

**CHRISTIAN INFLUENCE ON WIDOWS' SEXUALITY AMONG THE
ABANYOLE OF EMUHAYA DISTRICT, WESTERN KENYA**

BY

MOSES SIBOI OKONDA

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SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY**

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DECLARATION

This thesis is my original work prepared with no other than the indicated sources and support and has not been presented elsewhere for a degree or any other award.

Signature  _____ Date 19/06/18

Moses Siboi Okonda

REL/H/06/2012

CERTIFICATION BY THE SUPERVISORS

The undersigned certify that they have read and hereby recommend for acceptance of Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology a thesis, entitled "*Christian Influence on Widows' Sexuality among the Abanyole of Emuhaya, Western Kenya.*"

Signature  _____ Date 26/06/2018

Prof. Ogodo J.M. Nandi

Kaimosi Friends University College

(A constituent college of Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology)

Signature  _____ Date 26/6/18

Dr. Loreen Maseno

Maseno University

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ABSTRACT

Widows world over suffer marginalization and discrimination. Sexuality is one of the areas in which widows are discriminated. A global survey on the sexual situation of widows reveals that there is a general infringement on widows' sexuality in many traditions and cultures. This is because most cultures have a patriarchal view of sexuality. Hence, the powerlessness of many widows to exercise real choice in many subsequent relationships and vulnerability to male deception manifested in sexual harassment and related exploitations. Retrogressive and inhuman cultural practices that widows have to undergo and the general sexual situation depict gender power play. As a result many governmental organizations and non-governmental organizations and individuals have risen to the occasion to facilitate women's and widows' empowerment. Christianity which is founded on Jesus' preaching that promise above all other things freedom of the oppressed (Luke 4:18-19) is rife among the *Abanyole* for over a centennial. Yet there continues to be a sudden change of perception on women as they undergo widowhood transjectory in their life. Therefore this study sought to explore the influence of Christianity on widows' sexuality. It aimed at interrogating the influence of Christianity on widows' sexuality among the *Abanyole* of Emuhaya District by ascertaining the prevailing cultural perception on widows' sexuality; establishing Christian widows' attitudes on their sexuality; examining Christian perceptions on widows' sexuality and determining factors responsible for the Christian perception on widows' sexuality. Making sense of the data was aided through frameworks of Feminist Perspectives, Gender Sexuality over the Life Course, sexual script, liberation theology and social reconstruction to construe theology as an ongoing, emergent and indispensable epistemological axiom for authentic Christian living. Qualitative approach was used in the collection, measurement and analysis of data from 40 respondents. Purposive non-probabilistic sampling method was employed to draw a sample for the study. Interviews, Focused Group Discussions schedules and library research were used to collect data. These instruments' validity was assured by submitting them to my supervisors and their reliability through a pilot study with a few widows. In addition, the research preliminary findings were presented to the participants in this study for confirmation. A descriptive analysis was undertaken by consolidating, comparison and interpreting both primary and secondary data in light of the objectives of the study, research questions and conceptual framework. The findings were descriptively presented as narrated themes. Christianity wields double sided influence on widows' sexuality among the *Abanyole*. It cements traditional culture which is characteristically male-centered stigmatizing females on one hand while championing for widow empowerment on the other. Hence, there is both continuity and discontinuity of cultural perceptions on widow sexuality among the *Abanyole* Christians. It is recommended that the church among *Abanyole* engage the culture in light of its teaching to avert female subjugation that characterizes widows' sexuality. The study will assist the church as it seeks to effectively transform lives of its members (which include widows) and aid the implementation agencies to the SDGs (goal number 5) relating to women empowerment in their pursuits.

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ACK – Anglican Church of Kenya

AIC – African Interior Church

AICMAR – African Institute for Contemporary Missions and Research

AICN - African Israel Church Nineveh

COGEA(K), COG, COG (K) - Church of God in East Africa (Kenya)

FGDs – Focus Group Discussions

GA – General Assembly of the Church of God in East Africa (Kenya)

JCoC – Jerusalem Church of Christ

KIC – Kenya Israel Church

MDGs - Millennium Development Goals

MGSS – Ministry of Gender and Social Services

MYW – *Maendeleo ya Wanawake*

NACOSTI – National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation

NGO – Non Governmental Organization

NHOM – New Hope Outreach Ministries

OI – Oral Interview

PAG – Pentecostal Assemblies of God

RC - Revival Church

SDGs - Sustainable Development Goals

DEFINITION OF TERMS AND CONCEPTS

In order to understand what will be explored in this study it is important to explain the meaning of some important terms and concepts to be used herein.

Abanyole

In this study the term *Abanyole* refers to the people of Emuhaya/Bunyore/Ebunyole. They are a sub-tribe of the Luhya tribe who are Bantus (Appendix I). Some people pronounce it as Abanyore as a result of being challenged phonetically. It is notable that there is a people group in Uganda that goes by the name of Abanyore. Hence, *Abanyole* is the correct rendition of the name given and taken to refer to the people group under this study.

Church/Christian Community

Church or Christian community has been used in this study interchangeably to denote groups of Christian believers who gather in different places and under various denominations among the *Abanyole*.

Ebunyole/Bunyore/Emuhaya/Emuhaya District

The land (Emuhaya) is also referred to as *Bunyore*, therefore the terms *Ebunyole*, Emuhaya and Bunyore in most works, as in this study, are used interchangeably to mean the region, territory, location or land inhabited by the *Abanyole* people (Appendix H). It is worth noting that the study area has grown as an administrative unit from a Location

under a single chief to a Division then as a District in the government's efforts to bring services closer to the people (Appendix H). Currently, the region makes up two of the five sub-counties of the now Vihiga County. In this research the terms are used interchangeably to denote the geographical location occupied by the *Abanyole* people. In the wake of devolution, the region covers two Sub-counties which also serve as constituencies: Luanda and Emuhaya (see Appendix G & H).

Gender

It refers to the culturally social classification of human beings as male or female and its accrued implications. It is the cultural socialization that individuals are given in their societies to fulfill their roles as men and women of the society. Hence, it is a cultural identity specific to particular context. In this study gender refers to femininity and masculinity. It is about accrued socio-cultural definitions, constructions, and expectations of female and male which is assumed to be based on sex but is not.

Sexuality

It refers to a holistic personality. Comprises of sexual identity, sum of activities, attitudes, attraction, relationships, sexual intercourse and reproductive health involved in bodily system of reproduction hence sexual identity and behavior. In this study sexuality refers mainly to sexual intercourse and accruing identity.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

This chapter establishes the background information pertinent to this study. This includes: background of the study, the problem statement, the purpose of the study, research questions, significance of the study, the scope and limitations of the study and the underpinning conceptual framework.

1.1 Background of the study

Widowhood is an ancient phenomenon. However, it is only in the recent past that social scientists, researchers and civil rights activists have begun to investigate their plight that is gender based. This has come to the fore through the effort of women in academia seeking to investigate and highlight the experiences of other women within their particular contexts. One of the areas of concern for the widows highlighted has been their sexuality. Owen (1996: 80) concludes a chapter on ‘Sex and Sexuality’ in her book, *A World of Widows*, by observing:

Sex is part of life; sexuality is part of the makeup of every man and woman. Many traditions, customs and attitudes to do with widows are linked to a patriarchal view of a woman’s sexuality as being either the property of a man, or else to be ignored. From these attitudes has risen a whole culture of discrimination and suppression of women’s creative potential throughout her life.

Owen’s sentiments are in tandem with those raised in *An International Journal on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights*. In an effort to understand the experiences and challenges faced by widowed and divorced women, a research carried out in Oromiya, 1

Ethiopia showed that women experience high levels of community stigma in relation to their sexuality (Newton-Levinson, Winskell, Abdela, Marce, & Rob, 2014).

The plight of widows in general and particularly that which relates to their sexuality has often been overlooked in academic research and writing (Newton-Levinson, Winskell, Abdela, Marce, & Rob, 2014). Owen (1996) carried out a global survey on the situation of widows' sexuality. She generally noted many sexual injustices against widows in all cultures of the world. She established that the western and developed societies showed a little better situation of the widows' sexuality due to women's economic and political independence. Just like those in most of the societies in Asia, Caribbean and Africa, they still find themselves in humiliating and distressing situations.

Among the Asian communities, Owen (1996) discovered that traditional responses to widowhood are intended to draw a curtain over her sexuality and make her into a non-sexual being. This idea, as Nyaundi (2003: 126-127) recounts, is well illustrated by a practice where a widow may offer herself to be burned alongside her husband's corpse as the highest form of devotion. Other widows' among the Indians and Muslim communities out of intense fear of 'uncontrollable' sexual desires commit themselves to religious duties concealing their femininity not to attract or 'tempt' men.

In Latin America the fate of sexual desire for widows is long sealed. Their religious upbringing makes them asexual as they age. They are socialized to equate sexual expression with temptation and sin. Others refrain due to their frustrations from their previous union. Still others are afraid of the mockery from their children if they enter a

new relationship. This leaves the widows without a choice about their bodies and their sexuality except to embrace _celibacy_.

Owen (1996) observes that patriarchal societies hold that sexual activity for women was allowed only within marriage institution yet no one bothered about men's sexual expedition. She found many of such traditions worldwide. Widows living without men to cover them as head of household became easy targets for sexual innuendo and sexual assault. She explains that sexuality of widows has evolved into a taboo from,

[r]eligious and cultural inhibitions which hold either that widows should have no sexual desires or needs whatsoever, or that the sexuality is so rapacious that it must be stringently controlled lest it ensnare susceptible men. Widows thus must be forcibly incarcerated in institutionalized celibacy or be taken over in remarriage or other sexual union by the dead husband's kin (1996: 72).

