

Widows' and Coping Mechanisms in the South-South Geopolitical Zone of Nigeria: A Cultural Perspective

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ABSTRACT: The cultural obstacles faced by widows and widowers in the South-South Geo-Political Zone of Nigeria, as well as their coping techniques, are the focus of this research. Two hypotheses and a set of research questions served as the framework for this investigation. The research strategy used in the study was a survey. This research focused on six states in Nigeria's South-South geopolitical zone. Based on data from the registrar, ASUU, the study's sample consists of 441 widows and widowers enrolled at Federal Universities in the South-South Geopolitical Zone of Nigeria. For this data set, two separate tools were used. The FGDEFAWW and the "Widows and Widowers Coping Strategies for Family and cultural Challenges" (WWCSFCC) survey. The dependability of the instruments was determined using the Cronbach Alpha Coefficient. The study issues were addressed using bar charts, means, and standard deviations. The null hypotheses were tested at a significance level of 0.05 using independent t-tests, simple. The study issues were addressed using bar charts, means, and standard deviations. The null hypotheses were tested using independent t-tests at a significance threshold of 0.05. While the study found no statistically significant difference between the cultural challenges experienced by widows and widowers in Nigeria's South-South geopolitical zone, it did find that the two groups might use different coping mechanisms. It was suggested that people should be more aware of the difficulties faced by widows and widowers so that they may better understand these issues and find ways to assist those who have lost a loved one via widowhood.

KEYWORDS: Cultural, challenges, Coping, Strategies, Widows, Widowers

INTRODUCTION

The needs of widows and widowers in dealing with cultural and familial obstacles were the primary focus of this research. When death strikes unexpectedly, it robs many individuals of their husbands, children, and other loved ones. Some of life's most trying experiences include losing a partner to death (Spahni, Bennett, Perrig-Chiello & Pasqualina, 2016). A person is considered a widow when they have suffered the tragic loss of a loved one to death (Stroebe, Schut & Stroebe, 2007). After a spouse dies, you are considered a spousal widow. Either a sudden or expected death might occur. One of the most tragic, harrowing, and transformative experiences a person can go through is losing a spouse (Clark and Georgellis, 2013). One

becomes a widow or widower due to this situation. So, when a husband dies, a woman's position changes drastically, and she is left vulnerable to the decisions made by her husband's relatives and extended family about her and the assets left behind by the deceased, regardless of her own or her children's well-being. While not universal, almost every culture has some kind of widowhood ritual that only serves to worsen the situation for widows. Although it is more prevalent in rural regions, many metropolitan women in Nigerian society are nevertheless subject to the practice, which is typical for city dwellers who choose to be laid to rest in the countryside ("hometown burial"). In most cases, the widow is expected to endure a great degree of suffering in order to establish her

innocence, since she is often held responsible for her husband's death. The water used to wash the body is sometimes forced into her mouth. "Widows are sometimes expected to do things like sleep on the floor, not wash their hair, and wear soiled rags as clothing for the duration of their mourning" Regardless of whether they are accused of murdering their spouse or not, widowers still face discrimination. Widowers may struggle with psychological maladjustment due to a number of factors, such as a lack of social support, difficulty adjusting to changes in their surroundings, anxiety about taking on more domestic duties, strong emotional links to their deceased spouse, and societal expectations and pressures. (Ogu et al., 2020; Ong, 2010) Unfortunately, this issue has far-reaching consequences, since the majority of widows and widowers experience symptoms of despair, anxiety, bereavement, increased hospitalization rates, low self-esteem, and irritability.

Couples who are not married have less good feelings, more loneliness, lower life satisfaction, worse health, and greater stress levels than those who are married. They also lack confidence in those around them. Indicators of health tend to fall once a partner dies (Bennett & Soulsby, 2012). Ogu, Obi, and Isidiho (2020) list other symptoms as follows: depression, rage, lack of interest in previously enjoyed activities, excessive thinking about the deceased, weight loss, functional impairment, and feelings of helplessness and longing. Those who have lost a spouse in the South-South geographical zone of Nigeria often appear very distressed. It is not uncommon to see them spending time alone with a photo of their spouse, gazing at it as if it were a living being, and speaking to it as if it were a person. They often express their feelings of grief and loss by recalling happy times spent together, which brings back painful memories. Some widows take it upon themselves to seek out financial assistance in order to meet their obligations, such as providing for their children's food and education, after their family members have seized their assets. Most of them would have to deal with the prospect of their children dropping out of school due to financial difficulties if their spouses were the main earners in the family. This study therefore centered on demographic characteristics of widows and widowers in South-South geo political zone in Nigeria.

