Thus, this reality calls for the investigation of the reason why the widow becomes economically vulnerable immediate to her loss; which this study addressed when answering the second research question in the following session.

The social challenges:

The experiences of the mothers entails that widowhood is more than just an economic issue rather it is an entitlement and human rights concern. Cultural stigmatization and cultural norms are critical factors that contribute to economic vulnerability. As mentioned above, social discrimination, stereotypes, derogatory portrayals towards the widow or her children and social loneliness (lack of support) are the majorly experienced widowhood social challenges. While such cultural stereotypes propel the stigmas within society, economic vulnerability exacerbates the

problem by strengthening the basis for the stigmatization. Even though they are highlighted and incorporated with other factors, economic problems were largely quoted by all respondents and key informants.

Regarding their social challenges, interviewees responded in a detailed manner which will vastly be discussed under the subcategories of accelerating factors. However, the research founded, that most participants have not recognized or naturalized most of the social challenges as a result of gender socialization (patriarchic nature of the society). In fact, all of the interviewees, except for one have directly admitted the social aspect of their challenges; this makes them even more socially vulnerable. Despite the meanings they gave to their social lives, it was the major reason that challenged their economic and emotional well-being (this is also discussed under the following sections of the study). The researcher and the key informants, especially key informant from Zer Ethiopia who informed has studied social work demonstrated social challenges as reasons for low self-esteem and stress.

Social challenges of the widow are very much tied in to their unpredicted economic loss that widowhood resulted. However, their loss has also a deeper influence on their new social standing as a single mother; being a reason for triggering gendered stereotypes. When the process of adapting in to the single standing is tangled with economic vulnerability presents the widow multidimensional challenges including self-exclusion from social life and various emotional struggles.

This changes the whole aspect and experience of widowhood. When asked about the social challenges, respondents have depicted that the social respect they use to have has largely declined after their loss. In some cases, losing the social attachment or facing challenges from the husband's siblings and their children was found as a reason for their economic loss as well.

The other key informant from Zer Ethiopia who mentioned has ten years' work experience in the areas of social work revealed that he observes that the widows have placed less value for themselves in the society. According to him,

“What I witnessed working in this project is that their stories may vary but they face the same difficulties: complications with grief and loneliness, forms of social stigma or exclusion, financial struggles to raise their children and hopelessness”.

Summing up, socio-economic challenges on this study are factors that have negative influence on the widow's social or economic life. The data shows, nearly every woman that participated in this study mentioned she encountered social and economic challenges or the combination of both. Poverty is one of socio-economic issues, and it indicates lack of basic capacity to participate effectively in society and it also means susceptibility to violence, and it often implies living on marginal or fragile environments (Mark, 2009). Poverty is not a single factor rather is characterized by multiple physical and psychosocial stressors (Eichner & Robbins, 2015).

Thus, the combined challenges in this study revealed, the current economic and social situation of a widow in a society, which has a potential to contribute to the risk or positive adjustment of widow after their loss. Such description of the phenomena presents questions on how to address widows' situation at the grassroots level. Thus, to examine the root causes of social and economic challenges, the study identified and analyzed accelerating factors in to four major themes; poverty, socialization of gender, HIV and cultural stereotypes towards widows and their children.

4.2.1 Factors accelerating socio-economic challenges

Factors that made widows more vulnerable to socio-economic challenges are diverse and complicated. It encompasses gender, poverty and emotional issues that are closely interrelated to one another. The restricted access to financial resources and economic avenues, with exacerbating poverty, leave widows vulnerable to physical, emotional psychological violence. Thus, lower socio-economic status of the widow and its correlates, such as lower educational achievement, poverty, gender inequality and poor health, ultimately affect the overall wellness of widows as well as their children.

This study founded loss of husband and subsequent economic loss has a major impact in every aspect of widow's life. Also Hoonaard (2001) claims, widowhood unsettles the foundation of interpersonally created and maintained self: disrupting relationship systems, affecting regulation, attachment, identity and social roles. Hence, this study sought, exploring the challenges and strength of widowhood as it is a vital component of understanding the issues and assisting widow.

4.2.1.1 Poverty

According to the findings, the interviewees identified poverty as a defining factor of their lives along with cultural, emotional, social and gender issues. In this sub-section, poverty is discussed as a major factor for widows' socio-economic vulnerability. Under this major theme, first, the reason that subjected the widow's to poverty; and the role it plays in exacerbating social discrimination is discussed.

Poverty is a phenomenon with different aspects, thus, it's a major accelerating factor that made the participants more susceptible to variety of challenges. This study has an understanding that poverty is taken here to mean a range of deprivations, not simply lack of income. In fact, the phenomenon is not only a consequence of lack of income but also the result of the deprivation of capabilities and gender biases presented in societies. In most cases, the causes and outcomes of poverty is heavily gendered. Thus, it is easy to estimate the magnitude of the in a context where women's access to property or an income remain linked to men.

Although many factors have been identified on the literatures as contributing to a greater burden of poverty on women, literatures on feminization of poverty often argue that women of all races and classes have a common destiny, especially if they are poor single heads of families following divorce or widowhood (Judith & Susan, 1991).

1. Reason for poverty:

Among other things, the current poverty of the participants is birthed from; loss of husbands' income; economic vulnerability resulted during or immediately before their loss; illiteracy; limited access and opportunities to and control over economic resources; large sized family; health related issues, lack of housing, lack of social and familial support; time poverty (due to dual responsibility of taking care of family and breadwinning) and social discrimination.

Discrimination in such context is to mean a symptom of any situation where patterns of structural inequality are maintained by rules, norms and procedures which dictate a subordinate role for women in all spheres of the society (Pandey, 2006). As such discriminations subjected the widowed mothers to social and economic challenges that in combination or separately affected their lives.

Economic status of the widow before loss:

Rendering their background information, the women under this study had very little even when their husbands were alive; they mostly were house wives and dependent on their husband's income. Four of interviewees informed that they were housewives before their husbands' death. Furthermore, even those who had jobs were engaged into small businesses except for one who was a singer. However, not every participant on the study was poor. In fact, as compared to their current situation, with their husband's income most lived an average life. According to their descriptions, most of their life challenges came after their loss, an event that changed their life direction. Yet, widowhood deprived those who already have very little. Therefore, most of them face a heightened risk of deeper deprivation and outright destitution when their husbands passed away.

As has been mentioned, poverty is not only triggered by the loss of the husband's income, rather it's an outcome of multiple deprivations that the widow has faced starting from childhood through gender biases. Supporting this, Ayferam (2015) argues that Ethiopian women are mostly dependent on their husband's income, much less likely than men to be literate, to have professional and technical education. Thus, this was found to be an effect of economic instability and structural inequality for widows which intern sustains cyclical poverty.

Expenses during and immediately after widowhood:

According to the respondents, very often their husbands were incapable of inheriting them land, money or houses, so there was less for them to manage their life as a widow. Even so, some informed they had to spend all they have for funeral and taking care of their dying husbands. Thus, the fact that they have spent all the family's resources has left them no savings. As death is mostly unexpected and since it is not something that one can be sure off, the widows expected their husbands would survive. For most, hope, was their reason for spending what they had.

Complying with this, Hewan, Bethlehem and Iyda state that they struggled with poverty immediate to their husband's death. In relation to immediate expenses, Abigail who informed her husband used to take care of the finances said they spent a

lot of money for almost a year to save her husband's life. According to her that was not the only expense;

“When he got sick we spent a lot of money for hospital for almost a year. But when he died, the company he used to work for gave me small amount of money and it all ended during the funeral and the programs after that”.

Even worse, she informed that her sister lost her husband around the same time and subsequent expenses shacked their economic stability. Ewnet, who lost her husband to HIV after cyclic medical treatment similarly informed; *“he died at the hospital after we spent a lot of money, if it wasn't for my brother I wouldn't have sustained my life.”*

Beyond her expenses, the social life demands the widow to have spent the rest of her savings to a funeral. For a minimum of three days, she is expected to host people that come to accompany her. Except for one participant who informed got financial support of his friends and her family all the rest have had to spend the money they had for a funeral.

With a different experience immediately after loss, Megnot who claimed she has borrowed a lot of money to take care of her sick husband claims she got challenged with her life as a new widow;

“after the death of my husband, I came back to Addis and wanted to continue doing the business we used to do, but I couldn't keep the equipment's (construction materials) we had. One day as I got back from work, my stuff including the household materials were stolen and some scattered on the streets, all this happened because I haven't paid rent as I have finished the money we had to pay for hospital while he was sick. I had to build my life from zero”.

Even worse, Ruth has informed that she had to pay the money her husband borrowed and that left her with additional expenses immediate to his death:

“I knew he borrowed money because he was an alcoholic, but he told me he was going to furnish the house. After he died, the person (the lender) came and informed me he hasn't finished paying. I had to pay that money starving myself and my children”.

This woman, in addition to her expenses for a funeral, had to pay what her husband owes, while she has a responsibility of feeding her children and taking care of the household expenses.

The larger meaning indicates widowhood has consequential economic implications that go beyond spending for hospital or for the funeral ceremony. Added together, such experiences denote that economic aspect of widowhood is further challenged with expenses immediately before (during his death) and after loss of the husband (with expenses related to the funeral). Especially if the death is sudden and unexpected, it will result economic shock to the family.

Loss of housing:

All, except Abigail and Ewnet who currently own a house, have mentioned they suffered with their children to look for a place to live in, as soon as their husbands died. Widowhood deprived the women of their home, agricultural land or assets and savings. Ascribing with this, Iyda mentioned she used to own a house and a farming land before the death of her husband but afterwards she became homeless and unable to get someone to farm the land, which became one reason for her migration to Addis. Her experience indicates that she has not only lost a house but also an asset which she could pass on to her children as inheritance. Her words;

“We used to live in the regions (Oromia region) before he died, back then I had no income and our farming land was taken away from me as I couldn’t farm, I have stayed with my parents and struggled to sustain my life for almost two years. But, having no income, nothing to eat or to feed the kids was very challenging. So, I came to Addis 7 years ago, I still don’t have a place to live in. Me and my two teen age girls are living in a plastic shed on the streets of Chrekos were there are so many threats of violence”.

In a similar manner Ruth who now lives in a plastic shaded house added, she has lost her house after the death of her husband. But her story has presented a different reason that widowhood has brought;

“We used to live in a house that my family has given me and when he died some women came claiming that he is her husband and he has kids with him so, the house belongs to her. Since the house was not under my name,

and I was out because of the fight I had with him; Kebele¹ took it till it gets investigated. I and my children were forced to stay at a mud house, and it's been years now.”

Similarly, Tenbit, ascribing to the loss of housing resulting economic vulnerability shared that she was living in a rented house before her husbands' death and suffered for six years to sustain her life;

“By the time he died, I had no income, the twins were only few years old, plus I had three more children to take care of. After staying for few months in our rented house, they first cut off the power supply, shutoff the toilets and later told me to leave if I don't afford to pay rent. I begged them, but they refused and throw all my stuff out. I and my five kids went to four different palaces hopping to find a cheaper house. Finally, I started to beg as I have finished the small money my husband left when he died. We suffered for 6 solid years to sustain our lives.

Widowhood may deprive women of their home, agricultural land, assets and even their children (United Nations, 2001). The husband was in many cases the source of income, housing or asset. Many of the participants had housing (whither rented or their own), and even two of them were planning of buying condominiums according to their descriptions. Thus, the above quotes showed that death of a husband has contribution in to the poverty their poverty by taking away their possessions such as land and house. For those, who used to live in a rented house with their husbands the challenge differed as they had little to pay for rent which left them to problematic situation, even to the extent of living on the streets. Thus the incident of death not only challenged them economically but also emotionally; leaving them to situations they never expected to experience.

Lack of housing deepening poverty:

Widowhood challenged the mothers taking their source of income (which is the husband). Thus, loss of housing has added in to the cycle of their poverty. As mentioned in the previous subcategories, the widows had very little even when their husbands were alive. In addition to this, some had to spend what they had to treat their husband or for pay for the funeral ceremony. This being so, some were even forced to lose their assets such as housing or land.

¹ The smallest administrative unit of the local government structure in Ethiopia.

As a result, in their current life, majority of the participants reflected that having to pay for rent is what's challenging them most; even leading them to live on the street, which they said never imagined before. Particularly, Megnot, Iyda Wengel and Hewan claimed their highest expense is rent and it prohibited them from saving the income they generated with their limited time. Especially Megnot mentions how paying for rent drained her economy,

"I never took a break from working, I relatively get good money but rent takes more than half my income. I tried different areas but it's all expensive."

Iyda who informed had a house before loss stated, *"Land lords require a lot of money even for falling houses like this, how can I save money? The month reaches even before you realize it"*.

Furthermore, since they can't afford to pay rent, these mothers live in slum areas mostly built with mud, plastic and wood, which in some case requires them further expenses and subjected them health risks. Wengel who used to share rent with her husband says it has become her major challenge and reason for expenses;

"My largest expense and headache relate with rent, on top of this I almost every year have to pay to repair the roof and the walls or else it pours rain. Last year the flood damaged all my stuff including my bed & TV, I struggled to fix it or to buy another one."

With a description that affirms the researcher's observation and participant's discussion, the key informant, Ato Hilu from Zer Ethiopia informed,

"All of them are in deep poverty, when we initially visited them in their houses; they don't have basic things to sustain their lives. They don't get enough food, and some were challenged with their health. Their houses seem as if they were to fall apart. Plus, they head large families with their limited income".

Even worst, one of the interviewees (Megnot) is currently living in an area with major risk for her life.

"I live under a gorge where there is a forest and hyena. About a year ago a huge tree fell in our roof and smashed the house. That costed me a lot, plus we had to sleep outside for days."

During the interview, the researcher was able to see the fallen tree, the damage it caused and the possible economic and health related risks her living areas has. According to her, she chooses the area for its affordability. But, we witnessed it remained deepening her economic vulnerability along with its risks. Not only her, but also Hewan and Bethlehem share similar experiences of having to live in slummy area subjecting them to pay for repair and rebuying house equipment's. Thus, has obviously added to their existing economic vulnerability with much higher possibilities of resulting cyclical poverty.

Time poverty:

The widows argued their life situation demands them to be equally available at home and at work place. They pointed that they get exhaust in performing the household duty while at the same time they are required to work outside, provide the family and pay rent. Thus, time poverty emerged as one of the basic reasons for heightening their economic vulnerability. According to the data, most of their time is spent on unpaid activities, such as household work and caregiving for the children, leaving little time for paid labor or social and leisure activities. Akshay (2017) defines this scarcity of discretionary time as 'time poverty'.

Hence, time poverty had two implications on this study, one; it prevented the widows from being involved in social activities and the loss that come along with it. And two, it limited them from being engaged in income generating activities; leaving them with less energy for a paid work, limiting possibilities, access to information and opportunities. This means, time poverty exacerbates widow's social and economic challenges.

For instance, Bethlehem, a mother of two, who works a cook, mentioned that she only works half day and earns small amount of money as she is expected to watch the kids, cook and clean in the afternoon. Their statements depict that they have countless responsibilities, let alone the outside, the house work demands a lot of energy. In fact, they should be admired for being able to manage all the tasks which basically take two people (the husband and wife).

Similarly, Saron, Iyda, Megnot and Hewan reflected that they couldn't engage in a full-time job or work on the weekends as they have similar responsibilities in the

household. Saron said, *“I only get 700 birr per month and they even cut my salary if my daughter gets sick and I stay home”*. Megnot also informed she works at nights, after she sends her son to school as she is expected to watch him in day time. On this regard, especially key informants from Zer, pointed, the fact that the mothers had minimal or unfixed working time; had limited them from assigning them in to group works (small scale business groups).

Added together, their limited marketable skills, cultural barriers, and need to care for children are among only a few reasons why the widow is denied any economic opportunity and faces no prospects of work, or at least safe or dignified work. This research also found out, because of this and other related factors, the widows used to only generate an average monthly income of 700 ETB without having the time to take care of themselves; gain energy for work or business ideas and to get enough sleep or time to eat. Moreover, they are restrained from having a social life, which also mean minimal chance of getting information’s or job opportunities. Also Khanna (2016) strains, motherhood often leads widows to miss training, employment, healthcare, education and other information and opportunities.

Low-income, large family size and inflation as exacerbating factors:

The heavy time demand to different activities inside as well as outside home limited the widow’s opportunity in the involvement of income generating activities from which she can support her families. According to the data from interview respondents, six of them didn’t have a fixed job but they work in small business and sometimes par time job and the rest three are employed with maximum of 1500 birr. One participant only works at Safety Net program getting paid 500 birr per month.

Although, they currently have gotten support from Zer Ethiopia and their life progressed this was their situation during the past years. With this income, the widows head minimum of two and maximum of 6 family members who are under the age of 20. In addition to their own, five of the respondents are raising children of their siblings.

The data from the observation indicates that most of them didn’t even have a space to sleep. One interviewee informed, to live from month to month without having to delay the payment of rent; she and her children had to eat only twice a day.

Despite their limited income and large family, all participants revealed that inflation has devastated their life. Tenbit, a mother of five for instance claims,

“Before life was very cheap, we used to survive with little amount of money. Now everything is so expensive, even a piece of injera² is sold for 5 birr and when you add the price of oil, berbere³ and Shiro⁴ your expenses will reach the sky ...”

With even worst experience, Abigail who has a sister who have lost her husband on the same year claims,

“With few moths difference my sister lost her husband to a car accident. Though she used to have a better life, his death and the inflation economically challenged her, so she moved in with me. Our life was hand to mouth. I started selling water and card aside my fulltime job. Despite the income, life gets demanding day by day”.

Inflation being a common problem for all citizens, the number of family members in each household has appeared to be a challenge for the widowed mothers. This became very difficult for them to share their limited income and highly accelerated their poverty leaving them to additional expenses and less free time to work and generate enough income. It has also become source of their stress as they don't have any one to share their economic burdens. Considering the average widow has two children and other family members, the wider impact affects not only the widow but also the lives of the children, limiting their participation at school, nutrition and physical wellbeing in general.

Studies indicate households headed by a single woman are more than 5 times as likely to be living in poverty as married-couple families (Cawthorne, 2008). Without income, the widow may no longer be able to educate her children, condemning them to an impoverished life at best, but more likely to a life of wrought of crime and vulnerability to indoctrination of radicalized beliefs (WUNRN, 2016).

² Staple food of Ethiopians, it is a kind of pancake. Most of the time, it is made from teff

³ is a red pepper used to cook Ethiopian stew.

⁴ is a prouder prepared of beans or pea, it used to cook Ethiopian stew

2. Poverty as a risk for ill health and GBV:

As mentioned earlier, because of lack of housing many of them are living in conditions that subject their wellbeing to disease, gender-based violence, theft and robbery. Poverty brought them ill health and ill health brought them poverty and thus attracts violence. This study evidenced that, nearly all interviewees, except for Abigail who lives with her family, reflected that they shared the experience. Particularly, Iyda mentions she and her daughters were once living in a compound that during day time is a garage paying a small amount of money and she was subjected to rape. She said,

“A security guard of a garage, which I was living at attempted to rape me more than twice so got scared that he might do the same to my children; I runaway to other area. But I am still in that similar situation, being highly exposed to bad health, robbery and gender-based violence in the streets of Cherkos (one of the slum areas)”.

Hewan who lives in a place where there are a lot of bars also shares Iyda’s experience of living in slum area and being subjected to gender-based violence. In fact, participants with female children expressed risk of violence repeatedly. Tenbit (mother of five) and Bethlehem (with three daughters) also raised such concern of their social environment’s subjecting them and their daughters to rape, robbery and other health threats. Especially, Mengnot, Bethlehem and Wengel informed that they have been robbed.