Potash (1986) demonstrates the status of widows in African societies. She illustrates how widows in Africa have limited or no choices to make relating to their sexual life. This is due to the patriarchal view of widows' sexuality that places it squarely in the hands of their male who exploit it to their own ends. Magesa (1997) ably demonstrates that in African societies sex is jealously guarded under male custody as it increases and propagates life force. Similarly, he shows that in African communities, bride price seals marriage that even death does not break. This ensures the status of women and guarantees her needs, including sexual needs in her husband's family.

Kirwen's (1979) study of leviratic marriage in African communities reveals how widows' sexuality is discriminately abused. The widows' sexuality is viewed from a patriarchal

subjecting them to _uncontrolled_ sexual appetites of men. Hence, as 3

Shisanya (2006) demonstrates through her research on the widow sexual cleansing rite among the Luo, such cultural practices places widows to liminal status denying them control over their sexuality.

Emuhaya District's Development Plan 2008-2012 identified HIV/AIDS, retrogressive cultural practices, and gender inequality as detrimental to the district's development. The plan cites wife inheritance and neglect of the girl child as examples of such practices. It goes ahead to elucidate that 21.5% of the households in Emuhaya District are headed by widows and widowers of which widows are the majority. Mutongi's research among the Maragoli who boarder the *Abanyole* on the North-East notes that:

Families headed by widows constitute a large proportion of families in Africa: nearly 30 percent of adult women in Africa today are widows. And for fairly clear reasons Maragoli has suffered some of the higher rates of widowhood in Kenya (Mutongi 2007: 4).

Due to proximity and common context, the *Abanyole* share similar factors that aggravate widowhood among the Maragoli. Widowhood phenomena become even complicated by the revelations that in-laws are becoming less willing to inherit the widows of their relatives because of the economic burden of supporting the widow and her family, as well as the risk of acquiring HIV from the widow (cf. Ambasa-Shisanya, 2007; Agot, 2005). This may explain Emuhaya's higher HIV/AIDS prevalence compared to the national one.

History of Christianity is similar to that of the church. The *Abanyole* of Emuhaya have a very rich Christian heritage spanning over a century. There are as many denominations as there are clans and families in the region. Alela (2007) in his Doctoral dissertation dubbed *Good News to the Poor: A Model for Holistic Christian Ministry in Bunyore*, 4

Kenya looked at the historical development of Christianity in Bunyore. Bunyore forms then provincial administrative unit formerly known as Emuhaya District that is under study in this research. He notes that Christianity was introduced in this region by The South Africa Compound and Interior Mission (SACIM). The first missionary from this group arrived in the region among the *Abanyole* people at a place known as Kima on the 15th day of August, 1905. This missionary, Robert Wilson had been commissioned by A. W. Baker, the mission leader and an owner of a gold mine in Zululand. Baker had had a dream to the effect that God had commanded him to reach the natives of Emuhaya, as land of the *Abanyole* people later came to be known as. Wilson worked with Mabel Baker (a daughter of A.W. Baker) and Yohana Bila together with other indigenous people that had accepted the Gospel Message.

Wilson's arrival in Kima did not only mark the inception of the church in Bunyore but also the beginning of the Church of God in East Africa, Kenya. The SACIM changed its personnel. Wilson left and was replaced by Edward Richardson, who later handed the mantle to Henry Kramer who had covered for him while on leave. Baker, the pioneer missionary, visited in 1914. He handed over the mission work to the Church of God (Anderson) in 1923. This was a church organization that Kramer belonged to. The deal for the transaction was finally sealed in 1931. The denomination later changed its name to Church of God in East Africa, Kenya following nationalization of its leadership and ministry work. This denomination commands the majority following in the study area, with a robust women's ministry (Makokha 1996).

The earliest denomination founded among the *Abanyole*, as noted earlier, is African Interior Church which was established by SACIM in 1905. The mission work changed hands through the Church of God (Anderson Indiana) and later revived through a split in 1945 over the relocation of the Bunyore Boys' School to Ingotse (Makokha 1996: 150). This denomination has not performed well compared to COG since it remained stuck among the *Abamang'ali* (see Appendix J) with only a handful follower from other clans and very few followers outside the *Abanyole*.

According to Alela (2007), the Anglican Church of Kenya (ACK), formerly Church Province of Kenya (CPK) was established through the prevailing efforts of the Church Missionary Society (CMS). Its work among the *Abanyole* people in the study area was initiated at *Maseno* in 1905, almost the same time as the South African Compound and Interior Mission. The work took root in the 1930s around *Ebusakami*. This denomination prides itself in having a robust women ministry, referred to as Mothers' Union (MU). The women's ministry of the ACK among the *Abanyole* held its centennial celebrations at *Ebusakami Enyaita* on July 30, 2016 in the course of this study. They showcased the progress of women ministry of the ACK in the study area.

Pentecostal Assemblies of God (PAG) began its work in Bunyore in 1937. The PAG missionaries having settled at Nyang'ori in 1924, some of the elders from Bunyore who subscribed to its way of worship desired to establish a branch in their area. Otto Keller allowed them to establish a branch at *Matope*, two kilometers from *Kima*, the mission headquarters of the Church of God. This did not succeed. They finally landed at *Musinaka* which is where the current Hobunaka PAG church is located. The church has 6

grown in terms of local congregations but with comparatively low numerical performance (Makokha, 1996). All these and other denominations among the *Abanyole* pride themselves for their concern for and ministry by women.

The New Religious Movement wave saw proliferation of Christian religious movements and churches in numbers and of different shades among the *Abanyole* as in other parts of the world and people groups. African Israel Nineveh, African Divine, Upendo, East African Holy Spirit, Revival, New Hope and Word of Faith are among the many other Christian religious movements that have sought to proselytize the *Abanyole* people. They all have in different ways and degrees championed for peace, which includes creating an environment for women to fully explore their God given potential.

Maseno (2014: 110) outlines widows' experiences as uncovering, loss of significant relationship, loneliness and loss of assistance. Widows have continued to endure suffering silently world over. Their experiences see many of them to flock into Christian institution in large numbers sometimes making up the majority. They normally expect that religion with its promises for a better life and a glorious future will mitigate their present problems (Luke 4:18-19). In Sider's (2003: 107) words —a church that fully implements New Testament teaching will offer a powerful attractive alternative to our world so broken by greed, corruption, selfishness and racism. This is in line with Malatesta, Chambless, & Cantor (1988) whose study on widowhood, sexuality and ageing established that despite the widow's age, activities pertaining to her children and grandchildren, wearing attractive clothing, and expressing her spirituality are all effective in meeting affection and sexual needs. This means that widows, with their multiple 7

losses, will find a haven in a church community. Furthermore, research reveals that half of women are sexually active into old age (Trompeter, Bettencourt and Berret-Connor 2012). In view of such wide spread ramifications, widows' need for intimacy (sexual or emotional), sexual intercourse and sensuality are a reality that cannot continue being ignored by the church and society among the *Abanyole*. Therefore, this study sought to determine the Christian influence on widows' sexuality among the *Abanyole* of Emuhaya District.

1.2 Problem Statement

Christianity has been rife among the *Abanyole* for over a centennial. There is a widespread church activity by and among the *Abanyole*. Women are the majority of the faithful that throng churches among the *Abanyole* every Sunday. In fact women are the majority among the church workers and volunteers among the *Abanyole*. Yet there continues to be a sudden change of perception on women as they undergo widowhood transjectory in their life. This is because widows are seen to be a source of temptation easily lured into sexual relationships. As a result widows are barred from taking up religious responsibilities. Those who continue with religious responsibilities suffer attrition as they are often maligned and held with suspicion. Those not involved in church work continue to suffer in silence as the church finds their sexuality a trivial matter of concern. Therefore this study sought to explore the influence of Christianity on widows' sexuality among the *Abanyole*.

Sexuality of widows is an issue that elicits mixed reactions world over. There are those who are for the idea that widows indeed need and require to express themselves sexually and meet their sexual needs and those who strongly opine that they should resort to ‘voluntary’ celibacy. From the foregoing information, there are various questions that arise. First, in African traditional societies and according to research, meeting sexual needs of widows is essential for their individual satisfaction; happiness and wellbeing (cf. Rebec et al., 2015). One wonders how this is being achieved among Christian widows among the *Abanyole*.

Second, the *Abanyole* are an African society and in African traditional societies the sexual needs of individuals, particularly of widows were recognized and catered for. Is this view still held by church leaders, opinion leaders, social and health workers and more so widows themselves, with regard to the Christian widows among the *Abanyole*?

Third, researches on widows’ experiences have indicated that widows, whatever their age, have sexual desires (cf. Trompeter, Bettencourt and Berret-Connor 2012). How should widows view their bodies sexually? Under what circumstances can a widow allow herself to have sex again? And if not, what alternatives are there for meeting widows sexual needs?

Widow sexuality contributes to a number of social, economic and psycho-spiritual problems. The problem this research addresses is the lack of sound Christian teaching on widow sexuality, and by extension, lack of a widow care program that empowers them to

participate in church ministry as whole persons. Thus, this study investigated the relationship between Christianity and widow sexuality in Bunyore.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

This study was to explore Christian influence on widows' sexuality among the *Abanyole*. The *Abanyole* widows experience loss of status and significant relationship at the demise of their husbands. The study sought to examine how the church (Christianity) perceives and how the perception influences the sexuality of these significant constituent. The aim of the study was to expose perceptions on widow sexuality among the *Abanyole*, inspire and encourage the church, especially widows, to engage in discourse on widow sexuality, propose a model for developing an authentic *Abanyole* Christian perception (theology) on widow sexuality and finally inspire and encourage the church among *Abanyole* to get involved in holistic widow ministry. The study fulfilled the purpose for which it was set.