THE CONCEPT OF CULTURAL CHALLENGES

Almost every Nigerian ethnic group observes widowhood rituals, although the Yoruba, Igbo, and Hausa are very strict about it. From the beginning of time, widowhood has been a part of society and passed on through the generations. Because of cultural differences in how widows and widowers deal with the loss of a spouse, the widowhood problem seems to have gender implications, especially in Nigeria. Widows endure a

great deal of physical pain, deprivation, ritual contaminations, emotional instability, socioeconomic trauma, and psychological distress; as a result, traditional practices disproportionately impact them (Olanisebe, 2015). The announcement of a husband's death marks the beginning of a widow's suffering in Nigeria, especially in the southwest region. After her husband's death, her in-laws would demand a list of his assets and bank accounts, and she will be made to undergo a number of rituals and ceremonies meant to ease her grief (Okoronkwo, 2015). The widow will be subjected to a series of ceremonies that include degrading treatment and torture. As a result of her loss, a widow is expected to feel terrible, downtrodden, and guilty (Oloko, 2001). To keep her infectious disease from spreading to other women, she is regarded as a bad luck goat. The author also said that widowhood is linked to taboos and customs in many regions of the nation, which are demeaning and cruel. Olanisebe (2015) and Sossou (2002) state that for the first week, the victim is required to remain in a room where others may see her, wear all black or dark clothing, and, in the majority of instances, have her hair cut. Depending on one's culture, religion, and family's stance on the subject, the appropriate period of grieving can begin with a three-month period of wearing black clothing and finish with a yearlong period of mourning proper. He claims that the kind of relationship between a widow and her in-laws determines whether or not she is granted a mattress to sit on during her seven days of confinement, during which she is not allowed to leave her house, bathe, or change her clothes. Instead, she is expected to sit on the bare floor or a mat, at most. Without a doubt, being a widow has not been easy, but it is an inevitable part of life when a spouse dies. For context, Fasonranti and Aruma (2007) said that certain Yoruba communities demand widows to use broken dishes and pots for food and cooking for the first six days after her husband's death, and then to cut their hair as a symbolic act of breaking the connection to her late spouse on the seventh day. Keeping vigils is also required of her, and she makes a very sad appearance by weeping and grieving a lot. People worry that she could go insane or lose her entitlement to benefits if she doesn't grieve. Next, she enters the customary grieving period, which may last three or four months, or 120 days, during which she is expected to behave immaculately so that her husband's spirit might swiftly join the society of his ancestors' spirits. After three or four months, the widow will undergo the "outing" rituals, which include being led to the market, changing into new clothes, and being washed in the night after the final wailing. These are all believed to bring the deceased's spirit to final rest. The widow also participates in the excursion rituals

by attending a lavish celebration called "ijade-opo" to celebrate the occasion. A widow would have to devote her remaining resources to carrying out the rituals of the funeral. The widow subsequently assumes the role of provider and begins to provide for her family. The children of a spouse who dies have an equal claim to his estate. However, in a polygamous household, the property is divided up according to the number of wives he had. But if he did leave a will, his possessions will be distributed as he specified.

- **The concept of coping strategies**

Coping is the process of attempting to alleviate the unpleasant emotions and/or physical stress that arise as a result of adversity. Keeping a good self-image and emotional stability while learning to cope with unpleasant circumstances is also part of this process (Cleveland, 2020). Individuals' physical and mental health depend on their capacity to cope, which is defined as "the process of using behavioral and cognitive approach to manage difficult or threatening situations" (Davis & Newell, 2022). When a spouse dies, the survivor must go through a difficult life transition, mourn not just the loss of the loved one but also the ways in which their own life has altered, and finally, build a new life that is worthy of passionate reinvestment (Neimeyer, 2005). According to Neimeyer (2005), "the fabric of one life thoroughly and perhaps surprisingly interwoven with the strands of another can be disrupted by the loss of a long-term partner," even in seemingly independent lives. A coping strategy is an approach that an individual takes in order to manage stress; it is a course of action that aims to alleviate or resolve a difficult situation (Karlsen, 2015). An individual's coping mechanisms are their ever-evolving mental and behavioral attempts to deal with the stresses in their environment, whether those stresses are seen as overwhelming or exhausting on their resources (Standridge, 2019). There is no silver bullet for dealing with stress; rather, there are a variety of tactics, some of