Additionally, poverty after their loss has exposed this woman to a bad health situation as well. Megnot, who used to own a business with her husband, now feels the sorrow of losing her husband when she is living under such economic struggle. She said, the house she finally was able to rent pours rain and that caused a bad smell which left her and her son to a bad health situation (allergy). This is even frustrating as they have limited income to get medical treatments.

Furthermore, participants suffered from poor nutrition. Especially, Saron’s word best explains the relation between poverty, malnutrition and its health risk. She is an HIV carrier and claims that she mostly doesn’t afford to buy food and that brought implication on her health subjecting her to successive illness.

“Doctors repeatedly tell me to eat balanced food for the medications. But, I can’t, sometimes there is nothing to eat in the house for days, I would give what I have to my daughter and I just take medicine empty stomach. This has damaged my health; it made me very weak day after day”.

Others like Tenbit and Megnot have mentioned that beyond themselves, lack of food had affected their children’s immunity and health. Research by Akujobi (2006) and Chirwa (2006), also depict that malnutrition is a major challenge of the widow. In the same manner, the key informant from Arada Sub city small scale business enterprise revealed that their economic situations are risky to their children’s as well;

“We have visited all their houses and what we have witnessed was that they were in critical economic and health situations. They have small children whom they were not able to feed. Plus, they didn’t have fixed occupations or the skills to get a better job.”

Moreover, lack of support and means to live has overwhelmingly subjected one of the respondents to risk of HIV. Most of the research participants admitted that they considered prostitution and living on the street. However, Hewan informed that, after she became a widow, she felt option less and responsible for raising her children and got in to the work. She described her experience as follows,

“I even became a sex worker 7 years ago. When he died, I haven’t had any job, food or shelter for my children, so the situation has left me with no potion”.

Too often, widows don’t see relief from their suffering and their poor health status decreases ability of involvement in productive work. On this regard, Tenbit who works as a daily laborer stated that the labor-intensive work has affected her health.

“I used to bake injera or bread but now the smoke got my eyes are sick. Plus, my knees and hand joints are hurting me now a days, sometimes I used to wash cloth (Jeans, Gabi or huge blankets) empty stomached. Imagine I gave birth to five children which has left me with back pain. I am not productive like I used to be.”

Also, Ruth working as a cleaner said she was frequently sick and did not have the physical strength to work as a laborer, so her only choice is doing lighter jobs.

Having a similar experience, Abigail informed that the labor-intensive job has gradually affected her health and productivity. All in all, their actual experiences and fear of risk of GBV; ill health because of labor intensive work or malnutrition as well as poverty leading the widow to engage into health risky sex work are found to be factors that made the widows unable to distant themselves or their children from risky life situations; aside to limiting their economic productivity. Studies also indicate, widows, through poor nutrition, inadequate shelter, lack of access to health care and vulnerability to violence, are very likely to suffer not only physical ill health but stress and chronic depression as well (UN, 2000).

3. Post widowhood poverty worsening social discrimination:

Since this research choose to focus widows that were exposed to poverty after their husband's death, the most obvious problem is economic, but the data indicated that poverty has a major contribution in the exacerbation of the widow's social challenges. Thus, loss of husband resulted loss of economy and this resulted them multiple deprivation which heightens social discrimination. The study witnessed such experience to be commonly shared. Most of them agreed that the social challenge that came after loss of a husband is very much affected and influenced by their economic vulnerability post loss. "Saron on the interview sadly spoke on this,

"Before my neighbors used to call me for coffee and if it is a holiday we used to buy different things together, eat celebrate and spend holidays like that, but now no one calls me or my daughter. I don't even get invited to neighbors weeding next door; I don't have anything, so I can't afford to invite them home. If I can't invite them, then they are not interested to invite me either..."

Another participant added that even when neighbors go to visit the sick or a woman who gave birth, they no longer invite her to go with them because she is poor and couldn't contribute money. One's low economic status can be a target for discrimination causing a cyclical pattern between discrimination and poverty (Nada, 2015). Wengles' words have explained the close relationship between poverty and social challenges a widow.

"When you are a woman who heads the family with low income and especially if you don't have a house of your own or if you don't have ID from the Kebele, no opportunity will reach you. If you are in such

situation, most likely there is no one who will be willing to support you, especially if you have health related problems, they won't even lend you money or other items; that's because they think you will be dying soon just like your husband. Even if you are healthy, you will not get the time to socialize like before since you will have double responsibility of taking care of your children and working all week long. Simply, if you are poor and widowed, you will automatically or eventually lose your friends, your family and social respect that you use to have".

This indicated incidence of widowhood when backed with poverty results in social discrimination and feeling of inferiority; a new kind of experience which the widows never experienced when their husbands were alive. This was known from the terms they used as “before my husband died” and after my husband died”. According to Khanna (2016) and Owen (2000), widow’s economic crisis sits exactly in between the social crisis that is an element of causation and the humanitarian crisis that emerges because of the economic vulnerability. These symptoms become ignited and lead to social death or stigmatization and an eventual poverty (Khanna 2016).

Summing up, as a hermeneutic phenomenological study, the analysis picked up the core meanings (details which might be taken likely) of subjective experiences that made the situation what it is. As such, the identity shift to widowhood not only resulted them economic deprivation but also feeling social inferiority and low self-esteem whose social support systems have shrunk or become non-existent with the husband’s death. Not surprisingly, economic situation during and immediately after widowhood is the strongest predictor of status during widowhood. Striking in the data is the minimal income during widowhood, producing substantial numbers of exits from poverty.

Largely, this study perceived the multidimensional aspects of poverty, its exacerbation role and manifestation through; poor livelihood, hunger(malnutrition), homelessness, ill health, low income, limited time, limited or lack of access to economic resources, increased stress, loss of hope, unsafe living environment and social discrimination. In conclusion, it was learnt from the data that the absence of the breadwinner had left the respondents in an unstable economic position which in various ways accelerate verity of their challenges, including the social and emotional.

Hence, the findings on this section consoled with the argument of with Durojaye (2013) who argues, widowhood results loss of economic means that are conditional on marriage, including access to productive assets, loss of protection and status previously derived from a husband.

4.2.1.2 Gender

On this study, albeit the interviewees attributed majority of their problems to economic challenges, as it handed them destitution immediate to their husbands' death; yet their statements have further drawn circumstances in which sociocultural constraints contribute directly to their challenges. To this effect, the analysis summarized the socio-cultural situations that accelerated participant's challenges in relation to socialization of gender into the following themes; effect of gender pre/post-widowhood and particularly through identity shift after loss. Thus, this paper holds, socialization of gender is a critical factor that accelerates economic vulnerability of the women; limiting their economic and productive role and increasing social stigma and stereotypes. Above all, it is such reality that has worsened their life challenges as a widow added with their emotional responses to loss.

Gender is the result of the interplay of culture, religion, and similar factors of a society. According to West and Zimmerman, gender it is not a personal trait rather, it is an emergent feature of social situations: both as an outcome of and a rationale for various social arrangements, and as a means of legitimating one of the most fundamental divisions of society (Sivard et al.1995; Buvinic 1995"). Literature indicates that widows face gendered violence doubly as women and as widows (WUNRN, 2016). Still, studies depict that social discrimination of widows is directly proportional to their economic vulnerability, and this direct proportionality is greater in patriarchal societies due to heightened economic vulnerability caused by structural gender inequalities for women.

1. The role of gender socialization pre-widowhood

Gender socialization is the process by which individuals are taught how to socially behave in accordance with their assigned gender, which is assigned at birth based on their sex. Largely because of the projections of gender socialization, most of the study participants were depended on their husbands income, in fact the majority (nine out of thirteen widows) were illiterate and have low income; almost all (except one) faced but saw social encounters resulted by gender as natural; which makes them even more vulnerable and all, except one experienced feeling of psychological neglect and isolation. However, the level of discrimination varied between those who stayed in same community before and after their loss. Those who stayed and have frequent social interaction experience the stereotype and bias towards their identity as a widow or widowed mother.

Thus, the vulnerability of the widows stems from their subordinate status regarding individual endowments, social norms and access to and control over resources. According to Habtamu (2004), there is strict gender division of labor in most societies of Ethiopia, which contribute to the lower position of women. Generally, women in Ethiopia occupy a subordinate socio-economic status and suffer critical gender disadvantages (Helina, 2015). Since childhood they are expected to stay home providing reproductive services (Ayferam, 2015). Therefore, those women who lost their husbands are likely to lose source of income and social respect. Findings from this study depict similar outcome since nearly all participants share similar experience of being illiterate with limited opportunities and access to economic resources which made them highly dependent on their husbands' income and challenged their life's variously. Hence, the identified reason behind this is the traditional gender roles assigned to women.

Dependency on husband's income:

As stated above, gender socialization is the process in which women and men are shaped and molded since child hood to act according to the given tradition. Due to this, participants were mainly attached to the role of mothers and wives, their primary roles are preparing food, looking after children and other similar domestic chores.

As such, majority of them were economically dependent on the husband and had fewer choices in terms of occupation, education, and life progression after loss. Even if they want to progress their life's the chances got very low as they have responsibilities of heading the family. Thus, identifying the most tangible element of this issue provides the perfect vantage point or locus for viewing the current widow's socio- economic situation. The finding depicted, it is because of this that five of the respondents which is half, claimed that they were housewives before their husband's death and often uneducated. For some of them, until their widowhood, being married, giving birth and being a home maker was an easy task and a respected identity. Abigail who used to work as a singer and later become a house maker after she gave birth on this regard said,

“Before I got married I was working as a singer, but after I gave birth, my husband and I decided that I stay home. Since I am the mother I couldn't stay late and work at a night club, so I said I am better to raise the children and he shall support the family. After that I was unable to get back to business”.

Socialization is the process of transferring norms, values, beliefs, and behaviors to group members (Carter, 2014). From Abigails' statement one can understand how learnt behavior influences decisions made. The gender socialization in this case made her quit her job to be a good mother and later on challenged her as she has lost both the income from her husband and her carrier. With different view Ewnet, has informed that being a housewife was an imposition from the husband. She mentioned,

“I couldn't come up with a business idea even after he died because even when he was alive, he did not allow me to approach other people or to work and generate my own income.”

Even though she wanted to go out and work, this woman informed her husband restrained her from doing so and that she was not even unable to support herself even after he died. The two statements have shown us how differently the gender socialization applied in their lives, on one case it was influenced by self and on another case it was pressurized by an external factor. Overwhelmingly, most of their descriptions imply being a housewife was common and a woman might not consider working if the husband provides.

Though death is a fact of life, and might not give the chance for a preparation; their current destitution was highly influenced by their past socially constructed gender roles.

As such, it is such kind of view that encourages men being the breadwinner; that pulled the widow to depend on her husband's income which latter affected her involvement in economic activities. Still, except very few, the respondents have shown a challenge of accepting the bread winning role they are left with after loss. Supporting this, literatures on poverty of widows argue, if widows are poor, it mostly because they have depended on their husbands as the main breadwinners (Global Widows Report, 2015).

Lack of education and its effect on the widow:

In this study, it was found out that lack of prior skill or education along with their expected role of being mothers restrained their involvement in productive work, which when their husbands died subjected them to poverty and social discrimination. Majority of the women become poor, as few of them access educational opportunities due to the low value placed on the girl child. In most cases, the interviewees reflected, the fact that they have not pursued in their education and got married because of different factors such as; early marriage, migration to Addis Ababa to escape forced marriage, economic challenges, or because of the minimal attention given to girl's education in their area of living.

Similarly, participants' experiences also pointed that illiteracy, directly or indirectly limited their income, opportunities or access and exposures to information. Furthermore, the study found the meanings they give to their current life situation is very much attached with them being illiterate. Gender socialization is the process by which individuals are informed about the norms and behaviors associated with their assigned sex, usually during childhood development (Carter, 2014). Stating her current challenges, Tenbit recalled her past (her childhood) and said that she blames her father for making her drop out of school,

“When I was a child I really wanted to pursue on my education, but my father repeatedly discouraged me saying, what good can come out from educating you, and later made me a full-time shepherd. That's when I escaped and migrated to Addis Ababa and got married.”

Socialization of gender seems to not only influence the current life of the widow but also her past, especially the above statement points the place that girls education has and how it influenced migration, then decision for marriage and lastly widowhood.

In a similar manner, the study witnessed the influences the socialization offered to the widows. Ruth, who is now a mother of four and in her late thirties, repeatedly spoke that she regretted the life she has now, being uneducated and working at job that is less paying and less respected than her childhood friends and described that it was her husband who made her drop from 9th grade and got her married and pregnant. Also, Hewan's description implies she was forced to drop out of school and later got married. She thought marriage offered a second alternative than education, but death took away her husband. Regretfully said;

“It was my aunt who brought me to Addis saying that she will educate me but, she later changed her mind and made me work as a house made saying education wouldn't help me”.

In fact their experiences go beyond dropping out of school and had various implications influenced gender. For instance, Ewnet who mentioned she came to Addis to learn, work and change her family's life says her relatives arranged and got her married promising his income would support her. After wards, she drooped school, gave up her job and became pregnant and unable to support her family as she was doing earlier. Sharing her life which she said took unexpected direction, reflected regrets of being uneducated challenging her variously.

“Uneducated woman would face multiple challenges. I grew up in a rural area, I haven't learnt but I knew how to be a good wife. Before he died, I got in to a car accident and since I couldn't read or sign, the person who caused the accident paid the compensation money for my husband. My husband remained silent after he took the money and when I asked him, he told me that we were paid small amount and that he spent it all on my medication & hospital coast. After his death, my brother found the signed paper and saw that my husband took a lot of money that was supposed to be mine. It really broke my heart that my husband used the fact that is illiterate to fool me. He also infected me with HIV; I was not even able to protect my son because I want alert like an educated myself”.

Apart from this, some of them mentioned being illiterate limited them from guiding or supervising their children which is regarded to them as a major concern. Especially Bethlehem and Saron showed concern as they highly associated their current sufferings with illiteracy. Bethlehem states her worry as followed,

“I have three daughters who are going to school. Since I cannot help them in their studies, I fear that they would have a future like min...”

Equally, Tnbit who is a mother of five students cried and stated, that it is hard for her to supervise what her kids are doing with their studies and she fears for their future as well. Summing up, although their experiences vary, the gender discrimination the widows have suffered throughout their lives in education and training impeded their efforts to generate income, self-sufficiency as well as self-esteem.

2 Post-widowhood, social and psychological challenges of accepting the other gender role

The interview data has further depicted that the participants are challenged by the created and maintained gender roles. Some of them argued they face challenges from the society while some others are convinced that they couldn't or shouldn't perform roles that are socially assigned to “Men”. This goes with West and Zimmerman argument, gender is not simply what one is, but what one does. For instance, Iyda mentions how she and her husband used to own land, but she then willingly left her land and migrated to Addis Ababa because she thought as a “woman” she could not farm. She stated;

“Back when we got married, our parents had given us land, when my husband was alive he used to farm, sell and feed the family. After he passed away there was no one to provide for us, I am a woman I couldn't farm...”

Her view illuminated that the gender division of labor does not remain physical, but of mental and emotional as well. The argument, which seemed completely right to her, justified her presumptions about a women's role and how she responded to it. Because legally, she is entitled to own the land and she could farm or give it to someone who could farm for her and take the share. When she was asked why she hasn't done this she said, “I am a woman I couldn't deal with all this”.

Another perspective on gender socialization is influenced when the gender is understood as created and maintained while actors (men and women) assume and play out roles in society (Carter, 2014). As socialization takes the role of two (which is self and external influences), for one of the participants, it's the societal view of women's role that has become a challenge. On this regard, West, C. & Zimmerman, D (1987) argue, male and female could not persist as structurally important social categories if they did not perform enough gendered and gendering behavior of acting like "Women" and like "Men."

Megnot, who used to work as a street sales person stated how hard it was for her to work on the streets as a woman. As she puts it,

"Life is very hard especially if you are a woman working on the streets. Our society doesn't accept the idea of a women working late or she will be considered having some other business. Especially if you are active and good sales person, people would consider you impulsive. I used to bring my son from school, cook dinner, feed him and go out to sell maize at night. I did this because the sales increases at night and plus I use to feel like my son would be safer once he is at home sleeping. But my neighbors used to gossip that I work at night looking for something else, so I stopped and started to sell coffee & tea during the day."

Her arguments imply that she has the courage and strength to work like a "man" by being a good sales woman, but the society did not acknowledge that, and this challenged her emotionally and changed her better income generating job to a relatively lesser one. Here, emphasis is placed on the fact that many roles and tasks in society tend to be gendered. The experiences and meanings given by the two respondents have depicted the exacerbating role that socialization placed on their lives.

The challenges of playing dual gender role:

It is obvious that widowhood granted participants a single parenting role which brought them various challenges on different regards. However, this session discusses the gender influenced aspect that played a dominant role in the exacerbation of their challenge. Particularly, the discussion with three of the mothers strained this. Ruth who is a mother of four said, she sometimes feels down when she thinks she had to play the "Men's" role in raising her children. In her words;

“I raise my children being both man and a woman; even so, the neighbors attack me. I raised them in discipline. I don’t even talk to them or play with them like a mother. Am always bold and firm but I sometimes feel that am being too hard on them so that makes me sad”.

A mother's socialization more typically encourages connectedness and expression of affection and compassion (Carter, 2014). While widowhood and single parenting restrained them from playing such kind of role, the mothers got emotionally challenged. In a similar manner, Wengel who has been a widow for thirteen years sadly spoke that she had a difficulty of playing a double role of being the mother, which she referred as soft, emotional and caring; while at the same time the father who she described as the guider and respected; when raising her children who are now in their late teen.

“Sometimes I feel like it confuses my children that I had to be the discipliner, the caregiver, the affectionate and the provider all at the same time, this really hurts my feelings ...”

This participant further stated she was a very strict mother who is not open to discussion and that made her teenage doubter not to have bonded relation and to be fearful. With this, she emotionally expressed that she feels like she missed her value of being a good mother.

Accepting the dual role was not only challenged by them exercising and playing the fatherly figure or losing the affectionate and caring motherly role but also by their breadwinning role as well. Hewan who once used sex work an alternative, also implied that she is never satisfied with her breadwinning role as a woman,

“Having a poor man in the house is better than having a house full of working women. It is never equal, even if he doesn’t have money; the fact that there is a man in the house has its own grace and positive attribute”.

Not only Hewan but also Saron, Tenbit and Bethlehem hold similar types of view. Especially when they informed about their experiences around holiday seasons, they stated dissatisfaction of playing roles that should have been taken care of by a man. By implication, almost all expressed they shared the above experiences; however, some connected their current situation with curse or with being unlucky.

While others attached it with a sin they don't remember committing that God left them with a lot of burden that was supposed to be shared with their husbands. With this, it was noticed that they have become unsatisfied with their minds being stretched to fulfill their responsibility of disciplining their children; while at the same time showing them motherly care or making them pleased, so that they don't feel the pain of losing their father. Added together, the meanings given to playing the dual role indicate how the predestined role of a mother negatively influences the experience of the participant's widowhood life.

3. Singleness and subsequent loss of social status resulting self-exclusion:

Findings from the data indicate that the respondents had the emotional experience and are socially challenged by the identity shift from being a wife and mother; which was their respected identity, to a widow and single mother. Moreover, the study founded that the post loss life of widows was largely fixed on the past, which they comparatively expressed as "before" and "now" (including connections with their deceased spouse); which maintained sorrow at the center of their experience and influenced their perspectives of identity, relationships, family, and life satisfaction. The exacerbation role of gender ranges from internal and ultimately to social and interactional.