1.4 Research Objectives

Issues of widows' sexuality remain clouded and tabooed even in Christian circles. This study explored how Christianity is a factor in informing and forming widows' sex life. The main objective of this study was to interrogate Christian influence on widows' sexuality among the *Abanyole* of Emuhaya. Specific objectives that guided this study were to:

- i. Ascertain the prevailing cultural perception(s) on widows' sexuality among the *Abanyole* of Emuhaya.

- ii. Establish *Abanyole* widows' attitudes on their sexuality among the *Abanyole* of Emuhaya.
- iii. Examine the Christian perception(s) on widows' sexuality among the *Abanyole* of Emuhaya.
- iv. Determine factors responsible for the prevailing Christian perceptions of widows' sexuality among the *Abanyole* of Emuhaya.

1.5 Research Questions

This study endeavored to provide answers to the following research questions:

- i. What is the prevailing cultural perception on widows' sexuality among *Abanyole* of Emuhaya?
- ii. What is the prevailing attitude that widows' themselves have on their sexuality among the *Abanyole* of Emuhaya?
- iii. What is the prevailing Christian perception on widows' sexuality among the *Abanyole* of Emuhaya?
- iv. What factors are responsible for the prevailing Christian perception on widows' sexuality among the *Abanyole* of Emuhaya?

1.6 Significance of the Study

This study is important because widows are whole persons. They are first and foremost sexual beings. It is hoped that the study will enhance knowledge on how Christianity influences on the sexuality of widows. This knowledge will add into the existing

knowledge on widow sexuality and aid governmental and non-government agencies in their quest for women's empowerment and Christian ministries with a bias for widow ministry in addressing their felt needs by providing reference material on the Christian perception of and sexual situation of widows. This study will also benefit academic community in exploring widow sexuality discourse among the *Abanyole*. The findings will help the Christian community among the *Abanyole* re-evaluate and improve on her widow ministry focus and strategy.

1.7 Scope of the Study

This study realizes that we have both widows and widowers among the *Abanyole*. Both groups have sexual needs. However this work was confined to widows' sexuality that is characterized by injustice, oppression and marginalization. It also acknowledges that the plight of widows is manifold and occasioned by many factors, yet the study focused on issues of sexuality. It also acknowledges various intervention measures, including governmental and non-governmental efforts, to leverage widows' plight, yet concentrated on the Christian responses to widows' sexuality. It is also a conscious decision of the researcher to concentrate on sampled denominations among the *Abanyole* of Emuhaya for an in-depth study and analysis.

1.8 Limitations of the Study

The researcher foresaw several challenges during fieldwork. The first one was with the nature of the subject. It is tabooed and so respondents' hesitated to talk about it.

However, the researcher assured the respondents of the importance of the subject and the

need for them to contribute to the ongoing discourse. The researcher listened to the non-verbal cues and encouraged conversation. He also ensured a free environment that encouraged free conversation. The second challenge was with the translation of the concepts of the subject under study. To resolve this, the researcher worked with colleagues of both genders with a command in *olunyole* to ensure that the translations communicate both intended concepts and attitude. The third challenge was to do with the gender of the researcher. This being a feminist research practice, it would better be handled by a female researcher to be able to listen with the ‘_stomach’ to the issues and attitudes evoked. The researcher tried to overcome this by engaging female research assistants as need arose and bracketing out as much as possible to remain an apprentice.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter focuses on reviewed literature related to this study. Its aim was to highlight the existing gaps which inform specific variable for study. Literatures that were reviewed includes: published and unpublished Masters (MA) and Doctoral (PhD) thesis, journal articles, books and other materials pertinent to the study. The review was guided by the four objectives of the study namely: Cultural perception on widows' sexuality; Widows' perception of their sexuality; Christian perception on widows' sexuality and factors responsible for Christian perception on widows' sexuality. This chapter further highlights on the conceptual framework employed in this work. Three perspectives have been drawn to develop a conceptual framework for this study.

2.1. Cultural Perception on Widows' Sexuality

A concept of culture has been a preoccupation of the academic field of anthropology. This field has advanced several definitions of culture. Ferraro explores over 160 definitions given in the field to draw his own that culture is, —everything that people have, think, and do as members of a society (1998: 18). He notes that culture is shared, learned, affects physical bodies and biological processes, changes and help people to adapt to their environments increasing their chances of survival. He as well observes that there are common features found in all cultures of the world. This view resonates with p' Bitek's (1986) idea:

Culture is philosophy as lived and celebrated in a society.... And all these institutions are informed by, and in fact built around the central ideas people have developed, ideas about what life is all about; that is their social philosophy, their world view (p' Bitek, 1986: 13).

It is thus important to establish the *Abanyole* sexual constructions as Villanueva (1997:

18-19) aptly puts:

It is very important to acknowledge the influence of sexual constructions in shaping sexuality. Goettsche (1989) emphasized the importance of culture in defining, shaping, and promoting sexuality, including the maintenance of socially stigmatized patterns. Goettsche did not include in the definition social norms or sexual scripts (Baber, 1994; Laws & Schwartz, 1977), which are specific for each individual's culture and personal experiences, and how these affect the concept. He acknowledged though, that while sexuality is a potential in all human beings, the ways people feel, think about, express, and experience sexuality are socially constructed and therefore influenced by external and internal processes which together create and change sexual scripts (Goettsche, 1989).

There is a renewed focus in the recent research to define the concept, sexuality. As observed by María Isabel Martínó Villanueva (1997: 17) in her Ph D Thesis, *“The Social Construction of Sexuality: Personal Meanings, Perceptions of Sexual Experience, and Females' Sexuality in Puerto Rico”* sexuality is an elusive subject for a precise definition prompting many researchers and commentators in the field to avoid or assume common knowledge. However, she underscores the need for a precise definition. She then pursues Goettsche's definition to emphasize sexuality as an individual capacity with bodily orientation that is socially constructed involving emotions and is influenced by external and internal processes.

Hillman (2012: 11) broadly defines sexuality as a term representing any blend of —sexual behavior, sensual activity, emotional intimacy, or sense of sexual identity.‖ He goes further to explain that:

Sexuality may involve sexual activity with the explicit goal of achieving pleasure (e.g., hugging, kissing) or orgasm (e.g., petting, oral sex, intercourse), sensual activity with or without the explicit goal of sexual pleasure (e.g., hugging, dancing, wearing body lotion to feel attractive or feminine), or the experience of emotional intimacy within the context of a romantic relationship. Thus, sexuality is commonly associated with a variety of issues and concepts including body image, self-stimulation, love, libido, intercourse, homophobia, relationship satisfaction, marital satisfaction, desires for sexual and sensual experiences, and participation in high-risk behaviors. It also is important to note that sexuality encompasses thoughts, feelings, and behaviors that may lead to positive or negative feelings (e.g., consider body image, masturbation, and sexual abuse).

However, in a quick rejoinder Villanueva (1997: 19) invokes Gagnon and Simon to observe:

By looking at the metaphor of sexual scripts, we are defining sexuality (1) as emergent in relationships and situations rather than as universal essence; (2) as needing to be constructed rather than needing to be controlled; (3) as a shader of conduct (as when sex is used to satisfy needs for affection, protection, and gender-validation); (4) as a contingent (dependent on our particular lives) rather than a necessary (mandated by some inevitable internal energy) form of human behavior; and (5) as an aspect of life that is qualitatively different for children and adults.

This means that sexuality is context specific and can only be understood from within the specific context that it emerges. It is to be understood in terms of relationships, situations, behavior, particular lives and age.

In Asia the attitude on women still show subjugation. Kilonzo (2004) cites Jaen and Stichter to report that in India subjugation was cardinal principle. Day and night a woman

must be held by the protector in a state of dependence as directed by Manu. The protector is a male kin such as the father, husband and the son depending on her marital status. The rule of inheritance was patriarchal tracing decent through male to the exclusion of the females. Hillman (2012: 15) recognizes:

Sexual power and privilege are distributed differently between Japanese men and women, and particularly so in older aged cohorts. In Japanese society, it is often expected that husbands will seek sexual partners outside of marriage, and that wives will remain true to their husbands. It also is important to note that even when the older Japanese wives reported that they had sex with some frequency with their husbands when they were younger, the wives' ability to communicate any sexual interest or desire was limited solely to indirect measures (Moore 2010). Because it is considered taboo and immodest for Japanese women to discuss or show any interest in sexual behavior, the wives in the study indicated that they would prepare certain foods for their husbands (e.g., broiled abalone and surf clams) as a nonverbal signal that they were interested in having sex. These foods are not considered aphrodisiacs per se in Japanese culture, but rather as symbols of fertility.

In Africa, most of the societies are patriarchal and patria-local. This provides that the male gender is given preeminence in decision-making and resource allocation. However, at the same way, it guarantees the security and dignity of a woman. Magesa (1997: 133) depicts that in Africa, —[m]arriage and other forms of legal sexual unions are meant to ensure procreation and the preservation of life and the life force through sexuality and its physical expression in sexual intercourse.¶ As a result, —the generative power through sexual intercourse is closely controlled to ensure its full procreative potential.¶ According to Magesa, in African world view, sexual intercourse has a spiritual dimension and is under the male custody. Consequently, the sexual act is communally managed through prohibitions and taboos. The giving and receiving of bride wealth establishes —the right of exclusive sexual access to the woman by the husband¶ and secures her a place

permanently in the new society sealing the marriage that even death cannot end. The bond of marriage survives the death of either spouse through polygamous, leviratic, ghost or surrogate marriages and sometimes women to women marriage and widow inheritance unions that are established for life fostering purposes (Magesa, 1997: 123-124, 127). Magesa's observation exposes four important and interrelated elements in the African world view on widow's sexual life that were very helpful to this study. First, death of a spouse does not terminate a marriage, especially when the surviving spouse is a woman. Thus African marriage vows are for eternity and not just a life time. The security of the widow to stay in her matrimonial home is guaranteed by way of bride price. Second, sexual intercourse is sacred and enjoyed exclusively within some marital arrangement. Hence any such practice outside such arrangement is scorned. Third, men are the custodians and managers of sexual intercourse and related activities. This gives the male the dominance in the initiation and determination of the practice. Finally, there are alternatives to ensure that normalcy of life, especially sexual, resumes with minimal disruption following the demise of a spouse. This is through its various marital and quasi-marital arrangements. However, Magesa's study was not carried out among the *Abanyole* and did not focus on the relationship between Christianity and widow sexuality. That was the focus of this study.