which work better than others. Resilience, fostered by effective coping mechanisms, protects older women against emotional and mental discomfort. The frequency with which the coping mechanism facilitates the experience of positive emotions is indicative of its efficacy (Standridge, 2019). If, for instance, a family reunion makes everyone feel hopeful and happy, it may be a good coping mechanism; but, if it makes everyone feel anxious or angry, maybe they should try something else. A coping strategy is defined by Sharma (2015) as an approach to managing and resolving challenging situations. In addition, the author distinguished between problem-focused and emotional-focused coping mechanisms. Ability to think and change the external event or circumstance is more important in problem coping strategies. Utilizing problem-solving abilities, resolving interpersonal conflicts, seeking guidance, managing time effectively, making goals, and acquiring knowledge about the cause of the obstacle are all examples of this method at the teaching level. To solve a problem, one must consider all possible solutions, weigh the benefits and drawbacks of each, and then choose the one that seems to be the most helpful in facing the problem head-on. In contrast, an emotion-focused coping technique focuses on changing one's own mental processes in response to stress. Action level examples include reaching out for social support, exercising, relaxing, taking medication, engaging in religious ritual, and using alcohol and drugs; thought process level examples include denying the situation's existence and making social comparisons; and avoiding the situation altogether (Sharma, 2015).

Some typical coping mechanisms included accepting the issue as it is, avoiding or avoiding confrontation, rejecting the

difficulty, mentally disengaging, problem solving, seeking social support, managing emotions, turning to religion, or being proactive (Blum and Silver, 2012). According to Sharma (2015), a person's coping mechanisms that work in one context could backfire or even hurt them in another. When faced with danger, damage, or loss, people react in many ways, and many of these responses are labelled as coping mechanisms (Carve & Connor-Smith, 2010). More specifically, coping mechanisms may help or impede the process of adapting to stressful situations, whether they be mental or physical (Karlsen, 2015). According to Aldwin (2007), our mental and physical well-being are greatly impacted by our ability to deal with stress and difficulties, rather than these factors alone determining the success or failure of our adaptation efforts. Hvana and Richard (2014) and Rafieei (2017) both argue that individuals should make an effort to build and sustain social networks that are both robust and helpful. This is because these networks have the potential to alleviate some of the most challenging life circumstances that people may encounter. When faced with adversity, a person's coping mechanism is their innate psychological propensity to manage the circumstance and adapt to the probable consequences (Saphni, 2015). What Sharma (2017) calls "it is the psychological processes through which people manage or cope with the demands and challenges of everyday life" really boils down to that. This provides further evidence that coping is an ongoing process that places an emphasis on an individual's adaptability to new situations (Sharma, 2017). At a different but related vantage point, the literature defines coping strategies as "a general process in which an individual changes response patterns as the dimension of the environment changes via which his

needs are satisfied according to societal demand" (Dubow, 2011; Ugboaja, 2016). An organism's coping mechanism is its approach to preserving ecological harmony, according to Raju and Rahamtulla (2007). According to Kulshrestha, cited in Ugodulunwa and Anakwe (2012), people go through the adjustment process when they are trying to manage their demands, cope with disputes, tensions, and stress, and adapt to new circumstances.

sustain balanced connections with the natural world. According to Ugboaja (2016), there are many different perspectives and explanations about coping strategies, but they all boil down to two main factors: the individual and their surroundings.

Research objectives

Specifically, this study seeks to:

- 1 identified the cultural challenges facing widows and widowers in South-South geopolitical zone of Nigeria.
- 2 identified the coping strategies that could be employed by widows and widowers in South-South geopolitical zone of Nigeria.

Research questions:

1. What are the cultural challenges faced widows and widowers in South-South geopolitical zone of Nigeria?
2. What are the coping strategies that could be employed by widows and widowers in South-South geopolitical zone of Nigeria?