Accordingly, identity shift of the respondents has brought two implications that influence one another; one is internal and emotional (which will vastly be discussed in the next session) and the other is external and social. Under this section, identity shift that is challenged by societal (external) view towards the widow's single identity is discussed. It also relates with Boelen and Prigerson's (2007), finding that identity shift involves sadness, self-blame, worrying about the past, and difficulty (or avoidance of) moving forward with life were each associated with their loss. In fact, the social response to the identity shift included negative perception, stigmatization, and discrimination. And of course consequently impacted their life as a widow and determined how they adopt/resist and respond to their single social identity. The identity shift and single standing were as such one of the major social problems that affected their physical and mental health through reduced social status and life satisfaction.

Analyzing the discussions, more than half of them initially claim that they haven't had any experience of social discrimination and did not directly acknowledge that they have come across unfair treatments because of their new identity as a widow. But the study later founded it's not because they haven encountered a challenge rather because they naturalized it. Except for Wengel who officially claimed that she was challenged of social discriminations after her loss, other participants statements depict that they presume the social ill-treatment towards their singleness as normal and expected. This indicated the level to which social thoughts are embedded in their actions, beliefs, and desires, and that it appears to them to be completely natural.

Collins (2014) on this regard argued, mostly widowhood can impact and be impacted by personally held identity, roles, and social relationships of the individual. Hence, as Akujobi (2006) argues, widows do not talk about themselves and remain silent; they constantly hide behind their masks and wear smiling faces even in the face of hardship and deprivation. The research has also founded, those who stated they never faced social stigma has in advance estimated and accepted the discrimination that might come with their new identity and excluded themselves from having a social contact. One of the interviewees has word by word mentioned that she even migrated to Addis Ababa fearing the social stigma but answered that she never encountered a social challenge during the interview.

Justifying this, Hancock (2017) argued single women may develop behavioral responses that are either consciously or subconsciously intended to reduce the discomfort they experience or could experience by failing to adhere to expected social norms of being under the cover of marriage. Further, in this study, it was noted that all of them, except for Abigail, choose not to make friends in the neighborhood or allow their children to socialize fearing the consequences that might come along with it.

When stating how they hide their feelings and down sides, respondents said they have avoided socialization; and frequently mentioned that they don't have any friends and they don't often attend social gatherings except for very important cases or funeral. On their theorization of singlism, DePaulo and Morris (2005) also argued, single women might be excluded and not be invited to social gatherings or if invited, they might not want to go because they know that people will gossip about them..

Unlike other respondents who naturalized and accepted loss of social status and social pressure towards their single status, Wengel connected every challenge she encountered with social stereotypes, claiming that;

“I always feel stigmatized and underestimated. Despite how brave of a woman you might be, being a widow results ill-treatment. Even when you want to join the edir, they will say, Oh! She doesn’t have a husband. We are not less than anyone in the society but when they portray us they very much diminish our value. If they by any chance know that you don’t have a husband, they wouldn’t even give you half the respect you had. I observe people devaluing what they used to have, when they know that am a widow. They don’t value my idea, I see them not accepting me. Surprisingly, even my old neighbors don’t send me invitation cards, they will only call me if they came across me and get ashamed. When my husband was alive I was a casher of the women’s edir,⁵ and when he died they immediately told me to hand over the money and withdraw from my position. I got very sad thinking that they have not believed in me but believed in my husband”.

Even though they haven’t boldly sated their arguments like the above participant, most of the respondents claim that social respect declines after the husband dies. For some, it started during the funeral with attacks from neighbors or his siblings. In many regards, participants felt that they used to be respected in her past life than after widowhood. For most of them, such feelings came from the social treatments they received; especially in relation to them being invited to various social gatherings.

As, Akujobi (2006) argues, one cannot really say they have much choice; acceptance is their best option if they are to live in peace with their societies without been tagged rebels. In this research as well, even though participants discussed stereotypical views towards them and their children (which will later be discussed), they obeyed the fact and live with it or developed preventive mechanism (exclusion from social life); which further exacerbated their challenges.

⁵ indigenous voluntary associations established primarily to provide mutual aid on burial matters but also to address other community matters” (Pankhurst and Damen, 2000: 36).

Self-exclusion as resistance to social stereotypes:

From the answers given, the study founded that respondents choose to adopt the social challenges and excluded themselves for resistance (relief). Because the more the socialization the deeper the challenge from social stigma. Bethlehem's words for instance, *"I now have no contact with anyone, I have excluded myself, I don't socialize or spend time in the village, so I don't encounter any challenge"*. Saron has also informed the situation of excluding herself with a tone that imply dissatisfaction,

"Am not a member of any social gathering, they are all unwilling so, I spend my day at home, I don't socialize, I used to drink coffee with neighbors, but I stopped now. Even if I don't have anything to eat I will not go. I rather sleep empty stomach."

In the same manner three of interviewees (Ewnet, Saron and Megnot) also mentioned that even their kids have few friends and that they don't allow them to further socialize because they fear their kids might get insulted or treated differently. Though didn't directly admit social stigma, participants reflected the following, Iyda for example mentioned that fear of social stigma was one of the reasons that she came to Addis when she described why she migrated in the first place. In her words,

"Here no one knows me, so I have no challenge, but there, if a husband is not there, everyone including your family underestimates and disrespects you, plus your children will compare themselves and feel they are lesser".

Individuals who perceive discrimination as legitimate are more likely to conform (Jetten et al., 2013/2012). Ruth, who informed has lived in the same area for more than eight years, also reasoned that she is a brave woman, and no one ever challenges her, but she later mentioned she has a very restricted social life and implied the reason as follows;

"No matter how brave of a woman you are, the fact that you don't have men beside you convey its own social challenge. I had a fight with neighbors once and for the first time that was when I felt like a woman, I felt so sad that there was no man beside me."

Immediately after this she further stated the reason why she has a limited social life saying that,

“The social attitude is very challenging, I stooped dressing up as I wish, and whatever relationship I may have with a man is translated in to some other thing. Late alone me, my daughter would be seen in different eyes if she goes out well dressed. So, we gather here in to our poor little house and eat whatever we have, lough if we do and live the life God planned and gave us”.

Similarly, Tenbit initially mentioned that her social life is peaceful and well except for her financial challenges and later informed that whenever she quarrels with neighbors they insult her mentioning her being husbandless or that she has killed her husband giving him headaches and stress. She also informed even her kid’s get insulted or picked up on because they are fatherless. When that happens she said, *“I feel so sad that there is no man behind me to get me respected ...”*

In the same manner, others also answered that they never had a problem other than poverty, however, deep in their statements later pointed they don’t often socialize and Zer Ethiopia is the only social gathering that they currently attend. When asked why? The most frequent answer was *“I don’t like to be looked down, I rather stay home fully respected than to go out and get picked on”.*

Summing up the discussion under this session, the study considered the concept of gender being associated with certain attributes which include division of labor, allocation of responsibilities and opportunities, access and control of assets and resources at an individual or social level. At an individual level, gender impeded their choices as well as their aspiration and attitude about self and others. And at social level it reinforced stereotypes towards their singleness, widowhood or to their children. This as Durojaye (2013) also agreed foster violation of their human rights (the right to live free from violence & discrimination); and largely impacted their social, economic and emotional well-being. This study also founded that gender and its attendant problems impeded the widow’s social standing and exacerbated both their social and economic challenges.

Corresponding to, Makatu (2017) who founded widows adhering to social constructs, finding of this section indicated; participants frequently used languages (“They” & “I”) that justified belonging to a collectivist culture.

Thus, this helped conclude that the way in which participants constructed their situated identities through social relationships, characterized their identities as widows in relation to others in the role of adherents within their experiences. It was also learned that those who directly or indirectly implied the existence of social stigma are those who lived in the same community before and after their husband’s death. Plus, those who work in small businesses around their village shared such experience than who don’t spend much time around the neighborhood. This implies, the deeper the social interaction the more the stereotype and bias towards their new identity as a widow. Direct or indirectly, social stereotype and self-exclusion from social life are commonly experienced, except for Abigail who completely saw the society supportive and appreciative of strong women like herself.

Over all, gender as an integral part of every social life, at various levels resulted and intensified; economic vulnerability (through illiteracy and limited access to economic resource); loss of social status (because of post widowhood economic deprivation & single status); social stereotype (because of single status); self-exclusion (as a resistance of stereotype); which generated social loneliness that lead to lack of support and emotional calamity when added to their loss.

4.2.1.3 Cultural stereotypes (derogatory terms/ comments) towards widows and their children

As indicated above, social challenges are classified in to three; social discrimination, stereotypes including verbal assault towards the widow and her children and lack of social support. Thus, this session presents one of the factors that intensified participant’s social and emotional challenge, both as a widow and as widowed mothers; as their children are also victims of social stereotypes and derogatory comments. Widowhood in Ethiopia is not just an incident rather it is something that carries a tittle to the widow and her children (Punkhurst, 1992).

Hence, finding of this research highlights the greater influence such stereotypes has on respondents or their children. While all single women face stigmatization, such stereotypes subjected respondents to suffer social isolation and lower self-esteem aggravating their challenges at different points post loss. These practices infringe the widow's rights to dignity, non-discrimination and equality, health, and life. As such, emotional abuse is one of them. According to Tracy (2012), emotional abuse which is also referred as chronic verbal aggression is any act including, isolation, verbal assault, humiliation, intimidation, infantilization, or any other treatment which may diminish the sense of identity, dignity, and self-worth. Accordingly, people who suffer from emotional abuse tend to have very low self-esteem, show personality changes (such as becoming withdrawn) and may even become depressed or anxious.

As such, the study has identified stereotypes which gave birth to the reputedly used derogatory terms, indirect affront and negative comments which participants mentioned have been forwarded to them or their children. Showing its cyclic effect, (Peterman, 2012) adds, the more economically vulnerable a widow is the higher the violation of her human rights through cultural stigmatization. However, as Tamale (2004) points, this paper noted that there are positive and negative aspects of every culture and that it is misleading to assume that all norms and cultures interfere with the enjoyment of widow's rights.

Stereotypes:

This research found some of stereotypes against widows being double fold as they face such stereotypes only because they are women. Justifying this view, one participant states that the feeling of being undermined and disrespected she encountered for so long resulted her behavioral change. This respondent has also informed that she has now become the kind of person who gets easily offended therefore, isolated herself. In fact, the isolation is commonly shared phenomena between respondents. Also, Benson (2013) adds, stereotypes can be very powerful and can influence individuals' behavior without their awareness.

The analysis has also seized gender inequalities suffered by widows based up on participant's statement. Her argument implies that the society has differential treatment to widows and widower. She stated her argument as follows,

“I have never heard the society accuse a child raised by a man for his/ her discipline; I always wonder why they don’t say “ye wend lij” (someone raised by men)? If a man raises a child alone, everyone will show sympathy, neighbors will say that he is a responsible, disciplined man who has a lot on his shoulder. He will be frequently advised to take care of himself, to get married or to hire a house maid to support him. I have witnessed even during lekso ⁶, the Edir will not ask such kind of men to stay late or to spend the night and accompany the mourner; they will compassionately say let him go to his house he is a brave man who raise children like a woman. But the issue of women raising children alone will not even get considered unique. The burden is very high for women; they will say if she can’t spend the night at the lekso bet, let her pay and hire someone. Late alone get advised to remarry, she will be called names like “Geffi”, and if they suspect she has a relationship they will say she is immoral and irresponsible of her kids”.

With an alignment with her expression, Durojaye (2013) wrote, interestingly stereotypical treatments are often performed when a woman loss her husband and not the other way around. This tends to raise concerns about the discriminatory nature and rationale for these practices. Although her view clearly indicates the existential stereotypes, others seem to obey or naturalize it and that makes them even vulnerable.

In fact, different interviewees reported they have never come across such challenges. Bethlehem said she has no social contacts nor received negative comments. Hewan supposed, everyone in her neighborhood has similar way of life (she lives in an area where many commercial sexes work live in), so she never gets casted out. For Iyda, her living in a distant area from her origins has helped avoid such issues. While Abigail thinks the society wouldn’t dare offend her or her children.

Akujobi (2006), argued in Africa, widows go through a lot of hardship that stems from the society, the husband’s family and from tradition. Standing on his argument, this study examined the nature of the social verbal attacks directed to widows and how that subscribes to the treatments they and their children receive in society. Additionally, Khanna (2006) stated, the nature of social interaction depending on (culture, religious view, geographic location or economic status) promote negative treatments towards widows. Findings of this study also depicted that geographic location and social situation varied their experience.

⁶ Is an Ethiopian funeral ceremony that gather people for a minimum of three days

All in all, the study founded social interactions increase the assault and indirect affront a widow and her children receive. In addition, the widow's economic vulnerability, negative cultural views towards the widow and their current areas of living impacted the level of social stigmatization attached to their widowhood. Moreover, derogatory remarks and verbal assaults that are tied into the stereotypical views against the widows have challenged the participant's emotional wellbeing and aggravated their social loneliness which will vastly get covered in the following section.

Derogatory remark against the widow or her children:

Whatever form they may take, stereotypical practices on widows are not only tools to perpetuate gender inequality but are also unethical, inhuman, demeaning and a gross violation of women's fundamental rights and freedom. By definition, derogatory terms or comments refer to insulting, demeaning or pejorative conduct toward a person, such remarks are obviously offensive (Deborah'1998). The word "Geffi", denotes an indirect affront that symbolizes of someone who prompted the death of siblings. According to their statements, "Geffi" is a commonly forwarded assault towards themselves and their children in addition to, Ye set lij⁷; Ye mut lij⁸; Balage yasadegwe/ yasadegat⁹; Ye geffi lij¹⁰ and Set yasadegat/yasadegew¹¹.

Such remarks denote that there is a common societal understanding that put widows or their children in to having similar characteristics and behaviors that are predominantly negative. As this study is hermeneutic phenomenological research, participants expression of their experience; how they perceive; judge; connect; feel or make sense of it as well as how they remember the experience was part and of the finding. When describing such challenges, their statements were as follows;

⁷ in its direct translation means someone who is raised by a single mother and it denotes impoliteness and mannerlessness caused by an absence of the father, who is expected to discipline and manner the house.

⁸ in its direct translation means an orphan.

⁹ is an insult against both the child and parent, indicating mannerlessness of a child as a result of being raised by unmannered parents.

¹⁰ an indirect affront used to insult children of the widow.

¹¹ is an insult that denote mannerlessness because of being raised by a single woman

Wengel, who has been widowed for thirteen years, shared her experience with annoyance;

“There is no one free from social challenge but what irritates me is the stigmatization and insult. Let alone me they call my children “Ye geffi lij”. There are specific names in our community. Ye set lij”, Balage yasadegwe, disciplines and so on. One time my son got into a fight in the neighborhood and the people, who mediated asked whose son he was, and then someone answered, he’s Wongels’ son he has no father. Without even asking further, the mediators accused and beaten my son claiming that he is probably the naughty one as he is raised by a single woman (Ye set lij). My daughter is labeled a slut if she gets well-dressed. Sometimes when we go to visit their fathers’ siblings, they will not even call their names, they introduce them as “she /he is the son or daughter of our dead brother”, Imagine what it leaves on their mind.”

Saron who has been widowed for a long time compared to the rest of the respondents sated, *“I don’t know if they offend my daughter, but they call me names, they always provoke and attack me with what I didn’t have”*. This participant, when giving response to other question, sated how she doesn’t allow her child to go out and socialize with others. This may be explaining why she said she doesn’t know if her daughter gets affected with negative comment or insult. Tenbit who is a mother of five when describing her bad days with neighbors described;

“When you quarrel with neighbors they will insult you saying, “husbandless”, or “Geffi”. Even when your kids get in to a silly fight, they will pick on them and bully them because they are fatherless. They call them “Yeset lij and view them as helpless.”

“Ye set lij”, in its direct translation means someone who is raised by a single mother and it denotes impoliteness and mannerlessness caused by an absence of the father, who is expected to discipline and manner the house. For Ewnet, who lost her husband to HIV, the first experience was indirect affront from her husband’s sibling. Explaining the situation, she informed that her husband lost his life because of HIV which she had no information of until he got very sick and she got tested and knew he has transmitted it to her too. With her eyes full of tears, she recalled her self being blamed for something she was victim of.

“Around the time he died, his sister used to attack me with “Ashmur”, (indirect affront). She used to say, “My brother is a disciplined man, it’s her who got him infected. I am now dying, but his family blamed me for his death. It hearted me a lot; I can never get it off my mind”.

Such experiences obviously depict that widowhood goes beyond loss of husband and results in negative view towards the widow or her children. By default this affects her or her children’s psychological wellness. With an affirmation, Megnot’s expression implies she feels for her son than for herself as a widow;

“Even more than me, my son gets challenged, he once told me that they call him “Ye mut lij” (orphan) at school. He (her son) told me the teachers are informed but neglected it, I don’t know why they would do that to a child, but it made me overwhelmed”.

Another participant with similar experience has informed that her daughter used to frequently get sick immediate to her father’s death and that people used to gossip that she (the mother) is associated with evil spirit or curse. With her eyes full of tears, she said, *“they gave my daughter a nick name saying that she is even disliked by death that she gets sick often and not die.”*

For Ruth derogatory comments or indirect affront related to herself. She has not directly pointed who, but she inferred those who challenge her as “they” and stated,

“Well the name “Yest Lij” is expected. They call me seductress. Even when I dress up to go somewhere, they say where does she go? Why is dressed this way? They provoke me saying, “yesterday she killed her husband and now she is going around, ownerless”. Or sometimes they say does she even work? How does she raise her children after she pushed and killed her husband?”

While others connected such challenge with neighbors who knew their down sides; which they inferred as having no husband or a son. In some cases, the widow herself is blamed for killing her husband, but not as directly as the above participant mentioned. For instance, there were expressions that imply that they don’t have a man to get them respected so neighbors forward indirect assault like “you nagged and killed your husband, and now who else?”

With an affirmation, literatures on patriarchal societies, especially Akujobi (2006) and Khanna (2016), claim social stigmatization attached to the event of widowhood incurs the widow by making them disliked by society and often blamed for her husband's death

In conclusion, despite the various expressions, the direct and indirect affronts, making derogative statements about the widows to others or to themselves and blaming the widow by raising the issue of death and insulting the children for being raised by a single mother is offensive and something that results in emotional abuse which in the widows words are explained to diminish the sense of identity, dignity, and self-worth. Once more, as socio-economic challenges are highly interrelated this session concludes, such acts as also noted by Durojaye (2013); is widow's human rights violation causing them humiliation, emotional and psychological violence. Thus, this study agrees with the mentioned argument that generally claims these are not just social norms, rather; negative verbal abuses that are insulting, degrading and compelling the victim to engage in humiliating acts, whether in public or private.

4.2.1.4 HIV/AIDS

This research outlined HIV/AIDS as a factor that accelerate widows' socio-economic deprivation. It's either a cause for the death of their partners, (whom are major economic sources), or it is accelerating factor of double social stigma and discrimination resulted from being a widow and HIV carrier. Aside to this, economic challenges resulted from HIV; the medical expenses, higher cost of nutrient foods and ill health resulting inability to engage in to a productive work are among the factors. HIV/AIDS and poverty are closely related and there were incidents that one has been a reason for the existence of other.

HIV as a challenge:

Out of ten interviewees, three of them lost their husbands to HIV and two of them described that they got infected because of their husbands. The prevalence of HIV, inadequate medical care, and unsanitary living conditions has added another layer of stress on the already precarious family institution of the widows.

Some of the widows under this study are particularly vulnerable because they haven't been informed of the cause of death of their partners or haven't found out what killed their husbands until they too become ill. Two of the respondents Ewnet and Saron, who are now living with the virus, said they were not informed about HIV until they got ill, and this challenged their life as a widow and as a mother.