Maseno (2014) cites Shisanya who explores the culture of widow's sexual cleansing among the Luo of Kenya in the context of HIV/AIDS. This study added value to the current one as it demonstrates how widows are exposed to the virus that is claiming their lives. It explained that this culture is based on a patriarchal view of widows' sexuality

that women are a property of men. The study also explored a tribal believe that a bad omen of death on the widow has to be warded off through a sexual union with a mentally ill man to pave way for the widow's remarriage. This culture is prevalent in most of African communities (cf. Perry, et al., 2014; Kirwen, 1979; Owen, 1996). Nonetheless, the studies do not explore the subject of Christian influence on widow sexuality among the *Abanyole* which is the concern for the current study.

Hillman (2012: 13- 14) cites a study carried out on various societies' cultural beliefs and practices on older people having sex that is herein extensively quoted:

In a groundbreaking study of more than 106 cultures (Winn and Newton 1982), less than 3% of those cultures were found to have societal sanctions or prohibitions against older people having sex. An analysis of the data gathered by the anthropologists, sociologists, and psychologists studying these cultures revealed that 70% and more than 84% of the societies reported sexual activity among its older male and female members, respectively. In many Eastern and Middle Eastern cultures, men and women commonly engaged in sexual relations well beyond the age of 100 and 80, respectively. African cultures maintained that impotence was not a normal function of old age, but an unnatural loss of ability resulting from illness or witchcraft. In the majority of these traditional cultures, menopause was not associated with either more or less sexual activity among older women; it simply represented a —point in a woman's life. In certain African and Asiatic cultures, an older women's physical attractiveness appeared unrelated to her sexual status; toothless, older women were considered as sexually desirable as younger women. Thus, sexual activity among older men and women in traditional societies is common, and apparently readily accepted throughout most of the world.

An additional difference noted between these traditional societies and our own was that although a double standard appeared to operate with regard to sexuality and aging, it appeared to be in the opposite direction. Specifically, older women were more likely to engage in sexual relations than older men, and older women were often described (in more than one-fourth of the cultures) as becoming less sexually inhibited and more sexually aggressive with advancing age. In certain South American and Eastern cultures, older women were designated teachers for sexually inexperienced young men. Older women also were described as commonly taking younger men for

husbands or sex partners, ostensibly because there were few male partners available of their own age. Other older women in South American, Eastern, and North American Indian cultures were described as dressing more seductively, baring their breasts more often in public, and delighting in off-color jokes once past the age of 60.

The above citation clearly informed the current study that sexual activity among older men and women is common and acceptable in most traditional societies in the world. The women have an upper hand in that respect as demonstrated by the statistical data provided. Age is maintained to be a non issue as well as transitions such as menopause and physical attractiveness as far as sexual status is concerned. Nevertheless, none of these studies were carried out among the *Abanyole* and also none of them explored the relationship between Christianity and widow sexuality. Accordingly, this research sought to establish Christian influence on widows' sexuality among the *Abanyole* of Emuhaya, Western Kenya.

2.2 Widows' Perception of their Sexuality

Understanding widows' self perception of their sexuality is important to the meticulous discerning and determining the response thereof. Perceptions have to do with the knowledge, attitudes and behavior that people have, embrace and do concerning a phenomenon. Perceptions are culture bound and just as the culture they are dynamic and conditioned.

However, the perception of widows' sexuality is imbedded in the understanding of the meaning assigned to concepts of women, femininity and widow. It is important to understand who a woman is in general and particularly a widow. The study about and for

women is referred to as feminism. Others for fear of the emotions evoked by the term prefer to term it as gender studies. Feminism is generally gaining currency in academia and seeks among other things, as Azuike (2009: 80) articulates, to help —women to relentlessly struggle to lift themselves from their subordinate state and to carve out new roles and identities for themselves|. Citing Ezeigbo, Azuike underscored that, —feminism is simply the awareness that women are subjugated and their determination to correct their subjugation|| (Azuike, 2009: 80). Such is the work by Joan Acker in *‘Women and Work in Social Sciences’* that summarizes new knowledge about women working by noting that first, women are no longer ignored by social sciences. Secondly, there is a redefinition of work (employment) to resonate with women situation. Finally, the underlying assumption that male is the generic human being and that the female is the residual category is being dissolved as more knowledge is being generated. Thus drawing conclusion that, such —Changes in our knowledge suggest a subversion and erosion of male bias| (Storberg & Harkess, 1988: 23).

It can, therefore, be said to be a reactionary or contextual study occasioned by a general perception that women are subjugated. Feminism as a concept aids in discerning women condition wherever and whenever (Onsongo, 2007: 27-28).

2.2.1 Woman Revealed

Having considered feminism the researcher will now proceed to explore womanhood. The overriding question is that of identity. Who does society say a woman is? As stated earlier, this question and the accruing situation of the woman forms the preoccupation of

the studies in feminism or gender. Studies in feminism or Gender studies have in the recent past unearthed enormous knowledge pertaining women in a gendered sense. Accordingly, Ayanga rightly observes that, —Gender becomes a power and resource distribution mechanism.‖ (Ayanga, 2011: 12). She drew from Mercy Oduyoye’s wisdom to underpin the fact that gender issues is pervading and —one of the oldest power struggles of humanity,‖ and is the underlying factor —in the politics and economics of a given people‖ (Ayanga, 2011: 12).

Women are generally disadvantaged and discriminated globally due to gender relations between male and female (Onsongo, 2007). This situation is more severe in the developing nations. In developed societies women have attained political and economic powers. However, interpersonally women in ‘developed’ societies still suffer gender based violence. In ‘developing’ societies, women subordination is harsh. Bride burning is reported in India, rape in South Africa, women assault in Brazil, intimidating situation for women in Muslim world, female infanticide as a result of son preference in Asia and female genital mutilation in many African societies. Though many of these oppressive norms are being challenged and changed, sexual discrimination against women persists due to a patriarchal social order (Marger, 2005).

Maseno argues for the existence of differentiation in —woman’s position in every national, regional and local spheres as well as the potential for transformation.‖ She goes on to accentuate that —woman in Africa in general could be thought of as standing together, affected in varying degrees by a particular discrimination, such as gender power imbalance‖ (2014: 23, 25).

Writing on the experience of Tanzania women church leader, Tregellas pursues the same train of thought. She establishes that the church faces a dilemma on how to regard women because of the general disregard accorded them in the larger society. She observes, —...is painful to women and destructive of their physical and psychological well being. This lack of regard is a denial of woman's human dignity and as such it is an issue that deserves careful consideration within the Christian community (1997: 60).

Correspondingly, Obwoye relates to us a similar situation of women in the church among the *Abanyole*. His study established women subordination among the *Abanyole*:

Women in general are educated to believe that being born female means to be born innately inferior and damaged, that there is something wrong with us. We are told that we are needed as mothers, caretakers, cheap labor in the field and factories. Due to women's low self-esteem, they underrate themselves and leave leadership role to men. The traditional way is that women do most of the work in church and society and men hold most of the leadership (2011: 82).

In the same way, Maseno explains that, —In general, socialization among the *Abanyole* prescribed division of labor shapes a girls' and woman's identity (2014: 130). This review demonstrates a general low opinion and social space ascribed to a woman. This impairs that identity of a woman for as she perceives herself in relation to men.

As such the reviewed literatures reveal that women are generally marginalized right from the socialization given from childhood. This is true among the *Abanyole* as in other societies in the world. This socialization shapes their identity and hence the gender differentiation. The studies are very helpful to this study in terms of informing it on gender differentiation and marginalization that leads to gender disparity among the

Abanyole. This was crucial to this study because it is concerned with gender power derived from femininity or masculinity, especially when it comes to bargaining on matters of sex. However, these studies do not explore Christian influence and widow sexuality which are the gaps to be filled with this study.

2.2.2 Widow Revealed

Maseno (2014) in her study on widow's Christology among the *Abanyole* observes that widows occupy peculiar social space among women. They occupy an intersection characterized with multifaceted marginalization such as gender, marital status, illness, and economic empowerment. This implies the importance of understanding their social situation in order to appreciate their experiences. She contends that widowhood reduces a woman, who is hitherto discriminated on the basis of her gender, to liminality. This, she explains, is because of the gender systems which are patriarchal and perceives a woman from a male dominated structure. Consequently, she established that women and widows among the *Abanyole* have authority but it is downplayed.

This study relates to the current study in the sense that they both explored issues related to widowhood among the *Abanyole*. Maseno's study is helpful in revealing the intersection that widows occupy among women and in the large *Abanyole* society. This is crucial because it affords us to appreciate the double loss that widows experience during their widowhood trajectory. It also aids in shading a light on how widows have embraced Christianity and bring back the memories of their deceased husbands through naming

their grandsons. However, the study does not explore issues of Christian influence on widow sexuality. That gap is well filled by this study.