Hypotheses

- H0₃:** There is no significant difference in the mean responses of widow and widowers on cultural challenges faced by them in South-South geopolitical zone of Nigeria.
- H0₄:** There is no significant difference in the mean responses of widows and widowers on coping strategies that could be employed by them in South-South geopolitical zone of Nigeria.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

For this data set, two separate tools were used. In one, the study goals served as the basis for a structured questionnaire. There were two parts to the survey that was called "Widows and Widowers Coping Strategies for Family and cultural Challenges" (WWCSFCC). Section B centered on research questions to gather data on the specific purpose of the study, whereas Section A asked questions that covered the respondents' demographics. The survey was designed using a 4-point Likert scale for questions 2, 3, 5, and 6, and a 5-point Likert scale for questions 7 and 8, with Very High Extent (VHE), High Extent (HE), Moderate Extent (ME), and Low

Extent (LE) as the possible responses. The second tool used to gather data on coping mechanisms was the Focus Group Discussion Guide for Widows and Widowers (FGDEWW), which consisted of five questions with percentage interpretations. Trial testing on twenty individuals who were not included in the sample size—widows and widowers—established the dependability of the instrument. Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20 was used to provide reliability coefficient values ranging from 0.76-0.82 after establishing reliability using Cronbach Alpha. The study issues were addressed using bar charts, means, and standard deviations. The null hypotheses were tested using an independent t-test at a significance threshold of 0.05.

RESULTS

Research Question 1

What are the cultural challenges facing widows and widowers in South-South geopolitical zone of Nigeria?

Table 1: Mean responses of respondents on cultural challenges facing widows and widowers in South-South geopolitical zone of Nigeria (Widows = 289, Widowers = 144)

S/N	Cultural Challenges	Widows		Remark	Widowers		Remark
		\bar{X}_1	SD ₁		\bar{X}_2	SD ₂	
1	I was subjected to ritual contaminations	3.18	.527	A	2.88	.548	A
2	I was treated as ill-luck goat to be avoided so that I do not infect others.	3.34	.475	A	2.28	.449	R
3	I was subjected to seven days confinement in a particular room.	3.31	.462	A	2.22	.412	R
4	I was mandated to putting on black or dark cloths and having my hairs shaved.	3.38	.486	A	2.18	.386	R
5	I was expected to eat from broken plates and cook with broken pots.	3.45	.498	A	2.23	.498	R
6	I was expected to keep vigils and appear very sorrowful by wailing and crying profusely.	3.40	.491	A	2.22	.593	R
7	I performed outing ceremony that involved washing in the night after having the final wailing and making some rituals.	3.26	.441	A	2.36	.716	R
8	I was handed over in marriage to my husband's younger brother,	3.33	.472	A	2.27	.628	R
9	Because I refused to marry my spouse sibling, family disowned me together with my children and left us to fend for themselves.	3.21	.406	A	2.42	.798	R
10	I am accused of having hand in the death of spouse	3.29	.453	A	2.24	.555	R
	Cluster Mean	3.32	.471	A	2.33	.558	R

Table 1 shows the responses of respondents on cultural challenges facing widows and widowers in South-South geopolitical zone of Nigeria. All the 10 items were above the cut-off point of 2.50 and were accepted by widows as cultural challenges facing them. On the other hand, all the items but one was below the cut-off of 2.50 and were rejected as the cultural challenges facing widowers in South-South geopolitical zone of Nigeria. The standard deviation of .471-498 for widows shows that the standard deviation from the mean was close. This means that widows were not far apart in their responses. The standard deviation range of .558-.789 for widowers was relatively close and this means that they were

convergent in their responses.

Research Question 2

What are the coping strategies that could be employed by widows and widowers in South-South geopolitical zone of

Nigeria? **Table 2: Mean responses of respondents on the coping strategies that could be employed by widows and widowers in South- South geopolitical zone of Nigeria. (Widows = 289, Widowers = 144)**