Ewnet accuses her husband for giving her and her son a miserable life;

"I came from a rural area, I haven't had any contact with men before, I got married to him. He knew he had HIV; he even was taking the medicine. The day I found out that I had HIV was the day that I heard of the symptoms and what's going to happen to me. I felt my body falling apart when I was told my son is also being a victim....., I fainted right away, and the counselor helped me lift myself. Then on my way home, a bus hit me and from then on, I have never been healthy. I spend a lot of money for hospital, even before 15 days I was in a hospital for two months. It affected our lives in every aspect. I can't count and say this and that."

As indicated in previous sessions, widowhood is highly influenced by pre loss life of the women. Ewnets' experience reviled multiple vulnerability and its direct impact on her current life as a widow. HIV intensifies poverty and even pushes non-poor to poverty (Collins and Rau, 2000). Saron, who has now lived with HIV for seventeen years, claims she did not know until it got critical. She recalls her past with so much pain in her face,

"I lost him to HIV 17 years ago. Back then there was no awareness, so I never knew what kind of disease he had, neither did I know how to take care of myself. I have been into a lot of pain; I got my whole body covered with lesion and that created a bad smell. You can imagine what it would have been like having HIV 17 years ago; then, they (neighbors) throw me out of my house and kept me in a store where there is no food or toilet. Then the government acknowledged our problem and started giving support for people like me, kebele helped us with food and other supplies. I started to recover but I was living on the street, then one man offered to take me to work as a cleaner. That's when I got pregnant. After a while he threw me and my daughter out and got married to other women".

Saron added she is still struggling with extreme poverty, challenged by malnutrition and inability to work outside as the medication weakens her health.

Before the support from Zer Ethiopia she said work as a street cleaner at Safety Net programme and receives 500 Birr in a month. In addition, she also discussed the different levels of discrimination she came across with.

“It’s as if my door is restricted, no one passes by, they don’t greet me, and they don’t sit next to me. It is still the same but that one was a lot worse.”

More so, Ewnet, Saron and Megnot have also informed that they have spent a lot of money during the time when their husbands were on the verge of dying. Such expressions made it obvious that compared to the participants that reported HIV free life, those who said their husband died because of it or who were victims at the time were more vulnerable to economic destitution; resulted from payments to hospital treatment of the dying husband, when added to HIV and its attendant problems costing them medical treatments for themselves and through affecting their physical health and emotional stress. Overwhelmingly, such challenges are posed on them in addition to lower socio-economic status, homelessness, and lack of an external (familial or social support). In fact, only one of them gets familial support.

A woman with HIV/AIDS is more likely to be poor (Collins and Rau, 2000). Other studies also indicate that prevalence of HIV varies enormously across marital status, with widows having the highest rates of HIV infection in most countries. Such widows are severely disadvantaged, and societies often do little to help them cope with this extraordinary challenge (World Bank, 2016).

HIV as a threat and reason for social stigma:

Direct or indirectly majority of the participants have greater chance of being subjected to HIV. Along their concern of poverty, unsafe area of living and having teenage daughters has maximized risk of GBV and HIV.

The widow’s economic vulnerability has increased their vulnerability to HIV. Especially, Hewan, Bethelhem, Iyda, Wengel and Ruth mentioned that they fear being exposed to HIV both for themselves and their daughters as they are living in unsafe environment. Ascribing to such an experience, Hewan cried and recalled the life she had immediately after her loss, she described how she could have been subjected with HIV while engaged in commercial sex work;

“When I was working as a sex worker, I used to come across a lot of incidents, my life was very traumatic. I used to sleep with different kind of men, mostly drunk and occasionally mentally ill. They used to order me to do sickening things, they used to force me to have sex without condom or they take it off when they think am unaware. Sometimes I scream or try to fight with them, but they mostly beat me. God saved me, but I was exposed to different kinds of diseases...”

Also other researches have shown that the economic vulnerability of women makes it more likely that they will exchange sex for money or favor (Heise and Elias 1995; Mane, Rao Gupta, and Weiss 1994; Weiss and Rao Gupta 1998). Ascribing to such argument, Hewan cried and recalled the life she had immediately after her loss, she described how she could have been subjected with HIV while engaged in commercial sex work;

“When I was working as a sex worker, I used to come across a lot of incidents, my life was very traumatic. I used to sleep with different kind of men, mostly drunk and occasionally mentally ill. They used to order me to do sickening things, they used to force me to have sex without condom or they take it off when they think am unaware. Sometimes I scream or try to fight with them, but they mostly beat me. God saved me, but I was exposed to different kinds of diseases...”

Theodros (2014), on his study of widows who lost their husbands to HIV concluded, aside the grief from loss, a sense of powerlessness, state of helplessness and fear of death are found to be the major challenges that overwhelm the adaptive strength of widows living with HIV. Agreeing with this, Megnot said she was stressed after her husband died fearing that her son might get infected,

“My husband died from HIV and I was really stressed back then because I was not sure about myself or my baby. I used to fear because I thought I will be the next one dying. I thought of killing myself several times, but when I think of my son, I say I have to live for him”.

This concern is also shared by Saron who is currently living with HIV; she informed that she has no family and that she fears what would happen to her daughter if she dies. Another respondent who lives with the virus (Ewnet) is supported by family but she has also shown fear of dying.

Moreover, some others stated they were challenged by people associating their husband's death with HIV and being interrogated or stigmatized. Replying to the interview question, participants who live in the same community before and after their loss informed that they experienced some level of discrimination and confrontations. Especially the interview respondents informed that people ask them why their husbands died, mostly being suspicious of HIV, for instance one interviewee reasoned,

“I have lived in the community for long time and people know how he died but still they ask me, and I know why they ask me. I know they think its HIV.”

Mengt shared Wongels experience, but her husband has actually died from HIV. In her statement, she revealed that after her loss she got stigmatized by people who grew up with her even though she was HIV negative;

“I always feel sad, my husband has not first told me he has HIV, plus my friends who grew up with me started discriminating me right after he died. We were born and raised together; their discrimination gave me a lot of pain. I still tell them that am not HIV positive, but they never believe me”.

Particularly what Mengt experienced is a triple suffering; in addition to her feelings of betrayed by her husband she feels her loss and even worse the social neglect.

In conclusion, despite her loss, a widow who is a victim of HIV suffered from social stigma, fear of death and medical expenses while a widow who lost her husband to HIV suffers from loss of his income, expenses to his medication and social stigma even without a legitimate ground for discrimination. Further, a widow who was not challenged by the above, gets challenged by fear of risks that HIV might presents her as she is living in unsafe area with vulnerable small children; whilst the other risked her life to it, to carry out her responsibility of raising her fatherless children. To sum up, on this section HIV is discussed as a threat (emotional & physical health risk) and as a factor that accelerates socio-economic challenges for the victims as well as for others by resulting loss of income (death of husband) and exacerbating social stigma and discrimination.

4.3 The Emotional challenges of widowhood

This section dealt with the emotional aspect of widowhood as it was found highly interrelated to their social and economic challenges. Emotional aspect required knowing about the plight of the widow; her world, what goes on there, how she is coping with it, the society's reaction to her situation, her pain, her loss of desires, and where she stands in the scheme of things. As a result, the finding outlined the major once in to three themes, stress or feeling of depression; feeling of loneliness and loss of hope. According to the presumptions and experience of the widows, the basic reason behind is; identity shift to singleness; the loss of financial security and its results leading to lower social standing which in turn affected their psychological well-being.

Thus, widowhood resulted them chain of economic and social struggles which made their emotional challenges rooted in to that than grief from loss of love. Justifying this, literatures claim what challenges the widow most is when the husband was the principal breadwinner, if so; his widow will be deprived of his income (Fasoranti et al., 2007).

4.3.1 Stress or feeling of Depression

Although the psychosocial correlates of widowhood have been studied, less research has prospectively examined the impact of their life situation on their emotional wellbeing. On this study, widowed became a reason for financial loss and further negatively impacted their subsequent relationships and psychological betterment. Thus, most of the participants have expressed that they were or still are challenged by excessive stress and sometimes depression. According to the finding, their stress is often related to economic challenges (financial insecurity), the responsibility of rising children alone, failing to satisfy children's demands, social maltreatments and minimal social interaction. In fact, the poor nutrition, inadequate shelter, lack of access to health care and vulnerability to violence, hinted the risk not only for physical ill health but stress and depression as well.

By definition, depression is a state of (long/short term) low mood and aversion to activity. It can affect a person's thoughts, behavior, motivation, feelings, and sense of well-being.

It may feature sadness, difficulty in thinking and concentration and a significant increase/decrease in appetite and time spent sleeping, and people experiencing depression may have feelings of dejection, hopelessness and, sometimes, suicidal thoughts (Zwart, 2018).

Except for one of the participants who discussed feeling related to early loss, all of them have not mentioned that they have been challenged with such feeling. However, its suddenness or unexpectedness varied from participant to participant, but still, they remained emotionally challenged both at the time and after their loss. Especially mood change and feeling of depression around holiday seasons was found to be common for all participants. Besides this, majority of them get depressed because of social stigma or its results.

The results of this study found bereavement is experienced by all participants, but for different reasons. Megnot and Ewnets experience indicates that even if the marriage has been bad they felt bereaved, for instance, Ewnet said she blames her husband for his wrong doings in her life, but still she described her situation at the time of loss as;

“I was really challenged by his death. I knew he was dying, I was also in the hospital with him for days but when I heard about his death I got shocked. We lived together for so long, so I felt alone and empty when I realize he died, and the shock has sickened me a lot. Everything was dark.”

Widows grieve not only for the loss of their spouse, but also for the loss of their identity as a married individual, goals, futures that were jointly held with the deceased (e.g., raising children, growing old, or retiring together). Therefore, their emotional responses include psychological wounds such as, anger, annoyance, irritation, indignation, or bad feelings such as shame, powerlessness, fear and sadness. It was also witnessed that respondents equally stress about their current lives and future of their children. Expressing her situation, Hewan and Saron mentioned being under the state of depression. Saron once mentioned that she has experienced such feeling since the time she became a widow.

“I felt depressed for 17 years now (since her husband’s death). I don’t remember the day I slept well since then and I don’t feel like talking to people, voice really irritates me. I just feel like sleeping all day.”

Hewan's word was as followed; *"I have excessive stress and that drives me crazy sometimes so, I run and go to church"*.

Ruth on the other hand has considered her stress as normal. She expressed it as, *"I am healthy, but I have excessive stress and gastric disease."*

Although depressive symptoms diminish over time among the widowed, they seem to remain high for many years following widowhood, at least in comparison with married persons in cross-sectional studies (Umberson et al., 1992; van Grootheest et al., 1999). According to the finding of this paper, the reason why depression lasts for most widows is because of economic vulnerability or driven from stereotyped social interactions. Concordantly, the loss of a spouse is one of the most difficult social and economic influenced psychological issue through which the widows experienced. And other factors associated with the adjustments in widowed status and unfamiliar roles and responsibilities.

Economic related depression of widows:

For the respondents under this study, depression was mostly associated with increased financial strain and its associated risk; the assumption of new tasks in household management, and changes in social relationships, all of which exacerbate or mitigate psychological distress. Participants also share that assumption of new responsibilities added to economic vulnerability increase psychological distress. On top of this, lack of safe and affordable housing puts the respondents and their children at greater risk for violent victimization, excessive fear (which was discussed along with poverty), stress and depression.

Another cause of concern was the fact that they don't have an asset which they will pass on to their children as inheritance. This according to the majority is reason for stress and fear of future (death). Moreover, they have daily responsibility of raising children whom will be vulnerable to even deeper poverty if something happens to them. Therefore, commonly mentioned views implied that respondents stress and are mostly in fear of unsafe environments of living and its consequent risks (of HIV, rape or pregnancy); sickness or worsening of existing illness and its possibility of resulting death; not being able to work and likely results on their children's future.

As parents the major stressor of the widows related with their children. In fact, economic stress was also found influenced by children's behavior and age; those who informed their children don't understand their situation stress a lot than those who have understanding and helpful children. Only two of the respondents informed that their kids work and support themselves. On this regard, those who were raising teenagers said that their demand increases day after day and they pressure them to fulfill their needs.

Hewan who currently work as a cleaner and receive small amount of money on the interview mentioned that she struggled with depression, the most challenging event that resulted her depression was related to economic, especially lack of housing.

“After my husband died I had nowhere to go so, one of my relatives gave me her house and I started living there, after a while, she passed away. I think someone from my neighbors has reported this to the Kebele, so I was told to immediately leave the house since the house was not on my name. One day they (the people working in the Kebele) throw away all my stuff and told me to move out. People who live next door begged them that I stay for a little long. Since then, they never came back but I am always stressed that they might come to take my house and me and my children would be thrown out on the streets. I never sleep, and I stress all week long except for the weekends (since the kebele doesn't work on those days) to be honest, I wouldn't even be this stressed if I didn't have anything to eat. I really don't want to live on the streets, I have daughters and it would break my heart thinking what would happen to them if we were to live out on the streets”.

On this regard, researchers who studied emotional related challenges of widows argue, socioeconomic factors may enhance or buffer any adverse effects of widowhood on depressive symptoms and, at the same time, also influences, depression, mortality, and related health outcomes (Eichner & Robbins, 2015). The widows in this study were found vulnerable in a variety of domains. For example Tenbit's who had five-year-old twin daughters and three other small kids back when her husband died, said her stress at the time was mostly economic and the fact that she couldn't provide for her children. She informed that she is still struggling with similar challenge; she shared her emotions crying,

“My children are very demanding; they even tell me that they wouldn’t go to school if I didn’t give them what they ask. Especially my last boy is aggressive; he sometimes tries to beat me. In some situations, I had to choose between my children, I can’t fairly give everything to them. I feel bad and sometimes I don’t even sleep. When I am sad I get angry and ask myself why did I give birth? Once, I asked myself if I could work as a prostitute, but I found that hard. I feel option less, so I cry. Sometimes I think of remarriage, but I say to myself I don’t want to hurt my children’s feelings. I stress a lot and I cry all night, so I don’t sleep often and therefore, I get a headache during the day”.

As has been repeatedly indicated, most participants don’t have social contacts or the financial security to their children’s future. Therefore, they fear and get depressed thinking about their children’s life’s if in case they die. Most of them used the expression, *“what worries me most is the future of my children if I die”*. Such stress is also exacerbated due to the young ages of their children.

On this regard, Dunn (2015) as cited by Caserta (2009) & Lund (2014) argues widows of all ages have reported seeking and receiving support for a myriad of reasons, beyond the moral support needed after the passing of a spouse. Furthermore, several aspects of widowhood have been specifically identified as stressful because of loss of income and feeling isolated from friends. Carr (2001) also stated the relevance of having external support in minimizing depression.

However, on the interview all of them mentioned they don’t have friends and don’t interact with any one. This reality, limited exchanging of ideas; sharing their burdens with someone they think would care for them or may be sometimes having someone who loans them money or watch their children when they go for work. Thus, their widowhood, aside from minimal income and loss of husband’s financial support, is challenged with economic related stress and depression because of lack of social support. This was witnessed when comparing those who have family backing and those who informed they don’t have or feel like they don’t have anyone beside them. However, as widowed mother, all shared the stress that comes from feeling that their children must bare poverty which life phenomenon of death resulted.

Social influenced stress of the widow:

The results of this study indicated that the sequences of events especially related with loss increases stress on the roles and responsibilities of widows as they cope with identity shift. Wengel who more than any of the respondents associated her widowhood challenges with social discrimination and stereotypes stated that such discrimination goes beyond her daily challenges and worsened her stress about her children.

“The first thing that scares and drowns you is the economic challenge, but you will adjust through time, what darkens your days is the chain of rising yemutlij (her fatherless children). My children don’t like to socialize because they fear the labeling, even in their school they call them names, and they mistreat them and view them as charity seekers anticipating them being fatherless would make them needy.”

Discrimination negatively affects both physical and mental health of the widow; more so, it has been associated with stress and depression. Throughout the discussions, stereotyping and discrimination have both been demonstrated to have negative effects on the individuals who are the targets of these practices in terms of emotional, physical performance, social interaction, and behavior. Bennett & Gaines (2010), discussed the negative effects of discrimination and stereotype in relation to loss and process of restoration.

Especially one of the key informants, of Zer Ethiopia who informed has studied social work demonstrated social challenges as reasons for low self-esteem and stress,

“Not only for a widowed mother but the social life in our country is extended and relates to every aspect of our wellbeing. The challenges faced by widows are many as they must face the changed circumstances and take on the role of both mother and father. In addition to dealing with loneliness the widows in many circumstances feel burdened due to added responsibilities. Other than this, when we have discussions with them they inform us about the humiliations, insults and indignations they suffer from. It is imperative that these women know that they are equally important as other people and do not deserve this kind of treatment, no matter how common it may be. I am a social worker and when I ask them questions related with their social lives, I get the feeling that their social

relations are not that good, this explains why they suffer from stress and low self-esteem”.

In a similar manner, participants mentioned that their experience of discrimination and stereotype lead them stress about their children’s future; as they believe it will get worst if in case they die or got ill. Participants were asked to describe their perception of and experiences with social support following the death of their spouse to understand how they cope with emotional challenges after widowhood; from all participants positive social interaction was only admitted by one interviewee. This justifies, the reason why they seek to distant themselves from social groups is to achieve self-esteem. Because, in many cases, even though they inform they have excluded themselves and that gave them relative psychological wellness, it seems that they attach meaning and stress about how society view, treat or say about them. Such argument is supported by Tajfel & Turner (1979), which indicate stereotypes, stigma and discrimination towards an individual and groups can result in the individual experiencing stress and social identity threat.

As has been indicated, widowhood is a stressful life event and demands holistic support from family and friends. This being so, respondents reduced attachment with (family, neighbors and friends) added to economic vulnerability; social discrimination and stereotypes; psychological impact of widowhood; feeling of their loss and thoughts about their children’s future affected emotional wellbeing of the respondents exposing them to feelings of stress or depression.

In fact, it influenced behavioral change for one participant while for others escalated feeling of insecurity stress about their children’s future added with dissatisfaction of current social treatments.

4.3.2 Emotional challenge from feelings of loneliness

Aside from depression, another problem associated with widowhood is feeling of loneliness. For my research participants, felling of loneliness is of course initially experienced from loss of spouse, but it was largely attached with feelings resulted from social and economic pressure. For them, marriage had at least offered them better economic security, therefore felling of loneliness was highly attached to loss of financial support. As understood, being the house maker, breadwinner and managing the children is a major challenge and made them receive minimal income.

This resulted them feeling of helplessness and exacerbates their feelings of loneliness in terms of being on their own; which as noted from their description includes anxious feelings about lack of connectedness or communality with others.

Death of a spouse resulted them trauma, grief and a total restructuring of one's life. Thus, the widows experienced economic hardship, emotional and social problems and they passed through a period of loneliness which manifests in so many ways.

Self-understanding or expression of loneliness

Tenbit who claims has a responsibility of raising five demanding teenage children, expressed her feeling of loneliness attached with her loss of husband whom would have shared the burdens with her.

“When my husband was alive we used to support one another plus life was less expensive. But now there is no one to support me and that makes me feel so sad and lonely”.

Similarly, Hewan's expression of loneliness was more connected with loss of her husband and raising her kids alone. She expressed that her first concern was raising the kids all alone,

“What scared me the most was rising the children alone; though he was poor his existence meant a lot. We would have grown together or at least support one another.”

While for Bethlehem the feeling of loneliness was referred as lack of support and having no advisor or someone who she calls a friend, this according to her is found with in marriage.

“No one has tried to help me, being on my own is challenging, even the kids feel for me. Without a supporter its hard but I never want to remarry”.