Chen and Prezie's (1995) study reports that widows in India experience high level of deprivation. They outline sources of vulnerability as patrilocality, patrilineal inheritance and remarriage practices. Their report also established that widows are socially isolated due to the injustices leveled upon them such as rumors and accusations, enforced dress and behavior codes, social ostracism and physical violence. Hence, confirming that Indian widows suffer marginalization.

This study relates to the current study in that they both explore widowhood experiences. The current study benefitted from it specifically by reviewing on the sources of widow vulnerability and the injustices widows experience. However, the current study was carried out among the *Abanyole* while the former was done among Indians. In addition, the current study explored the relationship between Christianity and widow sexuality among the *Abanyole*. Therefore the contextual and content gap existed calling for another study which necessitated the current work.

2.2.3 Widows' Sexuality

Sexuality of widows is rarely a concern of most academic research and writing. Most studies concerning widows focus on their social and economic marginalization (Newton-Levinson, Winskell, Abdela, Marce, & Rob, 2014). As stated earlier, sexuality refers to a holistic personality. It comprises of sexual identity, sum of activities, attitudes, attraction, relationships, sexual intercourse and reproductive health involved in bodily system of 25

reproduction hence sexual behavior. This raises issues such as: How does a widow view her body sexually; can a widow allow herself to have sex with someone else? Under what circumstances could a widow continue having sex? Is it only for widow cleansing or even more thereafter? What is the implication of view of widows' sexuality on their access to reproductive health?

There are varied views on the sexuality of widows as there are varied cultures and categories of widows. Owen (1996) carried out a global survey on the widows' attitude on their sexuality. The research revealed a mixed perception owing to the different social contexts and varieties of widows. The views can be categorized under two main classes: Living without sex and widows who have sex.

Widows for various reasons revert to asexual mode. Owen cites such cases as Indian low caste widows who choose 'celibacy' for cultural and religious reasons. Others will opt for staying without a sexual partner for fear of children from the previous marriage especially in patria-local arrangement. Still other for the previous chilling sexual and family experiences may give up on the matter altogether. Be it as it may, the elimination of this vital component in human life may lead to frustration, low self esteem and depression (1996: 76).

A study carried out on sexuality and stigma of widows and divorced women among Oromiya of Ethiopia found out:

Women experience high level of community stigma in relation to their sexuality. Participants fear of community stigma and the actions they took to avert it, further served to marginalize them within their community and

had negative impact on their economic, social and health support system and ultimately on their overall well being (Newton-Levinson, Winskell, Abdela, Marce, & Rob, 2014: 916).

Citing the world public opinion, Newton-Levinson *et al.*, ably demonstrated that widows and divorced women are discriminated against even by other women. They established that:

When women separated from men through widowhood or divorce, their sexuality received new emphasis and was constructed as uncontrolled, unpredictable and thus, threatening the community. Widowed and divorced women's sexuality, in short, was perceived as something that must be monitored or reined in. Other women in the community were often the most suspicious in one community. FGDS, for example, one married woman stated bluntly: 'A widow or divorced woman has more sexual desire' ...the assumption was that women without men were desperate to find new men and would use their wiles to do so (2014: 920).

Based on the foregoing, the general attitude on the sexuality of widows is one of infringement. They are suspected and/or feared suspicion by married women who formed vigilantes, their grooming would earn them accusation of trying to woo married men and sex is generally regarded as illicit and shameful in most African peasant societies.

Similarly, Owen (1996) writing in his book about, 'Sex and Sexuality' of the widows in West and most industrialized societies, notes that they suffer like their colleagues in developing societies. This is because married women perceive them as potential threats to their marriages. She explains that:

Even in the west, young and middle-aged widows risk being regarded as easily available, sex-starved and anxiously seeking some new relationship. In the West the term 'merry widow', used to describe widows past prime who enjoy themselves, has asexual connotation. Such attitudes account for why married women regard widows and divorced women a threat and are unwilling them in social gathering (1996: 72).

In the same way, Omari (2013) in her study on sexual violence in Eldoret Municipality underscored the fact that among the Kikuyu community men define themselves as the dominant sex and see women as objects at their disposal. This also reflects the sentiments expressed by Owen (1996, 80) whose research work suggest that patriarchal societies view widows' sexuality either as belonging to men or something to be ignored.

Other studies have shown that in-laws are becoming less willing to inherit the widows of the relatives because of the economic burden of supporting a widow and her family as well as the risk of acquiring HIV/AIDS from these widows and vice versa (Agot, 2005 and Ambasa-Shisanya, 2007). On the other hand, an ambivalent picture is painted. An example is with the study carried out among eighty-three widows from Mambai Sub-location, Wodanga, in Sabatia, North Maragoli. The study established that forty-two percent of widows resisted inheritance while forty-seven percent accepted for reasons of either economic, insecurity or because they wanted to bear sons to affirm their social status (Gwako, 1998).

These studies are very important to the current study. They explored the issue of widow sexuality in various contexts. They also highlighted on the situation of widows in various contexts as they navigate to affirm their positions using their sexuality. Revealed are also factors that determine widow's choices pertaining to her sexual life. Summarily, the widow is not in charge of her sexual life. Factor which more often are beyond her control, come to play. Accordingly, studies reviewed contributed a great deal to bettering this work. Yet glaring gaps existed both in context and content. This necessitated the current study that examined Christian influence on widow sexuality among the *Abanyole*.

2.3 Christian Perception on Widows' Sexuality

Christian community is both a spiritual and a physical gathering of the saints. This dual nature of the church has been emphasized in Bible. As a spiritual gathering it is mainly concerned with salvation in eschatological sense while its physical nature addresses itself to the here and now redemptive work of God as espoused in Luke 4:18. The concern of this study focuses on the later. Alela (2007) and Obwoye (2011) have not only demonstrated that social concern is part of the mission of the church but also that the church is strategically positioned to fulfill this noble mandate. They both report of dilapidating socio-economic situation of women in Emuhaya. Their studies recommend that the church should do more in establishing its adherents in this region economically. Their studies greatly enriched this work by providing a broader picture of the church among the *Abanyole*. Nevertheless, they were not explicit on the situation, especially sexuality, of widows who flock these churches. This content gap that existed required that this study be undertaken.

Kassily (2004) implores the church to take cues from the gender and status power revolutionary Jesus' earthly ministry to re-orient its own. She opines that Jesus' revolutionized attitudes on women should characterize the church and by extension, the society within which the church operates. She argues that Christian women need to reexamine the scriptures and participate in continuing synthesis of their past situation and present opportunities as opposed to welcoming dogmas and biblical interpretations imposed on them by some churches and theologians. They should instead yield to the ongoing contextual illumination of scripture.

In the same way Dreyer, a professor of Practical Theology at the University of Pretoria, underscores the ongoing duty of the Christian church in creating a conducive and humane living environment by embracing continual theologizing. He reiterates:

In order for human beings to create a —humane society, critical theologians find it important to remain suspicious of a dehumanizing *status quo*. In order to open up the possibility of authentic humanity for all people it is necessary to be aware that constructs and social patterns are human creations, not God-given structures. Therefore they have the potential to do harm or be evil. A dehumanizing system will affect those with less and those with more power: —When the systems operative in a culture are demeaning and dehumanizing, a vicious circle is set in motion in which women and men are prevented from developing the full humanity to which they are called. At the same time fractured humanity is incapable of creating a society that is truly human. Postmodern philosophy and theology create awareness of the harm that is done when human constructs are purported to be God-given and unchanging (Dreyer, 2008: 522).

These works were not specifically on widow sexuality. Nonetheless, they were helpful in providing fodder for urging the church to engage in and providing a model for developing an authentic *Abanyole* Christian theology on widow sexuality.

Conversely, Maseno (2014) through her extensive study on widows' experiences and the accruing Christology outline their experience as uncovering, lack of assistance, loneliness and loss of significant relationship. She seems not to have encountered sexuality as an issue or chose to treat it as a non-issue or widows chose not to talk about it because it is tabooed. Whatever the reason, this study noted this important gap of information that it sought to fill.

The Bible carries several episodes that relate to widows and their sexuality. Two from the Old Testament stand out: Tamar (Genesis 38) and Ruth (in the Book of Ruth in the

Bible). These stories reflect both a demand for justice in already established inequitable system and a ridicule of false self righteousness in a male subjugated society. Both cases celebrate the widows for their initiative that gives them a name in their hitherto unjust culture. These women were willing to go against the grain by initiating a process for their justice. In a nutshell, the Old Testament culture demonstrates the need and a culturally sound provision for widows meeting the sexual needs.

The New Testament, especially Pauline Epistles, seem to give uncritical praise of widows remaining celibate in its handling of widows and their bodies. There is a seeming discrimination on widows who remarry or engage in other form of quasi-marriage when it came to the inclusion on the roll for material care of widows (1 Timothy 5: 9-10). Younger widows are portrayed as sensuous in pursuit for self gratification hence, unfit for Church work and care. Paul advices Timothy to have these ones remarry as a way to tame them (1 Timothy 5: 11-15). The way through which these widows are to remarry is not prescribed.

However, the story of Ann, the prophetess, hails a young widow for her life of celibacy. She lived with her husband for only seven years. Celibacy is herein demonstrated as an epitome of religious discipline. The story is climaxed by insinuating that celibacy was the basis for her seeing baby Jesus (Luke 3:36- 38). The story demonstrates that sensuality is not about age. Even young widows are able to commit to church work. Nevertheless the manner in which they perceive and meet their sexual needs is of concern to us.