S/N	Coping Strategies	Widows			Widowers		
		\bar{X}_1	SD ₁	Remark	\bar{X}_2	SD ₂	Remark
1	I employ problem solving strategy	3.27	.445	A	3.19	.397	A
2	I engage in positive thinking and seek divine intervention	3.34	.475	A	3.23	.422	A
3	I take medication to care for my health	3.32	.467	A	3.13	.332	A
4	I employ insensitivity technique to issues I dislike.	3.36	.481	A	2.14	.347	R
5	I face my challenges by accepting that life is for the living.	3.28	.448	A	3.24	.637	A
6.	I employ attention diversion to certain issues	3.30	.460	A	3.24	.430	A
7	I put much effort to controlling my emotions	2.24	.922	R	3.23	.422	A
8	I engage time management and self-talk most.	3.25	.433	A	3.23	.422	A
9	I use denial strategy	2.07	.459	R	3.44	1.00	A
10	I employ biofeedback and relaxation in handling issues.	3.26	.439	A	2.08	.509	R
11	I employ goal setting and faith strategies in coping with my challenges.	3.51	.672	A	3.26	.438	A
12	I take care of situations using confrontation Strategy.	2.21	.409	R	3.26	.442	A
13	I try as much as possible to apply avoidance strategy.	3.28	.452	A	2.13	.340	R
14	I employ social support and acquire new skills for survival.	3.11	.535	A	2.24	.648	R
15	I engage in social interaction and leisure.	2.92	.434	A	3.23	.422	A
16	I engage in alcohol and drug as coping strategy.	2.18	.382	R	2.27	.446	R
17	I engage in religious activities.	3.29	.453	A	2.19	.392	R
18	I sleep with the opposite sex to overcome my challenges.	3.39	.488	A	2.16	.368	R
19	I seek for counselling when am faced with challenges.	3.41	.492	A	3.14	.347	A
Cluster Mean		3.05	.492	A	2.84	.461	A

Table 2 shows the various coping strategies that could be employed by widows and widowers in South-South geopolitical zone of Nigeria. Out of the 19 items, 16 have their mean above the cut-off 2.50 and were accepted as coping strategies for widows. However,

13 out of the 19 items have their mean above the cut-off point of 2.50 and were accepted as coping strategies for widowers. The cluster mean of ($\bar{X} = 3.05$) and ($\bar{X} = 2.84$) shows that widows and widowers accept that coping strategies could be employed by them in South-South geopolitical zone of Nigeria. The standard deviation of range shows that widows and widowers were convergent in their responses.

Hypotheses testing

Hypothesis 1

There is no significance difference on the cultural challenges facing widows and widowers in South-South geopolitical zone of Nigeria.

Table 3: t-test analysis of the mean ratings of widows and widowers on cultural challenges facing them in South-South geopolitical zone of Nigeria.

S/N	Items	Widows		Widowers		df	p-value @ .05	Decision
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD			
1	I was subjected to ritual contaminations	3.18	.527	2.88	.548	431	.602	NS
2	I was treated as ill-luck goat to be avoided so that I do not infect others.	3.34	.475	2.28	.449	431	.004	S
3	I was subjected to seven days confinement in a particular room.	3.31	.462	2.22	.412	431	.000	S
4	I was mandated to putting on black or dark cloths and having my hairs shaved.	3.38	.486	2.18	.386	431	.000	S
5	I was expected to eat from broken plates and cook with broken pots.	3.45	.498	2.23	.498	431	.000	S
6	I was expected to keep vigils and appear very sorrowful by wailing and crying profusely.	3.40	.491	2.22	.593	431	.000	S
7	I performed outing ceremony that involved washing in the night after having the final wailing and making some rituals.	3.26	.441	2.36	.716	431	.000	S
8	I was handed over in marriage to my husband's younger brother,	3.33	.472	2.27	.628	431	.892	NS
9	Because I refused to marry my spouse sibling, family disowned me together with my children and left us to fend for themselves.	3.21	.406	2.42	.798	431	.000	S
10	I am accused of having hand in the death of spouse	3.29	.453	2.24	.555	431	.466	NS
	Cluster Value	3.32	.471	2.33	.558	431	.196	NS

Table 3 showed that at .05 level of significance with 431 degree of freedom, the P-value of .196 which was greater than the alpha level of .05 is obtained. With this result, the null hypothesis which stated that there is no significance difference in the cultural challenges facing widows and widowers in South-South geopolitical zone of Nigeria is therefore accepted.

Hypothesis 2

There is no significance difference in the coping strategies that could be employed by widows and widowers in South-South

geopolitical zone of Nigeria.