Such descriptions imply that they feel they are all by themselves, explaining the exhaustion of playing the role of the mother and father. Specifically, Ruth and Bethlehem's expression imply that being single parent makes them feel lonely. Ruth, *“It's you who is responsible for the work, for taking care of the children when they get sick and provide. But at some point, you lose it...”*

According to Carr (2001), loneliness is an unpleasant feeling in which a person feels a strong sense of emptiness and solitude resulting from inadequate levels of social relationships. Parkes (2013) connects loneliness with lack of contact with old associations that had been frequent prior to the loss. For Megnot, who is in her early 30's and who informed was working with him before he died; feeling of loneliness relates with sudden death of her husband without her being prepared for spending her life alone. She said she has connected death with an old age and it happened so sudden to her when she was starting her marriage life. It was understood from her expressions; she is emotionally challenged with feeling of loneliness as she is in her young age and has not planned her life to go on this direction.

To sum up, from the discussions on emotional aspect of widowhood, it has been noticed that none of the participants expressed loneliness with feelings associated to loss of love or affection of the husband. Hence, statements of the respondents explain that a widow not only feels lonely because of her husband's death but also because of consequent life responsibilities and social interactions (which are discussed on the below subsection). However, according to Dunn (2013), loneliness of widows is experienced on various levels and support such as lending money or bringing in a meal or emotional (nonjudgmental listening) can free up energies which may help in rebalance of widowed; which participants of this study expressed don't have.

Feeling of loneliness as a response to loss of the manly figure:

Loss of the "Manly" figure in the house was an important concern for the participants of this research. This is because; in our society a man (husband) is considered not only as a provider but also as a protector and guider of the family. One way or the other, for them the social disrespect, underestimation, assault, attempt of theft or even most feelings of loneliness relate to the absence of men, the "Abawera".¹² Wengel, when she described being without a husband,

"There is nothing and no one that I share ideas with, my kids are disadvantaged in all regards. Those who have fathers are privileged because mostly men interact, discuss and decide what's good for their children. But a mother will always be busy at home doing the house work;

¹² Is the husband or the male head of the family.

she will have no interaction, who will counsel her? Even to sell or buy something valuable, you need a man's advice. If you do it by yourself they will ask, don't you have a trusted man relative?"

Her experience depicts how gender socialization impacts widowhood as marriage or having a man is valued and those who don't have those get underestimated. On this regard, Singlism theory highly argues that people perceive marriage to have individual, familial, and societal level benefits (Conley et al., 2013). Ruth had a different experience than the above respondent; she said she was a lonelier even when her husband was alive. She said her husband was a drinker and they frequently fought and even separated when he was about to die. But still her expression implies that his existence made her feel secured, and now she feels the loneliness differently.

"I always felt lonely even when he was alive, we were often separated but now when I think of having no one by my side, I feel down. Especially for holidays, when others get helped by their husbands I feel lonely".

All agreed that especially holiday seasons make them feel lonely and depressed. In particular some of their expressions pointed its relation with loss of the abawera, Hewan said;

"I feel so sad most of the time, especially for holidays when my kids tell me their friends got this and that or when they ask me why their father doesn't come to buy them food or cloth. I feel a lot of pain words can't describe what I feel."

Similarly, Megnot shared her experience of feeling loneliness with her tears rolling. She said that it's harder for her son to accept his father's death. Sometimes, she said, my son doesn't feel our house is complete because he sees his friends who have fathers.

"Even more than me my son feels about losing his dad. When he graduated from kindergarten, when their names were called out in stage, he said he doesn't want to step on the stage. He cried so hard and asked me why his father died so soon, what I can say, I cried with him. I always cry when I think of that day. He hates that we are lonely, especially during winter he cries and ask me to take him to regions, where my parents live."

While for Abigail who informed is living with her family, the manly role is played by her brother, so she never felt the stated above feelings. Such kind of expression was also noticed from one of the interviewees (Hewan), when she informed that she used to call her bother to live with them so that her kids don't feel lonely and unprotected.

Feeling of loneliness due to lack of social interaction/support:

The widows felt the loss of personal contact and association. Though not like financial challenges, social loneliness has its own effect. For majority of my respondents, especially such kinds of feelings were often experienced imitate to their loss when they didn't get external support (they expected) from their husband's relatives or from the people around them.

Due to cultural and religious values, the Ethiopian society is very much bonded; highly values and spend most time in social related affairs. Out of the many, weeding's, funeral, birthday, graduation, mehaber¹³, edir, and different holidays are ways of social gatherings. However, the participants mentioned that they don't either get invited or they don't want to attend such social gatherings because they have been avoided or stereotyped (because of their social standing or poorness after widowhood). Not only this, but it was also understood that participants excluded themselves and as a result very few (three out of ten) are members of social gatherings such as edir and mehaber.

In addition to what the researcher mentioned in previous sections, their responsibilities and engagements at home and at work place has left them minimal time to socialize. Therefore, they are mostly excluded from social gatherings and face social loneliness. Generally, what the research understood from the discussions is that, not only do they feel financial and social loneliness, but also hopelessness and helplessness with all aspects of their lives. Also, Parkes (2013) found that, the number one predictor of widow's challenges is the lack of contact with old associations that had been frequent prior to the loss.

¹³ Is a small association in Ethiopian communities

All the interviewees except for two of them who live with their family, all of them said they don't get assistance or companionship from the people around them. What is worst about this is that their lives were not like this pre-loss.

Thus, in addition to their multidimensional vulnerability, majority of the participants shared the feeling of social loneliness. Particularly, Wengel said, "*even the priest who used to frequently visit our family never showed up after the death of my husband, I guess my husband used to give him money*". Also, Iyda stating her loneliness said she lived in Addis for a long time, but she knows no one except for her one neighbor who sometimes offers her help.

Summarizing what has been pointed under this subsection, the research found out that feelings related with loneliness also developed feeling of helplessness and somehow, it made participants feel like the only thing that can restore their losses is financial independence. When asked if they had considered remarriage to encounter feeling of loneliness, all responded that they don't want to remarry either because of their age or their children. Regarding this, Bethlehem and Tenbit informed that they initially considered remarriage however, feared because they have daughters whom will be vulnerable sexual abuse. But one participant mentioned she considered it but got afraid of what people would say.

All in all, widowhood is associated with income inadequacy, which is also associated with lower social participation, and higher loneliness and anxiety. This is mostly gets worse as they are subjected to negative stereotypes and discrimination based on their non-partnered status (Pignotti & Abell, 2009). In relation with this, literatures state that benefits of marriage include, companionship; better mental health; physical health; happiness; economic security; lower blood pressure, lower stress, less depression, and higher life satisfaction (Holt-Lunstad, Birmingham, & Jones, 2008).

4.3.3. Emotional challenge in relation to loss of hope

Certainly, going through the experience of losing a spouse is an exercise in powerlessness. Moreover, as indicated on the previous sections, aside to their loss, participants struggle with multidimensional challenges including poverty, HIV and social stereotypes.

Thus, most of the widows repeatedly expressed they have experienced fear, helplessness and powerlessness. In fact, the socio-economic struggle of widowhood and its exhaustions resulted them feeling of insecurity and loss of hope up to the level of assuming suicidal. Fear according to Mark (2005), can lead to deadly consequences. As well, generally losing companionship and being alone cause's fear of future and loss of hope.

In addition, being a poor woman with no possibility of getting an opportunity to have a better life and having the responsibility of raising children, accelerated participants feeling of fear and finally loss of hope. Asserting this, Chen (2000) claims widows experiencing grief will be at subsequent increased risk for physical health events.

As a solution a study by Dunn (2013), Guiaux (2010) and others asserted that emotionally burdened widows will psychologically benefit from larger and more responsive social networks, including from family or friends. While on this study, what made my participant's situation different is that they all share the above discussed feelings and they don't have contacts with their relatives, the husband's siblings or friends whom they trust to give their children's, if in case something bad happens to them. Therefore, feeling of insecurity and hopelessness was noted from their expressions.

Other studies also indicate widowhood may also include prolonged or pervasive stress, depression, loss of appetite and sleep, fear, feelings of guilt, emptiness, hopelessness, social anxiety, continuous sense of exhaustion and loss of hope (Buckley et al., 2009).

Lack of support, fear and loss of hope:

Sense of loneliness and feeling of abandonment, particularly by their children, friends, and neighbors affected the emotions of widows due to lack of support. As has been mentioned in the previous section, participants mostly associated social loneliness with their single social standing and financial vulnerability. As such, large portion of their statements depict sense of helplessness and loss of hope that it resulted. In fact, there were participants that informed they assumed suicide especially, immediate to their loss.

Megnot, who claimed that she used to have a lot of common friends with her husband mentioned she has lost her contacts after he died. Furthermore, she informed that she never got supported by her neighbors finally expressed loss of hope,

“I have no one to support me and I also don’t have any hope in them (her neighbors and the kebele) I have lived in the village for a long time, but no one knows me, no one acknowledged I belonged here. I can’t think of what would happen to my son if I died”.

Similarly, on the interview Saron, who spent most her life being HIV carrier and widow when she concluded the interview responses implied loss of hope, *“No one is willing to offer help for someone like me, no one. Once they see your failures, they leave you”.*

For instance, Tenbit who assumed suicide informed that her children did not turn out as she has expected them and that discourages her as they were her last hope. Implying her life time efforts to create better life have been all challenged after her unexpected loss, she sated;

“Poverty is cruel, it downsizes you. There is no one beside me; even the children don’t understand my struggles. I hoped their growing up would reward me, but they became another headache. No one is interested to share your burdens; they will leave you as soon as they notice your complicated life”.

Hewan repeatedly spoke that she lives under a lot of stress and fear of her house being taken away. She said she has no supporter or networks that would help her finalize the process.

“I have no life, I don’t even properly breast feed my son, I spend most my days running up and down. These days you must have connections, money or you should be able to speak. On kebele it’s those orator people who are given the chance. I always get left behind; I spent a year and half going here and there. I have no one and am not the kind of person who speaks or convince people. I have given up now, I got really tired and I don’t even know when this will end”.

Wengel who is self-conscious of social view towards widows, said she felt dejection and lost hope when she felt the society labeled her husbandless. She expressed her feeling as,

“A married woman, ever though she is poor she will be trusted for loan, because people would think her husband will be held responsible. But there is no one who will be willing to loan us (those without a husband), because there will be no one to get accountable. I am honestly tired of accompanying and living other people’s life, for once, I would like be on their spot and live life.”

On top of all this problems that they experience, participant’s descriptions of living as single included that they are constantly fearful of sexual violence (rape). As stated earlier, Iyda has experienced rape attempt therefore, she fears that similar things might happen to her daughters. Iyda’s words, *“Because of the area I live in, I fear day and night. I am a woman with two teenage daughters, it’s really scary”*.

Complying with this, Hewan fearing the risks, *“I have a teenage daughter, what if she gets raped, pregnant or gets a disease? I hear that they started rapping boys too”*. Tenbit (mother of five) and Bethlehem (with three daughters) also raised similar concern of fearing their social environment’s subjecting them and their daughters to rape, robbery and other health threats. Generally stating findings from this session, most participants are found fearful of the challenges of their daily life. Even more, all of them are severely challenged by fear of death, this mainly is because they don’t have someone to support them or their children if they die.

Beyond the multidimensional emotional challenges discussed above, while answering the interview question, who would you counsel when you encounter a challenge? All of them except for Abigail said I don’t have anyone except for GOD. Thus, findings from the previous sections as well as this session has led in to a conclusion that, despite other things, fear and loss of hope are originated and exacerbated by financial insecurity, lack of social support (social discrimination and lack of social companionship), physical health related issues. It is also important to note that on the analyses, the time of widowhood was important. Women who were long term widows reported substantially higher level of depression, poorer social interaction and general health than short term widows. Longer widowhood, therefore, becomes an important factor associated with the elevated risk for living in poverty (Sevak et al., 2003).

From a theoretical perspective, number of mechanisms has been described to explain how widowhood might lead to impairments in mental & physical health.

Especially researchers like Dunn (2013), Thewodros (2014) and Guiaux (2010) described the importance of social support and intimate attachments for mental and physical wellbeing of the widow. As such finding of this study also noted the significance of familial and social support on mental and physical wellbeing. Those who got family support were found emotionally better than those who are lonelier. That implies, less the support, the higher the frustration and maladjustment. It was found that families of the respondents are also in similar economic situations but even so, familial companionship played a determinant role in the process of recovering.

Concluding the discussion under emotional challenges of widowhood, outcomes associated with the death of a spouse ranges from feeling of stress, fear, health complications, financial stress, feeling of loneliness, loss of hope and emotional distress. Generally, familial support equals fast emotional recovery; better financial security; less stress; less domestic work responsibilities; better health; motivation and productivity at work.

Therefore, profound emotional struggles have been encountered by those who lack social or familial support, or who get challenged by social stereotype and those who have excluded themselves because of fear of social stereotype. Generally, all of them, one way or the other said they have experienced feelings of stress, shock, confusion, denial, anxiety, anger, depression, and loneliness; but over different issues and levels. Moreover, the analysis noted, the fact that all participants were challenged by poverty immediate to their loss; made most of their emotional suffering about consequent destitution than about the husband's death. Thus, none reported emotional challenge from loss of intimacy or love (husbandly affection).

4. 4 Coping strategies of the widows

One of the objectives of this study is to learn about coping mechanisms of the research targets. Widowhood has profoundly impacted the participants on many levels, emotionally, practically, and financially. According to the findings, aside to emotional bereavements related to the loss, the widows needs to assume responsibility for some of the duties that were previously shared with or taken care of by their husbands. Such duties included: taking care of the finances; participating in social activities; taking care of the manly duties in the household or outside; disciplining; giving fatherly or husbandly care and love for the family.

Hence, coping with emotional as well as practical activities was an important process for the participant's motherhood life. More so, dealing with emotional challenges that are predominantly influenced by socio-economic (challenges) was part of the coping process.

Ironically, this session, unlike the previous one, discusses the braveness and courage that the widows have shown in their lives. Studies on widows coping strategies categorize the mechanisms as positive and negative. For Bahar (2013), positive coping mechanisms are those that are not harmful for widows and negative coping mechanisms are the once that result in harm. Accordingly, negative coping mechanisms are blamed for linking loneliness with depression; and thus, considered as a risk factor for becoming alcoholic, drug addict and committing of suicide. In this study, coping mechanisms are classified in to two, internal and external. Such strategies are used by participants to cope with, financial, emotional and social challenges of widowhood. According to Webb (2003), spiritual; cognitive; physical; emotional and social aspects are the core components in modifying the situation of widows as these factors are used to indicate the challenges as well as the strength in recovering or crisis of the widows. Moos and Shaeffer (1984), argue, age, gender, and socioeconomic status as well as cognitive and emotional maturity, ego strength, self-confidence, and what stage a person is in the lifecycle impacts a person's recovery from a traumatic event.

4.4.1. Internal coping strategies

Coping strategies highly differ from one person to another. This section of the research has identified both negative and positive internal coping mechanisms. As such, it considered the some of their expressions that relate with internal relief & strength as a positive coping strategy. Despite the multiple challenges widowhood presented them, participants informed about events which has shown them another dimension of life. Positive internal thinking lays the frame of reference within which individuals interpret experiences and formulate goals and strategies for living within the prevailing situation (Thewodros, 2014).

Strength and courage after loss

As indicated above, positive adjustment of widow is related to the ability of widows to use their internal strength and resources to come out of the effects of widowhood challenges. Unlike studies including this one that largely cover (portray) the downsides of widowhood life; the data on this research created an understanding that some of the participants created their own internal feelings which helped them move forward with their lives as a widowed mother.

Loss of husband might not always result sorrow and bereavement, in fact there might be cases in which the widow gets relief. Ruth who used to have a bad marriage justified that the death of her husband has set her free from domestic abuse and stressful life. Recalling her past with grudge, she has shown the marks (tarnish) in her face and told,

“This is what I have got from him, he took away my youth, my skin color has changed because of him. He is a person with bad characteristics, he had no good deed, when we were living together all he does was get drunk and beat me and my children. He used to kick me out of the house in the middle of the night. He made me suffer a lot, neighbors used to say he is going to kill her someday, but I am a strong woman. I am proud of where I am today, I have educated all my children; one will graduate this year. I thank God for allowing me to see this before I die. I don’t care if I die now.”

The same is true for another participant who suffered most of her life because of her husband. Ewnet who now has a better life regarding financial and practical support from her family, claims she got married without being fully convinced; plus, her husband disconnected her from family for years and prohibited her from working outside. She said she also founded his dishonesties and the fact that he transmitted a disease to her and her son, therefore, she stated,

“Sometimes I ask myself, have I been married to such kind of person? When I found out that I was infected with HIV because of him, I refused to sleep with him; on the return he said he will not give me money. He used to eat outside and I and my son used to starve for days. When I think of my life back then, I thank God that he died”.

For Abigail internal strength had a different aspect. She said her husband was getting an expensive medical treatment for a year and died after they finished all the money they saved.

“After he died I was surprised that at times I felt relieved by his death (because it meant the end of his suffering). Especially around his last days I was really stressed because doctors told me he must go abroad to get a brain surgery. He had a mental illness, so those times were difficult for me, I used to work during the day time and stay up all night with him”.

Even more, a statement that depicts strong passion and courage was forwarded from one of the participants; Wengel, who is a mother of three claims that she got rebirthed and grew with her children after the death of her husband. She said she sometimes appreciates her suffering days for making her strong, hardworking women. She justified her financial coping was also one of the things that was birthed through the many challenges.

“Looking in to my life before and after his death, I doubt if it’s me doing this. Sometimes I smile and ask myself is it me who did this? I can say, with his death I got rebirthed. For whoever chooses to learn from it, challenge is a very good school. I was just a house wife when he was alive; he spoiled me taking care of everything. Now I am a woman who came up with a plan of coordinating and leading a small saving association. I was strong enough to convince one rich woman, who has better acceptance than me in my village. She then agreed to persuade and gather a monthly 5 birr saving from all needy women around our neighborhood. Thanks to me and my idea, we now have 37,000 birr in our account, whoever wants takes a loan and start a business. We have successful women; I also managed to take loan and started a small business myself”.

Megnot and Ewnet shared a similar perspective as Wengel. Megnot said having no option to go back in time and fight with nature has impossible so she shaped herself.

“I knew I had no option but to strengthen myself. I am different and stronger than I was before. I used to cry for everything, I use to give up and lose hope easily, but now I am solution oriented”.

The above statements depict how their challenges after widowhood became pushing factors to better life, independence and internal relief. Furthermore, Megnot throughout the interview discussion informed that she never wants to develop a victim mentality. In fact, she informed that she repeatedly advises her son not to be independent on any one and to be self-sufficient as she is. As such, Ewnet when she informed about her life after she became a victim of HIV because of her husband says,

“His death has thought me many things and one of which is that I have to stand for myself and other women like me. I now teach my neighbors about HIV, I also contacted my husband’s mistress to tell her get tested. I was never like this before, I was just a shy rural woman but now I am bold”.

Despite the challenges discussed in the preceding sessions, most participants have shown remarkable determination and courage in the face of tragedy and have become self-supporting in running small businesses, saving and supporting their own and siblings’ children (out of the interviewees, Ruth, Wengel, Abigail and Hewan are raising siblings’ children). This agrees with Chant (2003) argument that depict households headed by women will not always get impoverished. Even though such courage was exercised on different aspects of their lives, it was noticed that their loss helped them discover a strong personality which they haven’t noticed had.

On top of this, even though their narratives indicate that they have developed strength out of their challenges, the meanings they attached to it differs. For instance, Ruth and Ewnet have considered it as liberation because their marriage lives have been bad, while Wengel have developed strength to start up business. But, Abigail felt relief because her husband was suffering for a year and death was a better alternative. Strength and courage has also been noticed when none of the participants asked for donations and when they informed they shall rather have menses to self-empowerment.