Nyengele (2004) writes about Africa feminist theology. She describes it as a liberation theology whose preoccupation is a freer society where men and women live and relate with one another without oppression. It explores and exposes issues of gender discrimination in African culture that oppress and demean male and female humanity. Furthermore, African feminist theology seeks the liberation of both men and women as for the entire creation in order to effectively participate in progression of the creation. Nyengele (2004) notes the recurring themes in African Feminist Theology: 1) Male domination of family relations; 2) Cultural expectations of marriage and motherhood; 3) Gender factors affecting women's mental health; 4) Unequal distribution of work in the household; 5) Discrimination in education and economics; 6) Violence against women and the issues of women's silence; and, 7) Neglect of women's individuality.

Nyengele (2004) thus establishes, as a matter of fact, that families and societies subject women to suffering. She explains that societal and family values and practices subjugate and downgrade women to the margins. Her work was useful to the current study in highlighting that African Feminist Theology has reflected on issues that affect women and has noted their marginalized status. It, however, did not focus on the *Abanyole* and widow sexuality which is the concern for the current study.

2.4 Factors Responsible for the Christian Perception on Widows' Sexuality

Owen's (1996) survey revealed various factors responsible for the negative perception of widows' sexuality. They include situation responsible or reasons given for the behavior of and on a widow. These factors determine whether the widow continues sexual

expression or becomes a voluntary _celibate‘. They can be summed up as: age at which one is widowed, the family status of the widow, economic status of the widow, health status of the widow, previous sex experiences of the widow, prevailing cultural codes on sex, and prevailing religious codes on sex. The same train of thought is taken by Theological Advisory Group’s research entitled, A Biblical Approach to Marriage and family in Africa (1994: 163-166).

According to Hillman (2012: 11- 20) age is a factor in the way people perceive sexuality. However, perception is not static. It has varied over a period of time within cultures. He notes that, historically, in biblical and medieval times as in the contemporary society —sexual relations among the older people were viewed as evil, immoral, perverse, inappropriate, impossible, or pathetically comical, at best.¶ This notion was modified and perpetuated by the church in the Middle Ages where sexual intercourse was strictly reserved for procreation thus older people were discouraged from engaging in any type of sexual behavior as it was sinful. Cross-culturally, there is a general approval of sexual activity among the older adults in majority cultures. Citing Winn and Newton’s (1982) study, Hillman reports:

More than 106 cultures less than 3% of those cultures were found to have societal sanctions or prohibitions against older people having sex. An analysis of the data gathered by the anthropologists, sociologists, and psychologists studying these cultures revealed that 70% and more than 84% of the societies reported sexual activity among its older male and female members, respectively. In many Eastern and Middle Eastern cultures, men and women commonly engaged in sexual relations well beyond the age of 100 and 80, respectively. African cultures maintained that impotence was not a normal function of old age, but an unnatural loss of ability resulting from illness or witchcraft. In the majority of these traditional cultures, menopause was not associated with either more or less sexual activity

among older women; it simply represented a —point in a woman’s life. In certain African and Asiatic cultures, an older women’s physical attractiveness appeared unrelated to her sexual status; toothless, older women were considered as sexually desirable as younger women. Thus, sexual activity among older men and women in traditional societies is common, and apparently readily accepted throughout most of the world.

An additional difference noted between these traditional societies and our own was that although a double standard appeared to operate with regard to sexuality and aging, it appeared to be in the opposite direction. Specifically, older women were more likely to engage in sexual relations than older men, and older women were often described (in more than one-fourth of the cultures) as becoming less sexually inhibited and more sexually aggressive with advancing age. In certain South American and Eastern cultures, older women were designated teachers for sexually inexperienced young men. Older women also were described as commonly taking younger men for husbands or sex partners, ostensibly because there were few male partners available of their own age. Other older women in South American, Eastern, and North American Indian cultures were described as dressing more seductively, baring their breasts more often in public, and delighting in off-color jokes once past the age of 60 (2012: 13-14).

Family status is another factor that determines a widow’s sexual behavior. This is to do with the size of her family – number and age of her children. It is generally observed that number and age of a widow’s children greatly influences the decision made on her sexual behavior. The children determine the behavior depending on their attitude. As reported of the traditional practice of widow- inheritance in Uganda by Nyanzi (2011) the older widows who do not engage in this practice face severe social consequences. As noted in Hillman (2012:14):

If an older widow does not remarry, her adult children are expected to monitor and oversee her sexual behavior. Because traditional Ugandan beliefs indicate that sexuality is acceptable primarily for procreation, most adult children actively scold, chastise, or actively prohibit their widowed mothers from dating and having other sexual relationships.

Thus it is important to discern the impact of children on sexual beliefs and behavior among the *Abanyole* Christian widows. According to GSLC’s lens of cumulative

(dis)advantages, children and the status of the family will determine widow's sexual beliefs and behavior.

Rebec, Karnjuš, Ličen and Babnik (2015) in their article, *Breaking Down Taboos Concerning Sexuality among the elderly*, extensively discussed the physiological and psychosocial aspects of sexuality among elderly. They alluded to many factors that encourage or hinder the expression of sexuality among the elderly. They note that physiological changes in elderly women include: dryness and vaginal atrophy, shorter and narrowed vagina, reduced vaginal discharge and shorter clitoris. They also outline distress caused by —urinary incontinence, removal of the uterus and some other chronic diseases‖ which affects sexual functioning, emotional state, self esteem and eventually, interpersonal relationship. However, they also note that women experience a release of libido leading to increased desire for sexual contact at this stage because they are no longer afraid of conception to need contraceptives. Even so, older persons are still perceived to be —without sexual needs or incapable of sexual activity.‖ As a result, the elderly people —suppress their sexual needs and start to behave in accordance to these beliefs‖ which are contrary to the reality (2015: 191-192).

On the social factors they discuss the impact of gender, race, ethnicity, educational and environmental background, socioeconomic status, financial resource, and religion on sexuality of the elderly. They underscore the suppression of sexual activity through internalization of negative cultural attitudes, myths and stereotypes about sexuality of elderly. Moreover, religion has demonized sexual activity of the elderly by restricting sexual intercourse to the purpose of procreation.

Though important studies, however, they do not relate the sexual plight of the widows to particular religious context of the *Abanyole*. It is also difficult to do an in depth study on all cultures of the world. This study made deliberate effort to examine reasons given by the *Abanyole* Christians for their perception of the widows' sexuality.

2.5 Conceptual Framework

Villanueva (1997: 9) notes that the social nature of sexual scripts and the supposition of the sexual construction of sexuality require a social constructionist/feminist perspective—to guide the methodology and the interpretation of the research findings. This research sought to explore the Christian influence on widow sexuality among the *Abanyole*. Therefore it required a combination of social constructionist conceptual frameworks that have feminist perspective and Christian bias.

2.5.1 Feminist Perspectives

Widows are the focus for this study. They are a subsection of the female gender. This study employed feminist perspectives as embraced in gender systems in order to perceive gender identities, roles and structures relating to male and female activities within the context of study. Feminist perspectives have extensively been employed in gender studies and related fields to understand gender relations in different contexts but the study relied mostly on the most recent work among the *Abanyole* widows by Maseno (2014). Onsongo (2007) in her study of women working in public universities prefers to refer to feminist perspectives as feminist theory. Villanueva in her research entitled, *The Social Construction of Sexuality: Personal Meanings, Perceptions of Sexual Experience, and* 36

Females' Sexuality in Puerto Rico' preferred to call this framework, feminine perspectives. Feminist perspectives are many as she notes. However, they all point at common basic assumption that institutions in the society marginalize females making them —invisible and powerless by denying them a voice (1997: 9).|| She goes on to explain:

The feminist agenda begins with documenting inequity and subjection, it analyzes the conflicting information about roles of women, the camouflaging subjugation, and how women wrestle, accept, or still conspire with their domination It confronts the representation of women as submissively exploited and offended and portrays women as pacesetters of their own destiny in spite of their fate These perspectives afford women with an expectation. On the contrary, the non feminist conventional researches down plays or cover the knowledge and lived out experiences of women ... (Villanueva 1997: 9).

Feminine perspectives, therefore, posit a vantage point for the study on issues relating to women through its methods, assumptions, tools, purpose and metaphors. It seeks to locate women status in their various constituents and champion for their emancipation. It is generally friendly and empathetic in its examination of women within their socio-cultural environment. Feminist perspectives relate to the current study because the study sought to locate the status of widows among the *Abanyole*. Its assumptions that women are marginalized as far as sexual power and privileges are concerned; methods of and tools that encourage women to speak and reflect on their social situation; purpose of awakening women consciousness to champion for their own emancipation; and their metaphors that describe women status as marginalized were handy to this study.

2.5.2 Gender Sexuality over the Life Course (GSLC)

The other navigating concept in this study was the Gendered Sexuality over the Life Course (GSLC). Benston and Allen (1993) explain that life course perspective examines family transmissions and transitions through a span of time and their accrued shared meanings. Through its lenses a keen interest is given to social meaning of life events, individual development, and the development of relationships overtime. It is handy for unpacking sexual scripts and meanings derived from the interaction between socio-cultural sources and individual experiences in time within specific context and process.

Carpenter (2010) developed this into a full blown conceptual model. She explains that it is comprehensive because it applies to all aspects of sexual life and incorporates —recent developments in life course sociology, feminist theory, and sexuality studies— and is transferable. This noble concept is useful for unraveling widow’s sexual beliefs and behavior because it combines tenets from life course sociology, feminist theory, and the scripting approach to sexuality. It posits that:

Sexual beliefs and behaviors result from individuals’ lifelong accumulation of advantageous and disadvantageous experiences, and their adoption and rejection of sexual scripts, within specific socio-historical contexts. Women and men follow distinctive sexual trajectories to the extent that they accrue gender-specific experiences and scripts and insofar as their gender and sexuality trajectories intertwine (Carpenter 2010: 157).