Table 4: t-test analysis of the mean ratings of widow and widower on coping strategies that could be employed by them in South-South geopolitical zone of Nigeria.

S/N	Items	Widows		Widowers		df	P-value @ .05	Decision
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD			
1	I employ problem solving strategy	3.27	.445	3.19	.397	431	.000	S
2	I engage in positive thinking and seek divine intervention	3.34	.475	3.23	.422	431	.000	S
3	I take medication to care for my health	3.32	.467	3.13	.332	431	.000	S
4	I employ insensitivity technique to issues I dislike.	3.36	.481	2.14	.347	431	.000	S
5	I face my challenges by accepting that life is for the living.	3.28	.448	3.24	.637	431	.000	S
6	I employ attention diversion to certain issues	3.30	.460	3.24	.430	431	.000	S
7	I put much effort to controlling my emotions	2.24	.922	3.23	.422	431	.000	S
8	I engage time management and self-talk most.	3.25	.433	3.23	.422	431	.356	NS
9	I use denial strategy	2.07	.459	3.44	1.002	431	.000	S
10	I employ biofeedback and relaxation in handling issues.	3.26	.439	2.08	.509	431	.024	S
11	I employ goal setting and faith strategies in coping with my challenges.	3.51	.672	3.26	.438	431	.000	S
12	I take care of situations using confrontation Strategy.	2.21	.409	3.26	.442	431	.017	S
13	I try as much as possible to apply avoidance strategy.	3.28	.452	2.13	.340	431	.000	S
14	I employ social support and acquire new skills for survival.	3.11	.535	2.24	.648	431	.223	NS
15	I engage in social interaction and leisure.	2.92	.434	3.23	.422	431	.001	S
16	I engage in alcohol and drug as coping strategy.	2.18	.382	2.27	.446	431	.000	S
17	I engage in religious activities.	3.29	.453	2.19	.392	431	.000	S
18	I sleep with the opposite sex to overcome my challenges.	3.39	.488	2.16	.368	431	.000	S
19	I seek for counselling when am faced with challenges.	3.41	.492	3.14	.347	431	.000	S
	Cluster Values	3.05	.492	2.84	.461	431	.033	S

Table 4 showed that at .05 level of significance with 431 degree of freedom, the P-value of .033 which was less than the alpha level of .05 is obtained. With this result the null hypothesis which stated that there is no significance difference in the coping strategies that could be employed by widows and widowers in South-South geopolitical zone of Nigeria is therefore rejected. This means that there is difference in the coping strategies that could be employed by widows and widowers in South-South geopolitical zone of Nigeria

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Cultural challenges of widows and widowers

Table 4.9 shows that there was no significant difference in the cultural obstacles faced by widows and widowers in the South-South geopolitical zone of Nigeria. This conclusion was reached based on the results in Table 1 and Table 3, which indicate that the null hypothesis was preserved with a p value of .196. Because of cultural differences in how widows and widowers deal with the loss of a spouse, this research lends credence to Ogwen's (2010) contention that widowhood is a gender-related problem, especially in Nigeria. Widowhood is associated with a wide range of negative experiences, including physical and mental suffering, deprivation, ritual contaminations, emotional instability, socioeconomic difficulty, and psychological trauma, all of which Olanisebe (2015) argues make traditions especially harsh on widows. The announcement of a husband's death marks the beginning of a widow's suffering in Nigeria, especially in the southwest region. In the aftermath of her husband's death, she is compelled to undergo a succession of rituals and ceremonies, and her in-laws swiftly demand a list of his assets and bank accounts (Okoronkwo, 2015; Olanisebe, 2015). The widow will be subjected to a series of ceremonies that include degrading treatment and torture. As a result of her loss, a widow is expected to feel terrible, downtrodden, and guilty (Oloko, 2001). To keep her infectious disease from spreading to other women, she is regarded as a bad luck goat. For example, Okoro and Nkama (2018) presents substantial evidence regarding the practices of widowhood in the Igbo culture of southeastern Nigeria, including the fact that some widows and widowers are accused of having a hand in their spouse's death and that relatives and family members commit violence against them. Contrarily, similar hardships accompanying a wife's death are uncommon for widowers in Nigeria. Based on what I've seen, they don't go through any of the degrading things that widows go through, such being forced to grieve or being exposed to indignities when their spouses die (Wuraola, 2016). According to Olukayode (2015), women are more likely than males to suffer from the disorganization and trauma associated with the loss of a spouse. In 'You're Responsible for His Death': Widowhood in Igbo Gender Construction and Struggle for Agency in Selected Literary, Ezeifeke (2014) found that when a woman's husband dies, her relatives accuse her of being involved in her husband's death and thus deny her the inheritance she was due.