Spirituality and hope built on the futures of their children

Spirituality:

Majority of the participants have a commonly agreed emotional coping strategy; “spirituality”. As mentioned on the background, most are Orthodox Christians, and the rest are Protestants. Despite their religion, all agreed their spiritual connection with God gives them strength to cope with their challenges. Thus, majority of them saw their spiritual connection as a medication for their stress. In fact, only one interviewee mentioned she doesn’t go to church. But the rest reasoned their faith in the highest power of God and their presumptions of challenges relating to his will is the pillar for them moving forward. The following statements are the answers of participants when asked about their coping; Megnot who lives with her little boy says she is a lonelier and stated,

“I have no one to talk to, no friends or relatives but God..., I lean on him. When I feel very much stressed I go to church and cry. I never ask people to support me; I don’t want my son to develop that kind of mentality either, so I tell him to pray”.

Similarly, holding spirituality as a positive coping mechanism; Hewan who mentioned her life has been subjected to risky health stations while she was working as a sex worker and during the time she almost got expelled from her house,

“The only thing that makes me feel better is going to church. When my stress gets pick, I quickly go there; stay for a while pray, cry and get back home”.

Bethelhem who boldly informed she doesn’t like to socialize, also reflected that spiritual connection gave her better answers to her life challenges; depicting her reliance on a higher power than socialization,

“I only have God to share my stress. I don’t ask people for an advice; they wouldn’t have the power to help me. Even if I asked them, oftentimes they say, oh I hope God helps you”.

Also Wengel who stated she is a newly convert to Protestant Christianity, seem to lean on her God and that gives her hope for a better future;

“I passed through all of it with him (God), I never stopped believing he will change my life. I know he will bring me a day, and everyone will be ashamed of their bad deeds”.

Tenbit who informed her children’s behavior frequently offends her, believes a divine power of God would change her children’s bad behavior. Her expression implies that she gets relief when she passes her stress to a higher body;

“I often go to church and pray, I tell him that I couldn’t deal with all of this, I beg him to hear my prayers.”

As has been repeatedly mentioned, majority of them don’t have money, friends or family to share and ease their pain. Therefore, the most accessible and convincing form of emotional coping was, prayer (spiritual connection to a mighty God), crying and going to church. More so, for three of them, it’s their fear of God that kept them from committing suicide.

This revealed that it is their spiritual strength that helped them cope with their sequential life difficulties. And indicates spirituality has a dominant positive role in the copings of the widow’s. A research by Shih, Turale, Shih & Tsai, (2010) examined the positive influence of religiosity on post bereavement adjustment. Likewise, this study indicated that people with intrinsic religious beliefs reported better coping by holding positive attitudes and taking multiple actions for adaptation. Literature by Dunn (2013) and others indicated that widows cope with counseling and through various forms of social support. Whereas participants on this study informed they didn’t have such an alternative and the best way to cope with financial and other stress was through spirituality.

Hope built on the futures of their children:

Another internal coping mechanism was hope on children. The informants shared that it’s their children who gives them hope about their future. They said it’s when they see their children that they get motivated to live the next day. For instance, Megnot who only has one boy said she counts on him to give her a better future. *“Sometimes I see those who have nothing or no one beside them and living on the streets and thank God saying that I at least have a son”.*

Hewan is a mother of four and when she answered the question what helps you cope with life, she replied, *“It’s only when I see my children that I see hope.”* Additionally, Iyda who earlier mentioned that she migrated from regions and is now living with her two daughters informed that one of them is very good at school and she hopes her future will bring something good in their lives. Also said, *“They are the family I have, and my only hope is in them”*.

Along with this, some participants also mentioned that their children are the only siblings they have, and their existence give them mental satisfaction and helped them cope with feelings related to loneliness. On top of this, majority (except for Ewnet) who shared that she is challenged with her teenaged children, all expressed their excitement when they spoke about their children being all grown up, getting in to high school or being at a stage where they can work and pay off their financial sufferings. Especially most interviewees used an expression,

“When my children grow up, I will be equal with others. I strongly believe my children will renounce my name and will show me a future nobody expected”.

Although most of their challenges correlate with the fact that them having children, their expressions have shown how the existence of their children on its own plays a positive role in their copings.

Self-exclusion from social life:

The reason behind the consideration of self-exclusion as internal coping mechanism is because participants informed their minimal social interaction gave them psychological relief. However, the experience of the widows in this study indicated that those respondents who were disconnected from the family and neighborhood circle experienced deterioration in their health, internal strength and economic empowerment.

As such, to cope with the emotional challenges resulted from social stigma or discrimination; nine out of ten participants have used social exclusion as one strategy; while one has a family contact. The commonly used expression was, *“I don’t want to go to others and I also don’t want them to get involved in my life.”* Especially Bethlehem and Saron officially spoke this gives them internal relief.

According to the finding, such participants who prefer exclusion are also the kind of parents who order their children not to socialize. Self-exclusion and loneliness according to Bahar (2013), is a negative coping strategy which will end up harming the victims themselves. Likewise, another literature indicates some widows try to survive by hiding their suffering and struggling with physical, psychological, and social problems (Holm & Stivenson, 2012).

As repeatedly mentioned in previous sessions, some of them did not recognize or naturalized the stigma but excluded them as a preventive mechanism. Among those who acknowledged the prevalence of stigma, excluded themselves and somehow got relieved; Bethlehem, when asked about how she deals with social challenges, she directly answered, *“I have excluded myself, so I don’t encounter any challenge.”* Unlike the others, Iyda used the strategy of migration to a place where no one knows her. But she hasn’t directly acknowledged she did that to cope the social stigma.

Apart from that the finding also indicated widows developed goals and plans to improve or maintain the family’s economy and their health situation, which is an indicative of strength of cognitive processing of the study participants. Emotional challenge is one of the significant challenges found out in this study, yet, none of them put any strategy to maintain their emotional health. It was also learned that participants have associated most of their challenges with financial constraints and thus, the situation depicts economic self-sufficiency shall offer them better coping.

4.4.2. External coping strategies

Some literature recommends leaning on friends and family for emotional and economic support as a positive coping mechanism. In addition, they suggest help of a therapist, grief counselor or grief support group if necessary. The easiest and most accessible help for the research participants would have been social and familial support but majority of them said they don’t get emotional, financial or practical support from an external source. However, this subsection discussed some of the coping mechanisms that were influenced by external factors such as familial, social or financial support from Zer Ethiopia. Within this, other coping mechanisms used to cope with economic challenges are discussed.

Literature on the role of social support indicated that when acute or chronic stressors occur, the environmental context can buffer or exacerbate the negative impact on the person (Kumpfer, 1991). Also, Dunn (2015) asserted studies indicate social support has been found to be a significant contributor to positive individual coping among widows. Findings of this research have very much correlate with this argument. For instance, Abigail claims she has family support and no regrets with her husband's death. But, for her societal appreciation was the major source of motivation and encouragement. Her words, *"They know my suffering days so people (her neighbors) admire my strength and appreciate me; that is my source of power, it encourages me."* However, aside from Abigale, none of them acknowledge social support. In fact, Hewan, when she narrated the struggle she passed when kebele was about to take her house implied, her neighbors supported her.

Regarding familial support, Ewnet and her son who are now living with HIV live with her family. She says that gives her strength and courage beyond the financial support. Her words,

"If it was not for my brother, I wouldn't have survived. He is the one who supports me; he pays for my hospital and other expenses. My sister also comes very often; she helps me with the house work when I get sick."

Therefore, the findings of this study, as it has been validated with related studies (Turner, 2005, Betelehem, 2009 & Thewodros, 2014) indicated that family involvement is very important for the widow to gain the initial energy to recover. Otherwise it fosters frustration and contributes to maladjustment to the widow.

Moreover, Abigail's statement indicates, even though someone gets familial support, still social encouragement and appreciation plays a huge role in the coping process of the widow. On this regard, as mentioned under the subsection of derogatory remarks, one of the respondents who is very self-conscious of the social stereotypes has informed that widows as a woman encounter challenges and this negatively influences their coping.

As mentioned on the literature review, widows' coping strategies involve exploitative informal sector work, putting children into child labor, begging and, ultimately sex work. Remarriage and exchange sex are also a widely used strategies.

Remarriage is an alternative widowhood insurance mechanism, which seems to be only a second-best for women (Lambert & van de Walle, 2012). Although some of them said they have considered such things, none reported being involved in such activity with an exception of Hewan who once remarried, divorced and started working as sex worker six years back. Additionally, Saron, a widow for seventeen years informed she has remarried but she said he left her after she got pregnant with his baby. Others also implied their will for remarriage but fear of social labeling and future of their children has limited them.

Other than from familial and social motivation, participants received financial support from Zer Ethiopia. On the interview, all of them have mentioned got 5000-birr support from Zer Ethiopia which they are using as seed money to start small business. As well, at the time of interview they were about to receive the second round 5000 birr. Concerning this, most agreed and thanked Zer Ethiopia for helping them get a sustainable income, own small business and money they can save. They also mentioned that they started saving money, bought equipment's for their businesses and they are in better situation with the support they got from Zer Ethiopia. With an exception of Saron who is now in critical health condition, all of them started their own businesses. With participants will, the researcher has also observed the business equipment and their saving bank books during the interviews.

The key informants, especially the project coordinator of Zer Ethiopia, have witnessed that the widows are in better positions and they have started depositing money on the saving accounts the organization linked with Enat Bank. The General Manager also informed that they are on the process of building a huge market center for the widows after they assessed and got amazed by the one-year progress report.

Furthermore, as to the responses of participants financial coping also relied on cost minimization, living planned and economical life. This was a major financial coping strategy for all, Bethlehem's statements, *"growing up in the regions has thought me a lot. You see, there we have a poorer life, so we didn't have a fancy life like the city, so we know how to be economical and deal with challenge, hunger & loss"*. Additionally, Tenbit, Megnot and Ruth, financial coping mechanism was through engaging in a part time job at Safety net program.

Aside to their formal job and financial support from Zer Ethiopia, all three of them work at Safety net as street cleaners. They said it helps them cover household expenses and to pay for rent.

Summing up the discussions under this session, both internal and external, positive and negative copings have been used. To elaborate, internal coping mechanisms included both negative and positive coping strategies. Among this, internal strength/courage after loss, spirituality and hope built on their children's future is marked under positive internal coping mechanisms. While self-exclusion from social life was discussed as negative coping strategy which participants understood as positive. In relation to higher form of self-exclusion, one of the participants used migration as an option. From this, spirituality and self-exclusion are the widely used once.

Also, internal coping mechanisms have been used in the form of strength and courage as a result of being freed from domestic abuse; escape from unhappy marriage; feeling of relief from stress caused by husbands' sickness and high medical coast, while at the same time, cop using challenge as source of strength. External coping mechanisms were gained from, familial support; social encouragement; remarriage (used by only two respondents); sex work (negative mechanism used by only one participant); coast minimization, income maximization (supplementary & part time job) and from job opportunity and financial support given from Zer Ethiopia.

5. Critical needs of the participants

Problem that is caused by widowhood is different and it highly depended up on the status of the family. Participants were asked to comparatively state their critical needs between social support, economic support and any other. All of them agreed that economic needs are their top priorities. The most frequent claim was for housing, participants noted that the government must identify and consider their living situation; prioritize and enable them to own kebele and condominium houses through fair distribution. Especially three of the participants are almost living on the street. The research through observation witnessed the calamitous houses/ areas of living. Also, one of the key informants, of Zer Ethiopia on his statement noted,

“Among the critical areas of concern, housing is the major one. There are widows who live on the street, being threatened by gang rape, theft and animal attack among others. Being fearful of this most of them live in remote areas where there is no clean water, toiletries and electric supply.”

Also, Rahma, key informant from Zer Ethiopia added, *“They now have a better income, so they are a little relieved but, the houses they are living in are either costly or in unsafe areas”*. The targets in this regard argued, owning a house will give them different advantages such as; a kebele ID (which gives them the chance to gain access of the opportunities that come through the Woreda & kebele), saves them and their families from living on the street and its potential threats; help them own something they can inherit to their dependents, take loan, save the rent money, and even to do their own businesses at home such as; baking injera, selling coffee/ tea or to store items for sell. The key informants from Arada and Kirkos Sub city small scale business enterprise spoke extensively on this area; especially the first one reputedly discussed, *“the majority is in critical need of house. But we are doing what we can to select and give those who are in serious need to NGO’s like Zer Ethiopia”*. Holding similar view, the later spoke, *“It’s not only them but anyone who doesn’t have Kebele Id will not get chances of benefiting, so we always tell them to look for ways to get ID”*. Additionally, all participants sought having sources of income. This stood very crucial for them as they assume economic dependence a major source for stigma or any another problem they encountered after their widowhood. The key informant from Zer Ethiopia, Mr. Hilu on this regard observed,

“Initially, we found these widows through their children’s school and when we first asked them to prioritize and tell us what they need, they immediately suggested job opportunities, they never ask for financial support. They are very courageous and hard working. We witnessed that when they practically showed us their savings after they established small businesses with the money we gave them last year”.

Few participants informed that they need employment not only for economic reasons, but also for their emotional and psychological betterment; while some others sought economic empowerment through entrepreneurship and time efficient skill development. On this regard, the research has founded, except for one participant (with health related problem), none of them want to be financially supported; they either need a space for selling items or a seed money that can help them run their own

businesses. Remarkably, most of the participants have their own business ideas often claimed; they have the capability, the courage and the will to work if given a startup capital. An informant, Mrs. Rahma from Zer Ethiopia has on this regard admired the strength and courage the widows have,

“Although they are all in critical economic conditions, majority of them don’t want to get grouped to work in small scale business. They say they don’t like the kebele small scale women groups. Each of them brings their own reasons (especially time constraint) but, most of the time they have an individual plan. That’s why we divided them in to two and allowed them to choose from group/individual work”.

In addition to this, some of them suggested for the government to give them priorities to get permanent job opportunities, free health service and school feeding programs for their children. Several participants stated their demands for the government to investigate and differentiate those that are needy like them and give their supports accordingly. Especially one participant informed, its only after Zer Ethiopia gathered them, their woreda recognized their situation. Affirming this, Mr. Hailu from Zer Ethiopia strongly argued,

These mothers were overlooked; they haven’t had any one to support them. We used to school feed their children at school but once we saw their critical situation, we said what’s the point of helping children who see their mothers suffer every day and loose hope. They are in serious life-threatening situations; their situation must be prioritized as they are raising children which determine the fate of the future Ethiopia.

When asked about the above concern, Mr. Asmelash from Arada sub city argued,

“There are obviously gaps, we cannot always be certain about each individual that we prioritize but, as much as we can, we refer documents and try to check with neighbors. There are also times that we expelled those who doesn’t belong and added the once that are needy.”

Mr. Asheber from Kirkos Sub city then justified,

“Sometimes Kebele/Wereda¹⁴ will only recognize and prioritize those who actively participate, but this doesn’t mean that its biased. If this woman

¹⁴ The second administrative tier in local government in Ethiopia above the kebele. Wereda is composed of two or more kebeles.

doesn't own a Kebele ID, access to new information's and if they don't attend meetings, they will be left behind".

Generally, the above stated were dominant concerns and few also reported that they need social acceptance and emotional support. And all in all, few slightly mentioned emotional and social support from their children's school, neighbors and the government at large. Both key informants from Zer Ethiopia has also alerted that there are several widowed mothers with similar problems but haven't been included in the project because of lack of fund. Thus, they called for the attention of the government to provide support for NGO's working to alleviate such critical socio-economic problems.

Chapter five

Summary, Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Summary

The general objective of this study is to examine the socio-economic challenges of widowed mothers in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, taking the case of beneficiaries from Zer Ethiopia Foundation based on this, the study attempted to explore challenges through their lived experiences, investigated factor/s exacerbating such challenges, what helped them cope and what shall be done to bridge the identified gaps.

In response to the first research question, what are the social and economic challenges? Gender being an integral part of all social issues, it mainly caused & deepened participants challenges, thus, major social challenges included; social discrimination, stereotypes and derogatory comments towards the widow or her children and lack of social support. The economic challenges of the widows are; unavailability of inheritance or property such as housing or land, lack of basic needs such as food & clothing, limited opportunity and information to access economic resources, limited access to credit and loan, minimal time (to get better earnings & formal job), labor intensive, health risky & low paying jobs. Such reality added to illiteracy, lack marketable skill, large family size & poor health situation escalated economic challenges.

To answer the second question, the study initially examined the exacerbating factors to identify the roots and put them in to four categories, poverty; socialization of gender; HIV and cultural stereotypes along with derogating comments. Firstly, poverty on this study denoted a phenomenon referring to a sequence of economic deprivation and scarcity and, as an accelerating factor that made the widows and their dependents susceptible to variety of challenges such as, physical health risk (gender-based violence and HIV); social discrimination including stereotype and emotional abuse. Poverty in this case, was not only a result of lack of income but also an outcome of the deprivation of capabilities and gender biases presented on widows.

Thus, the analysis drew lack of inheritance, property and difficulty of obtaining opportunities to progress their lives as major exacerbating factors sinking participants in to an even deeper cyclic poverty.

Secondly, their lived experience depicted, gender tied in to assigned gender roles; social and self-expectations and practices worsened the widow's life situation. It in fact, resulted and intensified their, economic vulnerability and loss of social status. This according to the finding is a result of their economic deprivation and new identity as a single woman (widow). Thus, it became a major reason for self-exclusion; which they used to resist social stereotypes, but later escalated, economic vulnerability; emotional challenges/abuse through feelings of social loneliness and support lessens. It has also become pillar reason to foster violation of their human rights (the right to live free from violence & discrimination).

Thirdly, aside for being a reason, HIV was found exacerbating their socio-economic challenges. For some, it was an initial depriver by making them spend their savings for hospitals (when treating their husband), for others it is a reason for their loss, (the husband as well as his economic support). While for those who are infected, it became a reason for expenses related to medical treatment; bad health situation which later limited their economic productivity and increased stress, fear and loss of hope. It's also a major health threat and source of emotional challenge for those who were engaged on commercial sex work or exposed to rape & gender-based violence because of their poverty. Further, it is also a reason for social discrimination and stereotype.

Lastly, the study outlined cultural stereotypes, derogatory comments (remarks), indirect affront and negative comments as issues challenging participants solely because of their gender. In fact, it was influenced by their levels of social interaction and area of living. Such reality intensified violation of their rights and resulted them emotional abuse, both as a widow and as a widowed mother (when society attacks their children). The session noted the more the stereotype and verbal attack the higher the social loneliness and emotional devastation.

As demonstrated in the problem statement, there are limited studies on psychological aspect of widowhood. Thus, the study under its second objective attempted to understand the emotional challenges of participants and founded depression, stress, fear, loss of hope & feeling of loneliness as predominant widowhood emotional challenges. However, the analysis depicted, the fact that all the widows live under economic destitution made most of their grief about social and economic challenges than about the husbands' death.

Aside to this, emotional challenges or recovery were highly dependent and influenced by, social relations, familial support and time length of widowhood. The study also indicated lack of social/familial support subjected majority of them to mental & physical health problems, which accordingly heightened their economic vulnerability.

Understanding their coping mechanisms was the third objective of this study. Thus, the findings demonstrated internal and external resources and skills used to cope with their loss and subsequent (social, emotional & economic) challenges. Their strategies had both negative and positive implications in their lives. Yet, internal mechanisms included, spirituality (which the majority used); courage and strength by feeling being freed from past or gaining the strength to create economic betterment; and through hope built on children. External coping mechanisms were, familial and social (motivational) support; income maximization (supplementary and part time job) or cost minimization; remarriage and migration. Hence, the findings indicated external involvement adds greater energy for recovery or otherwise promotes frustration and contributes to holistic maladjustment to the widow.

Finally, with an aim to fill in gaps, the research has identified some of the critical needs of the widows. The risk factors identified in this study are the following; problem of housing, basic needs (such as food and clothing), lack of marketable skill or capital, lack of familial, social & emotional support and high risk of physical and mental health. Fortunately, all (except for one who is in bad health situation) have the capability, the plan and passion to improve their situation if given assistance and practical support.