Carpenter demonstrates that more knowledge about gendered sexuality is discerned by employing all elements comprised in the GSLC model. That is, transitions, turning points, and their timing; cumulative (dis)advantages at individual and group levels; agency; physiological processes; intersections with other trajectories; doing gender;

adoption/rejection of sexual scripts; and the effect of generation, sexual identity, and other aspects of social identity. She goes ahead to explain advantages of the concept in the study of sexuality as follows:

The GSLC model improves on existing conceptual frameworks for studying life course sexuality in several ways. It provides crucial tools for unpacking the lifelong chains of (dis)advantageous transitions within sexual, gender, and other life trajectories that accumulate to produce patterns of similarity and difference across individuals and groups. It also helps to illuminate processes of change and continuity in individual sexual lives, including the means through which people select and reject sexual scripts. Moreover, by elucidating the mutual construction of gender and sexuality over the life course, the GLSC framework significantly improves on conceptual models of sexuality that treat gender as a relatively fixed master status and life course models that fail to view gender as an ongoing biographical construction and/or that neglect the intertwining of gender and sexuality. The GSLC model holds particular promise for studying complex phenomena like sexual agency and interest in sex, the lifelong unfolding of which is poorly captured by models that treat life stages in isolation. Critically, it can also improve knowledge about sexuality in mid- and later life—stages that are understudied, especially relative to the increasing proportion of the U.S. population they represent.

This was a useful tool in understanding the development of perception of women sexuality. Hence, this conceptual framework was suitable for this study because of the tools it provided to aid in understanding the relationship between gender and sexuality and specifically as they relate to widowhood. These tools laid bare the fact that widows occupy a social space characterized by intersection of gender, sexual identity and widowhood transition within a specific socio-cultural context.

2.5.3 Sexual Scripts

Sexual scripts concept refers to beliefs and practices of sexuality of a particular people group as determined within their social context. Villanueva (1997) describes sexuality as

a social construction that reveals conduct meeting specific needs and is qualitatively different for children and adults. Thus, this concept came in handy in discerning and interrogating who, when, what, where, how and why of the widows' sexual behaviors and activities among the *Abanyole* Christian widows.

Sexual scripts as a concept is handy in discerning how women construct their sexuality and attain a sexual identity. Villanueva demonstrated that this concept perceives sexuality as a social construction dependent on prevailing socio-economic environment. She defines it as "the implicit rules that individuals develop for themselves regarding the who, when, what, where, and how of their sexual behaviors and activities"; "repertoire of acts and statuses that are recognized by a social group, together with the rules, expectations, and sanctions governing these acts and sanctions"; —the blueprints of sexuality, the specific guidelines or rules that individuals develop that determine their sexual behaviors and activities; and as a conveyor of —messages regarding sexual normalcy, sexual power, and appropriate sexual expression (1997: 19).

2.5.4 Other Conceptual Frameworks

Liberation Theology was promulgated by Gutierrez (1968), and expanded on by Segundo, (1976); Boff (1982) and Mugambi (2003). It is a critical reflection on praxis in the light of the scripture. The category characterized as the weak recognizes their potential to pursue their liberation. It conjectures that socio-political process represents a radical engagement for Christianity with the world, with the intent to represent human freedom and God's gratuitous activity in the questions and issues of the day. This framework was

handy in examining how widows in sampled churches among the *Abanyole* have engaged/should engage their Christian faith to attain cultural and social liberation.

Finally, the Social Reconstruction theory was employed to infer how Christianity has encouraged widows to be less depended on others, be strong, shrewd and resourceful in order to protect their rights as women. It premises on the *imago dei* concept. Getui (2001: 30) articulates it better, —God has created each one of us in that we are individually capable of contributing constructively towards the improvement of our social condition. Its framework is on the socio-political processes within history, in a specific cultural context. Thus, the concept was befitting this study.

2.5.5 *Abanyole Sexual Scripts*

There is no study carried out on *Abanyole* sexual scripts that I know of. Thus much of what is available is from primary sources which only remotely recall the traditional perspective that is elusive. Thus a few anecdotes will suffice to paint a picture of the *Abanyole* belief and practice on sexuality, especially of widows. As noted from studies on other societies, especially in Asia and Africa, sexual power and privilege are engendered and thus distributed differently according to ones sex with men being given an upper hand as compared to their women counterparts (Villanueva, 1997; Hillman, 2012 and Alati, 2016).

Abanyole, the target population, are generally a patriarchal people with clan and family names derived from the male patriarchs (Appendix I). This social setting allows for men to possess ultimate authority. Such a world view is responsible for the gender-based 41

stereotypical social construction that subjugates women and girls among the *Abanyole* people. As Alati observes:

Women among the *Abanyole* are relegated to submissive inferior socio-political status in the distribution of resources and power. The family prepares individuals for their culturally constrained gender roles towards transitions to adulthood. The boys are expected to gain more independence as they begin to court girls for marriage. The construction of *esimba* 'a small hut' after *esisebo* 'circumcision' is a demonstration that a boy is ready to free himself from the influence of the parents. The boy is discouraged from sitting in the kitchen or performing female chores as the boys are taught and trained to defend their families, clans and communities in case of external aggression. Traditionally, they are given war paraphernalia such as the shield, bow and arrow once they are initiated and graduate into manhood (2016: 90).

Villanueva (1997: 15-16) paints a picture of sexual culture in Puerto Rico which is a reflection of the *Abanyole* way of life. The men are encouraged to be very open and active sexually. The society celebrates men who show power and control over women. The *Abanyole* sexual culture perceives women as sexual objects whose obligation is to meet the desires and needs of men and that their main sexual goal is reproduction.

Omukhaye [a virtuous woman] is the aspiration and ideal of females as obedient, docile yet industrious. It is based on women's cultural-religious requirement to model the ideal woman in the *Abanyole* culture reinforced by the Judo-Christian virtuous woman of Proverbs 31 who is seen as the ideal for women's lives. From this orientation, a woman is supposed to be quiet, passive, and sexually available for her husband while placing no importance on her own pleasure. She is to demonstrate lack of understanding or resolve about sex. The *Abanyole* men scout for marriage, women ought to be innocent and preferably inexperienced when it comes to sex.

In courtship, *Abanyole* young people were encouraged to get intimate and show affection by touching in public. Nonetheless, young women were warned to keep their boyfriends' advances under check because any indulgence would cost their potential marriage. Sex related differences through lifespan are common place among the *Abanyole*. This is also true among the Puerto Rican community as noted from by Villanueva (1997: 15-16),

Regardless of age female widows are not expected to remarry or seek a male companionship out of respect for their late husbands. Contrary to men, who are expected to remarry soon to fulfill their "need for women", females should not be seeking sexual fulfillment after a spouse's death.

Women are expected to sacrifice their own needs for the benefit of their families ... there is a tendency for the working class to be more traditional in their sexual values and that more educated, economically advantaged females, and to a lesser extent males, tend not to place as much importance on these traditional beliefs.

Alati affirms this notion among the *Abanyole* in his observation:

In the Olunyole conversations, male dominance and authority over their female counterparts is evident in the expressions related to sex and sexuality (Makokha, 2012). A wife is culturally expected to give in to the husband's desire for sex without questioning. The idiom *okhwima omusatsa obukono-*to deny one's husband bedding' is used only in reference to women. The idiom depicts sex as man's right and a woman's duty to submit to the husband's demand. A wife who fails in this duty is reprimanded in a formal clan gathering and may even be sent back to her parents. The informants, Otieno, Oyule and Amukhuma, in the study observe that women are not expected to openly express sexual desire and emotions, for any woman doing so is regarded immoral (2016: 124).

Thus for the *Abanyole*, sex is within marriage between a husband and wife/wives primarily for reproduction. Its powers and privilege lie in the hands of the male partners. Widows are bequeathed with the privilege of continuing their sexual life within culturally prescribed boundaries.

2.6 Summary

The reviewed literary works have demonstrated that issues concerning widows are becoming of interest to researchers, social scientists, civil right activists and policy makers. It has also been established that widows occupy an intersection that is characterized with multiple marginalization. This position therefore puts a widow in a situation that calls for a specific discerning. It has also been demonstrated that most works on widowhood have considered their economic, social and political situation. However, the studies on widows' sexuality relate it to HIV/AIDS and cultural practices, despite sexuality being the very core of human identity, being and expression. This has persisted even in the wake of the seventh Sustainable Development Goal that envisions reduction of gender disparity and women empowerment. Hillman draws from Nyanzi to underscore the cultural norm that is representative of most African cultures and its justification as follows:

Nyanzi (2011) provides a detailed ethnographic analysis of —widow-inheritance, a Ugandan tradition in which a widow is expected to marry her brother-in-law or another relative after the conclusion of final funeral rites. According to Nyanzi, this traditional practice was designed to allow aging women to reassume sexual activity and be taken care of financially, as well as to maintain the integrity and status of the patriarchal family clan (2012: 14).

In this regard there is no study that has been done so far on the relationship between Christianity and widows' sexuality among the *Abanyole*. This comes on the backdrop of many studies demonstrating religion as a factor in social change and maintenance of status quo. The church among the *Abanyole* must be providing the widows with a

copying mechanism in addressing their needs as sexual beings. This study therefore, examined Christian influence on widows' sexuality among *Abanyole* of Emuhaya.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

This chapter represents the research methodology that was employed in conducting this study. It details a selected research design, what exactly was done and how it was done. The following elements in the undertaking this research is herein outlined: research design adopted; definition of the research site; exploration of the target population and sampling strategy; description of the research instruments used on selected study population; data collection, analysis and presentation techniques; explanation of steps taken to ensure validity and reliability; and highlights on ethical considerations made in the course of the study.