Widows' and widowers' coping mechanisms

The study's results, as shown in Tables 2 and 4, make it clear that widows and widowers in Nigeria's South-South geopolitical zone deal with familial and cultural issues in different ways. Sixteen of the nineteen items were deemed acceptable coping mechanisms for widows since their means were higher than the cutoff score of 2.50. Having said that, thirteen of the nineteen components have their

were deemed acceptable as coping mechanisms for widowers and fell over the cutoff limit of 2.50. The cluster mean of ($X = 3.05$) and ($X = 2.84$) indicates that widows and widowers in the South-South geopolitical zone of Nigeria are aware that they may use coping techniques. According to the standard deviation of the range, the replies of widows and widowers were rather similar. Due to the fact that the computed probability value was .033, which is lower than the declared probability value, the null hypothesis stating that widows and widowers in the South-South geopolitical zone of Nigeria might adopt different coping techniques was rejected. .05. One possible explanation for the noticeable disparity is that men and women approach problems in fundamentally different ways. In order to maintain one's physical and mental health, widowhood is a state that necessitates coping mechanisms that involve behavioral and cognitive approaches to manage challenging or dangerous situations (Davis and Newell, 2022; Neimeyer, 2005; Karlsen, 2015; Standridge, 2019; Sharma, 2015). Blum and Silver (2012) added to this finding by listing common coping mechanisms used by widows and widowers, including: accepting the situation as it is, avoiding confrontation, denying the challenge, mentally disengaging, problem solving, seeking social support, controlling emotions, turning to religion, and proactive coping. Widows and widowers in Nigeria's South-South geopolitical zone mostly used these tactics. Their contrasting coping mechanisms provide further evidence that what helps one person cope in one circumstance may backfire or perhaps hurt them in another (Sharma, 2015). There is a wide range of coping mechanisms used by widows and widowers in Nigeria's South South geopolitical zone. Wives were able to adapt to 1 of the 19 coping mechanisms to a very high degree, 15 to a moderate degree, and 3 to a low degree. Conversely, in Nigeria's South-South geopolitical zone, widowers were able to adjust to 12 tactics to a high level and 7 strategies to a low amount. A P-value of .243, more than the

alpha threshold of .05, supports the retention of the null hypothesis, which states that widows and widowers in the South-South geopolitical zone of Nigeria do not vary significantly in their adaptation to coping techniques. All of a sudden, people may just want to live and put this discovery behind them. Consequently, after losing a spouse, it's natural for them to want to keep living for their children and make the most of the coping mechanisms that are available to them. This discovery lends credence to Steinberg's (2011) contention that people possess an incredible capacity to adjust to any given situation in life. He went on to say that people aren't born "adjusted" or "maladjusted," but rather that each person's coping mechanisms are shaped by the unique combination of genetics, upbringing, and environmental variables. To back this up even further, Ugboaja (2016) argued that social connection is crucial for a person's adaptability to psychological and social welfare as part of their coping strategy. Hvana and Richard (2014) and Rafieei (2017) both argue that individuals should make an effort to build and sustain social networks that are both robust and helpful. This is because these networks have the potential to alleviate some of the most challenging life circumstances that people may encounter.

CONCLUSION

Also, although widows and widowers adapt to coping mechanisms to varying degrees, they use distinct techniques to get through the widowhood transition. There was a clear gender gap in the ways that widows and widowers in Nigeria's South-South geopolitical zone dealt with their respective problems. So, in order to adapt to their current situation, the people living in the South-South geopolitical zone of Nigeria have developed a number of coping mechanisms. There is a wide range of coping mechanisms used by widows and widowers in Nigeria's South-South geopolitical zone. Additionally, the study found that widows and widowers in the South-South geopolitical zone of Nigeria face high levels of family and cultural challenges, and that their coping strategies are influenced by a moderate number of interactions.

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