As a result, the study asserted the closer links between the positions of poor widowed mothers in a society and the entire range of gendered relations that provide the context for hindering their economic empowerment, social, physical or emotional wellness. Inherently, the finding set forth such realities resulting bad health situation; risky life condition; emotional abuse; social discrimination and loneliness cyclically entangling the widow.

5.2 Conclusion

The outcomes associated with the death of a spouse range from change in the survivor's identity to physical health complications and emotional distress. Yet, womanhood is suddenly challenged in the absence of a man. Thus, assisting and enabling women to support themselves in the face of a marital ending necessitates understanding of subjective experience. In fact, widowhood may not always pass on sufferings, rather the strength and courage that comes along with challenges.

Providentially, promising efforts are being made by Zer Ethiopia Foundation specially to address the economic aspect of the challenges. Yet, a lot remains to be done to curb multidimensional and cyclic challenges. To this effect, this research got beneath the subjective experience and found a genuine objective nature of the phenomenon as realized by the widow; the process or reason why it happened, how they feel, or negotiate their status in their interaction with others as well as how they used their agencies to cope with it.

As such, the study depart in to a conclusion that the nexus between gender and poverty inherently exacerbate and result in double gender bias and inequalities; emotional abuse, violation of human rights and economic disempowerment. Thus, this reality left the widow to a host of social calamities and cyclic challenges that are beyond her economic struggle. In fact, the social situations are of great alarm, but the bottom line is they are not the sole reasons for the violation of her rights; rather it's also her economic vulnerability.

This indicates, the primary concern included not only financial independency but also dignity and respect it shall bring. And this sought an economic empowerment as it offers social and legal resource that largely translate as power, and where there is power; the widow gets control over her own life and largely the vicious circle of poverty and socio-cultural stigmatization get edged out. Although, one must not undermine the process of empowering the widow is not just giving opportunities and resources; rather it's also about deconstructing negative social attitudes constructed with in her and in communities. Over all, the lived experiences of the widows saw that the issue qualifies as women's human rights concern that threatens gender equality and her overall empowerment. Thus, strongly argues lasting change necessitates broader attention that could address systemic inequalities through concentrated effort and surly, this is not something a single charity organization alone tackles.

5.3 Recommendations

The findings of the study, pointed areas where there is a need to improve, thus the following are recommendations of the researcher. Initially, any initiative that attempts to address the issues of widows must be able to acknowledge the shared and subjective challenges of the widow, this includes her social encounters, emotions, finances or it could the relation she has with her children. Such efforts will also need to be complemented by education and awareness creation targeted at correcting stereotypical attitudes.

The finding set forth, critical condition of change is through creation economic opportunities for the widow as it is extremely hard for her to change or challenge the social boundaries of which she is a victim. Especially, lack of education, networks and skill is found a critical areas which necessitate change and reason for decline in the family economy and frustration (feeling of hopelessness) of widows. Accordingly, this study suggests for marketable skill development trainings that are considerate of her time poverty; health situation and level of literacy. To tackle the challenges of time poverty, one way could be creating a system that could help one widow to work while the other watches the children. This will definitely help them save time, and generate better income. Furthermore, encouragement of savings, the use of financial planning resources, and linking the system so that they gain access to loan and buying of a house is important. Also, for those who stated they are in negotiation to claim back their house, provision of legal protection is vital. Added together, this would help minimalize economic vulnerability.

On another note, the process of economic empowerment must go hand in hand with emotional support that includes professional advises and counseling services that could help widows use her agency to resist the gender biases or the emotional challenges in relation to their loss. One way could be through teaching them about parenting and how to play dual parenting role, or by presenting successful lived experiences of widowed mothers who are now in better living conditions. This would help them deconstruct the gender norms which limited their economic and emotional wellbeing. In fact, the guidance must not always come from an external party, but through experience sharing between widows.

Further, to fill in the loss in terms of social and emotional support or networks, which appear to increase the risk for adverse mental health outcomes; creating inviting environment (it could be a simple coffee ceremony) and helping them network and know each other, share experiences and support one another is highly suggested. In addition to this, since most widows are illiterate and unable to guide their children in their education; giving tutorial and assistance to their children would ease one aspect of their stress. In fact, the holistic support this study repeatedly urged includes support of their children either in their education or overall health and emotional aspect of their life.

For grass root level change, combined efforts of the government, other NGO's, media, feminist movements, religious and community leaders as well as researchers is required. Especially the government must first acknowledge the issue and thus, fill in information and practical gap for effective planning and change. A start up would be collaboratively working or supporting NGO's working on the area. Community and religious leaders must be able to create awareness about the negative effect of social stigma on widows and their children; advice to avoid mistreatment and discrimination; encourage good deeds, positive religious as well as social values. More or less these are the vital components of assisting the widows and will certainly play a central role in the process of enabling them to have greater control over their own lives, progress their children's future and largely their psychological betterment.

References

- Addie, E., & Brownlow, C. (2014). *Deficit and asset identity constructions of single women without children living in Australia: An analysis of discourse. Feminism & Psychology*, 24(4), 423-439. doi:10.1177/095935351453946.
- AFDB (2015). Empowering African Women: An Agenda for Action. Africa Gender Equality, Index.2015 available at: http://www.afdb.org/fileadmin/uploads/afdb/Documents/Publications./African_Gender_Equality_Index_2015-EN.pdf.
- Akshay, K. (2017). *Time poverty: The key to addressing gender disparity*. IDR, India's first independent media platform for the development community. November 29, 2017.
- Amber Peterman. (2012) *Widowhood and Asset Inheritance in Sub-Saharan Africa: Empirical Evidence from 15 Countries*. *Development Policy Review*, 30, 5, (543-571), (2012).
- Amoran O.E., Lawoyin T.O. (2005). *Risk factors associated with mental illness in Oyo State, Nigeria: A Community based study*, *Annals of General Psychiatry*. [Accessed 25 March 2008];2005 4(19).
- Amsalu, H. (2007). *Causes and consequences of early marriage among Selale Oromo women: The case study of Hindabu Abote and Kuyu Woredas, North Shewa Zone, Oromia national Relational State*. Unpublished MA Thesis In Gender Studies. Addis Ababa University.
- Appleton, Simon. (1996). "Women-Headed Households and Household Welfare: An Empirical De-construction for Uganda." *World Development* 24(12) 1811-1827.
- Armstrong, A., Beyani, C., Himonga, C. et al (1993). '*Uncovering reality: excavating women's rights in African family laws*, *International Journal of Law and the Family* 7, 314-69.
- Ayferam Gashaw. (2015). *Assessment of the Roles and Constraints of Women in Economic Development of Ethiopia: The Case of Ambo Town Since 1991*. *J Pol Sci Pub Aff* 3:148. doi: 10.4172/2332-0761.1000148.
- Barak, K. S. (2014). *Spinsters, old maids, and cat ladies: A case study in containment strategies*. Doctoral dissertation, Bowling Green State University.

- Bella M. DePaulo & Wendy L. Morris (2005) TARGET ARTICLE: Singles in Society and in Science, *Psychological Inquiry*, 16:2-3, 57-83, DOI:10.1080/1047840X.2005.9682918.
- Bem, L. (1993). *The Lenses of Gender: Transforming the Debate on Sexual Inequality*. New Haven and London. Yale University Press.
- Bennett, K. Laura K. Soulsby. (2012). *Well-being in bereavement and widowhood*. University of Liverpool, Baywood Publishing.
- Bennett, K. M., Gibbons, K., & Mackenzie-Smith, S. (2010). *Loss and restoration in later life: An examination of dual process model of coping with bereavement*. *OMEGA-Journal of Death & Dying*, 61, 315-332. Retrieved from <http://dx.doi.org/10.2190/9JPI-1FM1-37NX-2DEC>.
- Bennett, T., & Gaines, J. (2010). *Believing what you hear: The impact of aging stereotypes upon the old*. *Educational Gerontology*, 36(5), 435-445. doi:10.1080/03601270903212336
- Benson, M. E. (2013). *Effects of single-group membership valence and social identity threat on intragroup singlism*. Unpublished master's thesis. University of Kansas, Lawrence, KS.
- Benson, M. E. (2013). *Effects of single-group membership valence and social identity threat on intragroup singlism*. Unpublished master's thesis. University of Kansas, Lawrence, KS.
- Berger, P. & Lukman, T. (1966). *The social construction of reality: A treatise in the sociology of knowledge*. London: penguin books.
- Bernard, H.R. (2002). *Research Methods in Anthropology: Qualitative and quantitative methods*. 3rd edition. AltaMira Press, Walnut Creek, California.
- Blakemore, J. E. O., Lawton, C. A., & Vartanian, L. R. (2005). *I can't wait to get married: Gender differences in drive to marry*. *Sex Roles*, 53(5/6), 327-335. doi:10.1007/s11199-005-6756-1
- Bloom, B. L., Asher, S. J., & White, S. W. (1978). *Marital disruption as a stressor: A review and analysis*. *Psychological Bulletin*, 85, 867-894.
- Boelen, P. A., & Prigerson, H. G. (2007). *The influence of symptoms of prolonged grief disorder, depression, and anxiety on quality of life among bereaved adults*. *European Archives of Psychiatry and Clinical Neuroscience*, 257, 444-452.
- Bolick, K. (2011). *All the single ladies*. Atlantic, 116-136.

- Bonanno, G. A. (2004). *Loss, trauma and human resilience: Have we underestimated the human capacity to thrive after extremely aversive events?* *American Psychologist*, 59, 20-28.
- Bonanno, G. A., Wortman, C. B., Lehman, D. R., Tweed, R. G., Haring, M., Sonnega, J., et al. (2002). *Resilience to loss and chronic grief: A prospective study from pre loss to 18-months post loss.* *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 83,1150-1164.
- Bonanno,G.A.,&Kaltman,S.(1999).*Toward an integrative perspective on bereavement.* *Psychological Bulletin*, 125, 760–776.
- Bond, J. (2010). *Gender discourse and customary law in Africa.* *Southern California Law Review* 83, 510–70.
- Borwankar R., Diallo R., and Sommerfelt A.E. (2008). *Gender based Violence in sub-Saharan Africa: A review of Demographic and Health Survey findings and their use in National Planning.* Washington DC: USAID/AFR/SD and Africa's Health in 2010/AED.
- Boyden, J.; Pankhurst, A. and Tafere, Y. (2013). *Harmful Traditional Practices and Child Protection: Contested Understandings and Practices of Female Child Marriage and Circumcision in Ethiopia.* oxford: young Lives.
- Brayan, (2008). *Social research method.* Oxford university press, Newyork.
- Buckley, T., Bartrop, R., McKinley, S., Ward, C., Bramwell, M., Roche, D. Tofler, G. (2009). *Prospective study of early bereavement on psychological and behavioral cardiac risk factors.* *Internal Medicine Journal*, 39, 370-378. Retrieved from <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1445-5994.2008.01879.x>
- Butler, J. (1990). *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity.* New York and London: Routledge.
- Carey R. G., 1979. *Weathering widowhood: Problems and adjustment of the widowed during the first year.* *Omega* 10:163-174.
- Carr.D. 2001. *Psychological Adjustment to Sudden and Anticipated Spousal Loss among Older Widowed.* *Persons Journal of gero social sciences* 2001.Vol56B5237. P.P 112.
- Cawthorne, A. (2008). *The straight facts on women in poverty.* Retrieved from https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/women/reports/2008/10/08/5103/the-straight-facts-on-women-in-poverty/#_edn1

- Central Statistical Authority, (2003). *Report on Urban Informal Sector Sample Survey*, January 2003. Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.
- Centre on Housing Rights and Evictions (COHRE). (2002). *Violence: The Impact of Forced Evictions on Women in Palestine, India and Nigeria*, Geneva: COHRE.
- Chakravarti U. and Gill P. (2001). *Shadow Lives: Writings on Widowhood*. Spectrum Books.
- Chakravarti. (2013). *A larger than life picture*. Dignity Dialogue Magazine, November issue.
- Chant, Sylvia H. (2003). *Female Household Headship and the Feminization of Poverty: Facts, Fiction and Forward Strategies* [online]. London: LSE Research Online.
- Chant, Sylvia H. (2006). *Re-thinking the "Feminization of Poverty" in Relation to Aggregate Gender Indices*. *Journal of Human Development*, 7:2, 201-220
- Chen, Martha Alter. (2000). *Perpetual mourning: Widowhood in rural India*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- Chirwa, D. M. (2006). *Reclaiming Womanity: the merits and demerits of the African protocol on women's rights*, *Netherlands International Law Review* 53, 63–95.
- Collins, L. M. (2014). *What not to say: How to reach out to a young widow*. Deseret News. Retrieved from <http://national.deseretnews.com/article/1898/What-not-to-say-How-to-reach-out-to-a-young-widow.html>.
- Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women New York, 18 December 1979.
- Cook, R. J., Dickens, B. M. and Fathalla, M. F. (2003). *Reproductive Health and Human Rights: Integrating Medicine, Ethics, and Law*. Oxford University Press.
- Corbin, J., & Staruss, A. (1990). *Basics of qualitative research: grounded theory procedures and techniques*. Newbury park, CA: Sage.
- Creswell, J.W. (2013). *Chapter 5; five different qualitative studies*. In J.W.Cresswell (Aut). *Qualitative inquiry & research design; choosing among the five approaches* (3rd -ed., pp.111-128). Los Angeles, CA; Sage.

- Cronin, T. (2010). *Angst and expressed biases against single people: Responses to threats to the institution of marriage*. Doctoral dissertation, University of Kansas.
- Damte G. (2010). *Early marriage and parent's socio-economic status in peasant communities: The case of Gendwabalegev and Genvavasajl peasant association in Dembia Woreda of North Gondar, Amhara Region*. Unpublished MA Thesis in Gender Studies. Addis Ababa University.
- Deborah J. (1998). *Gender-Linked Derogatory Terms and Their Use by Women and Men*. *American Speech*, Vol. 73, No. 4 (Winter, 1998), pp. 399-420. Duke University Press.
- DePaulo, B. M., & Morris, W. L. (2006). *The unrecognized stereotyping and discrimination against singles*. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, (5), 251. doi: 10.1111/j.1467-8721.2006.00446.x.
- Diemer, M. A., & Ali, S. R. (2009). *Integrating social class into vocational psychology: Theory and practice implications*. *Journal of Career Assessment*, 17, 247-265. doi:10.1177/1069072708330462.
- Dominique van de Walle. (2013). *Lasting Welfare Effects of Widowhood in Mali*, *World Development*, 51, (1), (2013).
- Dominique van de Walle. (2016). *The shock of widowhood: Marital status and poverty in Africa*, published on Africa Can End Poverty, January 11, 2016.
- Donnelly, J. (2003). *Human Rights in Theory and Practice*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Dunn, C. Ryan. (2015). *Young Widows' Grief: A Descriptive Study of Personal and Contextual Factors Associated with Conjugal Loss*. Utah State University. All Graduate Theses and Dissertations. 4537.
- E. Durojaye. (2013). *'Woman, But Not Human': Widowhood Practices and Human Rights Violations in Nigeria*, *International Journal of Law, Policy and the Family*, 27, 2, (176), (2013).
- Eichener, A., & Robbins, G. (2015). *National snapshot: Poverty among women & families*, 2014. Retrieved from <https://nwlc.org/resources/national-snapshot-poverty-among-women-families-2014>.

- Fasoranti O.O., Aruna J.O. A. (2007). *Cross-Cultural Comparison of Practices Relating to Widowhood and Widow-Inheritance among the Igbo and Yoruba in Nigeria*. *Journal of World Anthropology: Occasional Papers*. 2007; III(1):53–73.
- Fields, J., & Casper, L. M. (2001). *America's families and living arrangements: March 2000 (Current Population Reports, P20–537)*. Washington, DC: U.S. Census Bureau.
- Finlay, L. (2009). *Debating Phenomenological Research. Phenomenology & Practice*. London.
- Fisher, H. (2013), The effect of marriage tax penalties and subsidies on marital status. *Fiscal Studies*, 34, 437–465. doi: 10.1111/j.1475-5890.2013.12015.x
- García M. Lori H. Christina P. and Cari J.C. (2005). *Prevalence of intimate partner violence: Findings from the WHO Multi-country Study on Women's Health and Domestic Violence*. *The Lancet* 368(9543):1260-9 · November 2006.
- Genzebe O. Darartu, Ejegayehu K. Tulu & Mengistu, H. (2016). *Department of Rural Development and Agricultural Extension, Institute of Cope African Journal of Gender and Women Studies* ISSN 2516-9831 Vol. 1 (1), pp. 001-015, January 2016.
- Giorgi, A. (2009). *The descriptive phenomenological method in psychology: A modified Husserlian approach*. Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press.
- The Global Gender Gap Report 2017.
- Giorgi, A. (2012). The descriptive phenomenological psychological method. *Journal of Phenomenological psychology*, 43(1), 3-12.
- Goldberg, G S & Kremen, E (1990). *The feminization of poverty: Only in America? Westport: Greenwood Press*.
- Gordon, D & Spicker, P. (1999). *The international glossary on poverty*. Cape Town: IPSR Books.
- Grbich, C. (2007). *Qualitative data analysis: An introduction*. London: Sage Publications Inc.
- Guiaux, M. (2010). *Social adjustment to widowhood: Changes in personal relationships and loneliness before and after partner loss*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation. VU University-Amsterdam, The Netherlands.

- Gulati, L. (1995). *Social security for widows: Experience in Kerala*. Economic and Political Weekly, 30(39), 2451–2453.
- Habtamu, W. Hirut, T. Yusuf A. & Konjit K. (2004). *Gender and Cross Culture Dynamics in Ethiopia: The case of Eleven Ethnic Groups*. CERTWID, Addis Ababa University.
- Haddad, L. (1991). *Gender and poverty in Ghana: A Descriptive Analysis of Selected Out Comes and Processes*. Institutes of Development Studies.
- Hardy, S. E., Concato, J., & Gill, T. M. (2004). *Resilience of community-dwelling older persons*. Journal of the American Geriatrics Society, 52, 257-266. Retrieved from <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1532-5415.2004.52065.x>.
- Heimtun, B., & Abelsen, B. (2014). Singles and solo travel: Gender and type of holiday. *Tourism Culture & Communication*, 13(3), 161-174.
- Heise, L., M. Ellsberg, and M. Gottemoeller. (1999). *Ending Violence Against Women*. *Population Reports*, Series L, No. 11. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University School of public Health, Population Information Program.
- Holmes IV, O., Whitman, M. V., Campbell, K. S., & Johnson, D. E. (2016). *Exploring the social identity threat response framework*. *Equality, Diversity & Inclusion*, 35(3), 205-220. doi:10.1108/EDI-08-2015-0068.
- Holmes, T., & Rahe, R. (1967). *The social readjustment scale*. *Journal of Psychosomatic Research*, 11, 213–218.
- Hoonard, D. (2001). *The Widowed Self: The Older Woman's Journey Through Widowhood*. Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press.
- International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF). (2008). *From choice, a World of Possibilities: Sexual Rights on IPPF Declaration*. IPPF 4 New shams. Row London SE1 372 United Kingdom. Retrieved from: <http://www.ippf.org>.
- Jetten, J., Iyer, A., Branscombe, N. R., & Zhang, A. (2013). *How the disadvantaged appraise group-based exclusion: The path from legitimacy to illegitimacy*. *European Review of Social Psychology*, 24(1), 194-224.
- Jordan, A. H., & Zitek, E. M. (2012). *Marital status bias in perceptions of employees*. *Basic and Applied Social Psychology*, 34(5), 474-481. doi:10.1080/01973533.2012.711687.

- Jyoti Niswade. (2015). *Social Neglect and Oppression of Widows in Rural India: Need for Social, Economic and Policy Implications*, in Eunice Rodriguez, Research in Political Sociology, Volume 23) Emerald Group Publishing Limited, pp.113 – 131.
- Korb, B. R. (2010). *Financial planners: Educating widows in personal financial planning*. Journal of Financial Counseling & Planning, 21(2), 3-15.
- Kreuger, W. L. & Neuman, L.W. (2006). *Social Work Research Methods, Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*. Pearson Education, Inc.
- Lahad, K. (2013). *Am I asking for too much? The selective single woman as a new social problem*. Women's Studies International Forum, 40, 23-32.
- Lambert, Sylvie, Martin Ravallion, and Dominique van de Walle. (2014). *Intergenerational Mobility and Interpersonal Inequality in an African Economy*. Journal of Development Economics 110: 327–344.
- Langdrige, D. (2007). *Phenomenological psychology: Theory, research and methods*. London: Pearson.
- Lee, H., & Turney, K. (2012). *Investigating the relationship between perceived discrimination, social status, and mental health*. Society and Mental Health, 2(1), 1-20.
- Lindsey, Linda L. (2015). *Gender roles: a sociological perspective*. Linda L. Lindsey, Washington University in St. Louis.
- Lisa L. Hancock, (2017). *How Women Experience and Respond to Singlism: Stereotyping and Discrimination of Singles*. Walden University, August 2017.
- Lopata, H. (1973). *Widowhood in an America city*. Cambridge, Massachusetts:chenkman publishing Company.
- Lopata, H. Z. (1979). *Women as widows*. New York: Elsevier.
- Lorber, Judith & Farrell, Susan A. (1991). *The social construction of gender / Judith Barber (ed), Susan A. Farrell (ed)*. London; Sage publications.
- M. Radzilani-Makatu. (2017). *Construction of Socio-culturally Situated Identities and Relationships within the Context of Widowhood and Bereavement Rituals*. Psychology Department. University of Venda, South Africa.
- Mark A. Lutz, (2009). "Social economics," in Jan Peil and Irene van Staveren, ed., *Handbook of Economics and Ethics*, p. 516.

- McCracken G (1988) *the Long Interview*, Qualitative Research Methods Series 13, Sage Publications.
- Meera, Khanna. (2016). Widows Rights & Violence Against Older Women- Analysis. Panel – UN Human Rights Council 32. July 12, 2016.
- Meron, k. (2017). *Psycho-Social impacts of traditional marriage on women in Wolaita, kindo Didaye Woreda*. Unpublished MA Thesis in Social work. Addis Ababa University.
- Michael J. Carter. (2014). *Gender Socialization and Identity Theory*. California State University, May 2014.
- Moi, Toril. (1985). *Sexual/Textual Politics: A Feminist Literary Theory*. London: Routledge. 1985. Print. Stoller, Robert J. *Sex and Gender*. New York: Science House. 1968. Print.
- Moore, J. A., & Radtke, H. L. (2015). *Starting “real” life: Women negotiating a successful midlife single identity*. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 39(3), 305-319.
- Moos, R. H., & Schaefer, J. A. (1984). *The crisis of physical illness. Coping with physical illness (pp. 3-25)*. New York, NY: Springer. Retrieved from http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4684-4772-9_1
- Morse, J. M. (1991). *Approaches to qualitative-quantitative methodological triangulation*. *Nursing Research*, 40(1), 120–123.
- Moustakas, C. (1994). *Phenomenological research methods*. London, Sage.
- Mukasa, R. (2008). *The African Women’s Protocol: A New Dimension for Women’s Rights in Africa*. South Africa: Fanele.
- Mulumbet, Z. (2002). *Analysis of Household Poverty from a Gender Perspective: A Study Based on Two Kebeles in Addis Ababa*. A paper presented on a forum prepared by Forum for Social Studies, Addis Ababa.
- Narayan, D, Chambers. R, Shaa. M, Petesch, P. (2000). *Voices of The Poor: Crying Out for Change*. Oxford University Press.
- National action plan for gender equality (NAP-GE) Ministry of women’s affairs (MOWA).
- Nelson, G. (1982). *Coping with the loss of father: Family reaction to death or divorce*. *Journal of Family Issues*, 3, 41-60.

- Nicola J. Gupta. and Bekele T. (2015). *Evaluation of Norway's support to women's rights and gender equality in development cooperation Ethiopia case study report*. Swedish Institute for public Administration in cooperation with Overseas Development Institute and the Chr. Michelsen Institute (CMI).
- Owen, M. (1999). *The Status of Widows in 10 Countries: Seclusion and Exclusion*. London, Empowering Widows in Development.
- Owen, M. (2000). *Human rights concern of widows*, Women an International Human Rights Law, vol. 4, 1998-2000.
- Oxford dictionaries. (2017). *Oxford living dictionaries*. Oxford University Press.
<https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/umrah>.
- Oyeniya, A. and Ayodeji, I. (2010). 'Widowhood practices among the Yoruba's of south west Nigeria: are there differences in what women experience due to their status?', *Gender and Behavior* 8, 3152–67.
- Pandey, Parbati D. (2006). *Gender Discrimination in Tharu community of Patihini VDC, Chitwan, Nepal*. Tribhuvan University, Kathmandu.
- Parkes, C. M. (2013). *Love and loss: The roots of grief and its complications*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Parkes, C. M., & Prigerson, H. G. (2013). *Bereavement: Studies of grief in adult life*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Pascoe, E. A., & Smart Richman, L. (2009). *Perceived discrimination and health: A meta-analytic review*. *Psychological Bulletin*, 135(4), 531. doi:10.1037/a0016059
- Piatkowski, S. L. (2012). *An exploration of self-concept and life satisfaction of single women*. Master's thesis, Eastern Michigan University.
- Pignotti, M., & Abell, N. (2009). *The negative stereotyping of single persons scale initial psychometric development*. *Research on Social Work Practice*, 19(5), 639-652. doi:10.1177/1049731508329402.
- Potash, B. (ed.) (1986) *Widows in African Societies: Choices and Constraints*. California, Stanford University Press.
- Punkhurst, H. (1992). *Gender, development and identity: an Ethiopian study*. London; Zed Books.

- Ramaprasad, R. (2009). *Female-Headed Households and Poverty: Evidence from the National Family Health Survey*. August, 2009.
- Reynolds, J., & Taylor, S. (2004). *Narrating singleness: Life stories and deficit identities*. *Narrative Inquiry*, 15(2), 197-215.
- Richardson, V. E. (2007). *A dual process model of grief counseling: Findings from the Changing Lives of Older Couples (CLOC) study*. *Journal of Gerontological Social Work*, 48(3/4), 311-329.
- Samuel, G. C. E. (2011). 'Emergent issues on widowhood practices in Igbo culture: between the video screen and reality', *Unizik Journal of Arts and Humanities (UJAH 8, 184–93*.
- Scannell D. E., (2003). *Women's adjustment to widowhood. Theory, research, and interventions*, *J Psychosoc Nurs Ment Health Serv*, 41 (5), p28-36
- Schuster T. L., Butler E. W. (1989). "Bereavement, Social Networks, Social Support, and Mental Health." In: Lund Dale A., editor. *Older Bereaved Spouses: Research with Practical Applications*. New York: Hemisphere; 1989. pp. 55–68.
- Sen, Amartya (1990). *Gender and cooperative conflicts, in I. Tinker (ed), Persistent inequalities: women and world development*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Sen, Amartya. (1999). *Development as freedom*. New York: Anchor Books.
- Sevak, P., Weir, D. R., & Willis, R. J. (2003). *Perspectives: The economic consequence of a husband's death: Evidence from the HRS and AHEAD*. *Social Security Bulletin*, 65(3), 2004.
- Shachar, R., Leshem, T., Nasim, R., Rosenberg, J., Schmidt, A., & Schmuely, V. (2013). *Exploring discourses that affect therapists regarding single women*. *Journal of Feminist Family Therapy*, 25(4), 257-280. doi:10.1080/08952833.2013.777887.
- Sharkey, P. (2001). *Hermeneutic phenomenology*. In R. Barnacle (Ed.), *Phenomenology* (pp. 16–37). Melbourne: RMIT Publications.
- Sharp, E. A., & Ganong, L. (2011). "I'm a loser, I'm not married, let's just all look at me": *Ever-single women's perceptions of their social environment*. *Journal of Family Issues*, 32(7), 956-980. doi: 10.1177/0192513X10392537.

- Sivard, R.L., A.Brauer, and R.Cook. (1995). *Women, a World Survey*. Washington, DC: World Priorities.
- Smith, M. K., Willmott, L., Trowse, P., & White, B. (2013). *Back to the future: Prohibiting surrogacy for singles, same-sex and shorter-term heterosexual couples in Queensland*. *Journal of Law and Medicine*, 20(3), 638-654.
- Sossou M. A (2002). "Widowhood Practices in West Africa: The Silent Victims" *International Journal of Social Welfare*. Vol. 11, Issue 3. Ps 201-209.
- Spielmann, S.S., MacDonald, G., Maxwell, J.A., Joel, S., Peragine, D., Muise, A., & Impett, E. A. (2013). *Settling for less out of fear of being single*. *Journal of Personality & Social Psychology*, 105(6), 1049-1073. doi:10.1037/a0034628
- Ssenyonjo, M. (2007). *Culture and human rights of women in Africa: between light and shadow* *Journal of African Law* 51, 39–67.
- Stroebe, M., & Schut, H. (2010). *The dual process model of coping with bereavement: A decade on*. *OMEGA--Journal of Death & Dying*, 61, 273-289. Retrieved from <http://dx.doi.org/10.2190/OM.61.4.b>
- Tamale, S. (2004). *Gender trauma in Africa: enhancing women's links to resources*. *Journal of African Law* 48, 50–61.
- The Global Widows Report (2015). A Global Overview of Deprivation Faced by Widows and Their Children, March 2015.
- Theodros A. (2014). *Exploring the resilience of widows who lost their partners to HIV, case study of 6 widows in suki neighborhood in Addis Ababa*. Unpublished MA Thesis in Social work. Addis Ababa University.
- Tracy, N. (2012, July 24). *Emotional Abuse: Definitions, Signs, Symptoms, Examples, Healthy Place*. Retrieved on 2019, June 16 from, <https://www.healthyplace.com/abuse/emotional-psychological-abuse/emotional-abuse-definitions-signs-symptoms-examples>.
- Trivedi J.K., Sareen H., Dhyani M., (2009). *Psychological Aspects of Widowhood and Divorce*. In: *Some Issues in Women's Studies, and Other Essays* (A.R. Singh and S.A. Singh eds.), MSM, 7, Jan - Dec 2009, p37-49.
- Umberson D., Wortman C. B., Kessler R. C. (1992). *Widowhood and Depression: Explaining Long-Term Gender Differences in Vulnerability*. *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*. 1992; 33:10–24.

- UN Division for the Advancement of Women. (2000). *Widowhood: invisible women, secluded or excluded*. Published to promote the goals of the Beijing Declaration and the platform for Action. United Nations Division for the Advancement of women. Department of Economic and Social Affairs. December 2001.
- United Nations (2011). *Widowhood: invisible women, secluded or excluded*. United Nations publication.
- United Nations Development Programme (2001). Human Development Report 2001, 290 pp. New York: UNDP.
- United Nations Women. (2012). *From Exclusion to Empowerment: A Baseline Assessment of the UN women's programme for Empowerment of Widows and their Coalitions*. United Nations publication.
- Valiquette-Tessier, S., Vandette, M., & Gosselin, J. (2016). *Is family structure a cue for stereotyping? A systematic review of stereotypes and parenthood*. Journal of Family Studies, 22(2), 162-181. doi:10.1080/13229400.2015.1049955.
- Watts, C. and C. Zimmerman (2002). *Violence against women: Global scope and magnitude*. The Lancet, 359: 1232-37.
- Webb, N. (2003). *Social Work Practice with Children*. New York, NY: Guilford Publications, Inc.
- WEF. (2016). *The Global Gender Gap Report*. Genève: World Economic Forum.
- Welfare of Children in Urban Brazil”, Economic Development and Cultural Change. Vol.45 (2), 231-57.
- West, C. and Zimmerman, D. (1987). *Doing gender*. *Gender and Society*, 1:125–151.
- Wilcox, S., Evenson, K. R., Aragaki, A., Wassertheil-Smoller, S., Mouton, C. P., & Loevinger, B. L.(2003). *The effects of widowhood on physical and mental health, health behaviors, and health outcomes: The women's health initiative*. Health Psychology, 22, 513-522.
- Williams, S. (2004). ‘Nigeria, its women and international law: beyond rhetoric’, Human Rights Law Review 4, 229–55.
- Wilson, H., & Hutchinson, S. (1991). *Triangulation of qualitative methods: Heideggerian hermeneutics and grounded theory*. Qualitative Health Research, 1, 263-276.

- Women (2000). *Widowhood: invisible women secluded or excluded*. To promote the goals of the Beijing declaration and platform for action, December 2001.
- Women's UN Report Network (2016). *World widows report, Discrimination and Oppression of African Widows*, July 12, 2016.
- World Bank. (2014). *World Development Indicators (WDIs) 2014*. Washington, D. C: The World Bank.
- World Bank. (2018). *Invisible and Excluded: The Fate of Widows and Divorcees in Africa, Divorce, Widowhood, and Women's Welfare in Africa*. Washington, D. C World Bank.
- Wortman C. B., Kessler R. C., Umberson D., (1992). *Widowhood and depression: Explaining long-term gender differences in vulnerability*. *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* 33:10-24.
- Wortman, C. B., & Silver, R. C. (2001). *The myths of coping with loss revisited*. *Handbook of bereavement research: Consequences, coping, and care* (pp. 405–430). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.
- WUNRN. (2016). *Widowhood: A systemic violation of human rights and an economic, social and humanitarian crisis parallel event: commission on the status of women 60th and 61st session 2016*.
- Zewdu M (2002). *Sustainable Development in Ethiopia. Report of Assessment of Activities and Issues Relevant to the Review Process of the Earth Summit 2002 in Ethiopia*. Addis Ababa: Institute of Biodiversity Conservation and Research.
- Zwart, P.L. (2018). *Empirical evidence for definitions of episode, remission, recovery, relapse and recurrence in depression: a systematic review*. *Epidemiology and Psychiatric Sciences*.

Annex I

**Addis Ababa University
College of Developmental Studies
Center for Gender Studies**

Request for participation in research project

“Socio-economic challenges of widowed mothers, the case of beneficiaries from Zer Ethiopia foundation” is a qualitative research that aims to involve widowed mothers that are living in Addis Ababa Ethiopia. You are invited to take part in this research project which is part of my master’s thesis. The study aims to understand the situation of widowed mothers in Addis Ababa, to explore their challenges in relation to the economic, social, cultural and emotional aspects of their life as well as their coping mechanism as mothers or as widow, and finally to identify practical implications for further interventions.

What does participation in this research imply?

Participation in the research requires minimum of one and half or two hours for interview. Questions will concern your everyday life in the community that you are living in. Participants will not be asked to share personal stories or anything that might make them uncomfortable. The interviews will be taped (with your willingness) as well as guiding notes will be taken; but no one will be identified by name.

What will happen to the information taken?

All personal data will be treated confidentially. Personal information from all the interviews will be stored separately from notes and recordings/ transcription of the interview. No one including the researcher and the advisor will have access to your personal data or will be able to know who you are. That means no one will recognize you from the data collected in the written thesis. The study is scheduled for completion on March 25, 2019. At that point in time, all personal data and recordings will be anonymized.

Voluntary Participation

It is voluntary to participate in the project, and you can at any time choose to withdraw your consent without stating any reason. If you decide to withdraw, all your personal data will be removed from the data set. The study proposal is presented to Addis Ababa University, Center for Gender studies and got an approval to conduct the field study. Should you have further questions about the research, please contact;

Student researcher; Tyobestya Shalemariam, or Addis Ababa University Center for Gender studies

Phone number:

Consent form

I have received and understood information about the research “Socio-economic challenges of widowed mothers, the case of beneficiaries from Zer Ethiopia Foundation” and have been given the opportunity to ask questions. I give my consent to;

- Participate in a semi-structured-in-depth interview
- For my personal data to be recorded and processed in the study.

I also give my consent for my personal data to be processed until the end date of the study.

Date; -----

Signature; -----

Annex II

Interview guide for in-depth interview

Introduction

First, I would like to thank you for your commitment to get involved in this study, which will be used for the partial fulfillment master's degree in Gender studies. The general objective of the study is to have a better understanding of the socio-economic challenges of widowed mothers. The data collected from this interview is purely for academic purpose and will be kept only in the hands of the researcher as described on the consent form. Therefore, I kindly request you to be open and genuine while responding to the questions as it has a big contribution for the attainment of the goal of the research. This interview will take about one and half or two hours. I would like to thank you again for your cooperation.

Part One: Background Information

Part Two; I, Personal

- 1.1. How has your husband died?
 - 1.2. What was your greatest fear or challenge after your husband's death?
 - 1.3. How would you describe yourself before and after his death? Probe: what was your children's reaction, your reaction in different aspect?
 - 1.4. How do people see you now that you are a widow? Probe: when have you felt that?
 - 1.5. How would you describe your relationship with others? his siblings, your friends, relatives, and community or interest-based associations that are related to you (after death of the spouse)
 - 1.6. How is your and your children's physical or mental health?
 - 1.7. What do you think is the most challenging part of being a widow?
Probe: what are the areas of your struggle?
 - 1.8. Tell me about your role before and after the death of your spouse?
 - 1.9. How do you deal with the household expenditures? Do you have constant income?
- II, Social** 2.1. Are you a member/participant of formal or informal community structure? (Such as, mahiber, women's association (microfinance), religious group or any form of association?)

2.2. Tell me about your experience and the kinds of support you founded from your networks that helped you in your process of adjustment? Probe: help the respondent by reminding the potential social support from Idir, Mahber, extended family, their children, friends or any other. **Guide**; example of community may include but not limited to the following: children's school, neighborhood, place of employment, spiritual, community etc.

2.3. What was your children's reaction, and how would you describe the relationship you have with your them?

2.4. Over the years, how are you treated in the community?

2.5. Is there any different reaction from the community towards you or anyone else who is widowed like you to lend help or participate you in the social sphere? If there is how did that affect your feeling/ motivation?

III, Coping

3.1. What helped you move forward? Or How do you cope with internal or external pressure?

3.2. What alternatives do you use to overcome financial or emotional or challenges?

3.3. Who would you consult in time of need?

3.4. Tell me about your religious practices, if any?

3.5. What have you planned to your future?

IV, General support

4. How would you describe the support / challenge you came across from your Kebele/Wereda?

4.1. Have you ever received support from government institutes may be because of your economic, health or social status?

4.2. What benefits have you got from Zer Ethiopia? How the program did helped you plan, develop, and/or start your current work/your business?

4.2. What is the support system that you aspire for? What additional help/assistance would enhance your adjustment process: is there any recommendation or suggestion you have on the matter of meaning full support from the government, family, organization or community?

► **Exit question**, do you have anything to add on your experience or any other thing you felt like you haven't sufficiently discussed

Thank you!!

Annex III

Questions for Key informants;

Part One: Background information

1. Sex:
2. Name of organization:
3. Position in the organization:
4. Educational background:

Part Two:

- 1, As per your information what are the basic challenges of the widowed mothers?
- 2, What are their social challenges?
- 3, What are their economic related challenges?
- 4, How did you made sure they don't have any support before Zer Ethiopia?
- 5, What do you think would help them to encounter their challenges?
- 6, What are you doing to help them?
- 7, What do you think is the long-term consequence of their challenges?
- 8, How do we brig lasting change to the problem?

Thank you!!!