3.1 Research Design

Research design deals with methods and procedures employed in collecting and analyzing the needed information in a given study. It is a description of a research approach, study setting, sampling size, sampling technique, tools and methods of data collection and analysis (Kothari, 2010; Hansen & Kautz, 2005; Crotty, 1998; Giddings, 2006). Factors that determine the selection of a particular research design include: the nature of problem, purpose of the study, researcher's knowledge and experience, researcher's interest and motivation, research ethics and principles, resources, time, subject and participants (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Giddings, 2006).

This study aimed at examining the influence of Christianity on the perception on widows' sexuality. The nature of the problem and the solution sought called for a qualitative approach in the collection and analysis of information. This is because there was no much reporting on statistics which require a quantitative approach. Ethical dilemma experienced while collecting data on the subject were noted. They were premised on the delicate issues pertaining sexuality. Hence, there was a challenge in recruiting and engaging participants on the subject.

This study adopted a descriptive research design to collect, measure and analyze data. Descriptive research design is best for investigating behavior (Bryman, 2001; Woods, 1986; and Cresswell, 2003). Descriptive design is a fact-finding research design that gives an opportunity to reach information in its natural setting (Frankael & Wallen, 2000). In such design data is collected from members of a population in order to determine the status of that population with respect to one or more variables (Mugenda & Mugenda, 1999). The design was employed because it is simple and easy to use in collecting relatively large amount of information from a small sample within a short time (Robson, 2002).

In addition, this research yields itself to a feminist research practice because of the questions asked, the relationship between the researcher and the key informants and its purpose (Maseno, 2014 and Onsongo, 2007). The practice is handy in studies that seek understanding of gendered power relations, consciousness raising, and women's emancipation (Onsongo, 2007). Most researchers that engage in feminist research practice prefer to employ qualitative research design because of the preeminence it gives

to the —listening to, recording and understanding women’s own descriptions and accounts (Onsongo, 2007: 30). Perry *et al*’s (2014) research on ‘Widow cleansing and inheritance among the Luo in Kenya: the need for additional women-centered HIV prevention options’ serves an example.

3.2 Area of Study

An extensive description of geographical, social, political and religious aspects of the study area re give to aid locate and appreciate *Abanyole* widows and Christian influence in their sexuality. The former Emuhaya District which is in the Western part of Kenya was the study area in this research (see Appendix F, G & H). Kenya is one of the 55 countries that make up the African continent. It is part of the East African Community bloc being located on the eastern side of the Continent. It covers an area of 582,646 square kilometers. The country sits on the equator which divides it into two almost equal parts. Kenya has only eleven percent arable land which sits in the southern part of the country. Sixty-seven percent of the northern part is either a desert or semi-desert.

According to Eshiwani (1980), Kenya can be divided into five geographical regions: the Lake Basin, Central and Associated Highlands, Eastern Plateau Foreland, Coast, and North-East Plateau. These regions display varied climatic conditions and weather patterns ranging from extremely wetlands to extremely dry lands; from extremely cold to extremely hot temperatures. These weather condition influences the country’s population distribution and the social life of the people. However, the 2010 promulgation of the

current Constitution saw Kenya partitioned into forty-seven administrative units referred to as counties.

Emuhaya is located in the Lake Basin that is well watered. It is found in the current Vihiga County, Western Kenya. The people of Emuhaya are *Abanyole*, a sub-tribe of the Luhya tribe who are Bantus (Appendix J). The land (Emuhaya) is also referred to as *Bunyore*, therefore the terms *Ebunyole*, Emuhaya and Bunyore in most works, as in this study, are used interchangeably to mean the region, territory, location or land inhabited by the *Abanyole* people (Appendix H). Consequently, the study area has grown as an administrative unit from a Location under a single chief to a Division then as a District (Appendix H). Currently, Bunyore makes up two of the five sub-counties of the now Vihiga County, viz. Emuhaya and Luanda (Appendix I).

According to Makokha (1977) *Abanyole*, the focus of this study cover a land mass of about 180 square kilometers. However, Alela (2007) cites other source that puts it at 160 square kilometers. The Equator runs through the southern part of Bunyore. Politically, the *Abanyole* people border the Luo on the South and West, the Maragoli on the East, Kisa on the North and Idakho on the North-East. Prominent physical features in Bunyore include granite boulders, unbroken series of hills and valleys, winding and hitherto drying medium-sized streams and springs.

Culture is a very revealing aspect of peoples' philosophy and persuasion. Simply put, culture is people's way of life. The *Abanyole* people, as other peoples of Africa, have a way of life that revolves around birth, initiation, marriage and death. Though the

Abanyole have embraced various shades of Christianity and in varied degree, their way of life is clearly depicted in the way they carry themselves out, especially in times of new birth, marriage and death. At such time the cultural way of doing things is invoked and sometime Christianized to fit the times (Alati, 2016).

The main economic activity in Emuhaya is subsistence mixed farming. The bulky economic returns are from salaries and wages earned from employment in educational, religious, and government institutions in this area and remittances from the *Abanyole* who are working and living in other places. Other widespread economic activities in Bunyore are small scale trading and motor bike taxi services (Alela 2007; Emuhaya District Development Plan, 2009).

Farming as the main occupation among the *Abanyole* is bedeviled by the diminished land holding due to high population density and climate change. The population explosion and erratic climatic conditions of the study area cannot, as will be later demonstrated, allow for much profitable farming. Thus, the majority of those engaged in farming, practice mixed farming with an agro-business bias though with meager results. This explains the limping state of dairy, goat, fish, pig, bee, poultry and horticultural farming despite the government and NGOs' efforts in the study area (Emuhaya District Development Plan, 2009).

Formal employment and casual labor forms the chief source of income. Others simply live on remittances from those employed. The education sector is the main employer and revenue earner among the *Abanyole*, with others serving as health workers, clerks,

administrators, clergy, *matatu* operators and shop attendants among others (Emuhaya District Development Plan, 2009).

Transport sector also contributes substantially to the livelihood of the residents of Emuhaya. Many young men and a few women are gainfully engaged in transport provision. The main contributor in this section is *Boda-boda*. Young men ferry people and goods within the area and its environs using motorbikes. Others are hired as drivers or touts by trucks and pickup owners that offer transport. This is the economic hub for many young men in the study area, earning barely enough for their daily meal (Emuhaya District Development Plan, 2009).

Abanyole men, women and youths are engaged in small scale businesses at their trading centers, homes and sometimes through hawking goods. Three main market centers include Luanda, Esibuye and Kilingili. Luanda market pride itself for recording the highest turn-over in the County and Region, although the products exchanged originate outside of the area sometimes leaving the residents with little margins of returns accrued as wages, commissions, rent or profit (Emuhaya District Development Plan, 2009).

Notably, there is high rate of youth unemployment in the study area just as in other parts of the country. As such, most of the schooled young people, especially men, are disillusioned due to seemingly shuttered hopes and have become social misfits given to substance abuse and orgies. These youths have become a problem to the society as echoed in the words of Ngunjiri (2016) in his article: —State ought to double efforts in creating Jobs for Youthl:

The problem of youth unemployment extends far beyond the immediate crisis of individual lacking a wage: longer-term national threats include political instability, the viability of the county's fiscal and social security systems and the social integration of non-productive generation.

Government initiatives for economic empowerment through Women and Youth Fund and value addition on produce have borne little results among the *Abanyole* compared to the set targets and relative to other parts of the country like Central. The ferocious cycle of poverty and deplorable living condition for many among the *Abanyole* remain unbroken from generation to generation (cf. Alela, 2007). Many have blamed it on the negative response of the people (Makokha, 1977). Some feel that this is as a result of other stakeholders neglecting their rightful duty (Obwoye, 2011). Others laud it on the insensitivity of the intervening entities to the specific undercurrents bedeviling the community which leads to abusive and ineffective approach. Still others credit it to the solitary nature of *Omunyole* that does not support socialistic dictates that come with government and NGO interventions. Whatever the explanation, Bunyore remains in a state of wanton livelihood characterized by insecurity, high HIV/AIDS prevalence, drug and substance abuse and sadistic poverty. Thus, the high population that is supposed to be its currency has become a liability.

This makes Emuhaya, as Makokha (1977: 9) observes, —a peasant proletarian locality. The area does not produce any cash crop, has no institution of higher learning, and does not have any factory or industry or processing plant. Therefore, the elite from Emuhaya and young people, especially men, seeking for better employment and returns to support their families opt out of this area. This, may be, explains the phenomenon of women being the majority in the church in Bunyore.

Generally the study area has a very high population density given its rural setting. According to the Emuhaya District Statistic Office, the population estimation by 2012 was expected to stand as in Table 1.

Table 3.1: Emuhaya District Population by Size and Density

Division	Area/Size in Km ²	Male	Female	Total	Density persons/km ²
Luanda	98.6	56,965	65,525	122,217	1,240
Emuhaya	74.6	42,077	49,458	91,535	1,227
Total	173.2	99,042	114,710	213,752	1,234

Source: Emuhaya District Development Plan, 2009

From the statistics above, it is notable that the female population is slightly higher than that of males. This could be explained by both mobility and average life expectancy of the area. Statistical analysis given also explains the prevalence of widows among *Abanyole*. Emuhaya District was estimated to have an adult population of 97,350 by 2012. This figure would comprise of 46.3% male and 53.7% female. The household heads by sex: 62.9% male and 37.1% female. Widows and widowers head of household was put at 21.5%. Of this, widows are the majority. Generally the widows in Bunyore, Emuhaya from the statistics given would be estimated at 4,624. The prevalence of widowhood in Bunyore is generally high due to female life expectancy being higher than that of men, early marriage of women, polygyny and a widespread practice of widower remarriage.

Obwoye (2011, 43) in his study on the role of the Church of God (K) in Alleviating Poverty in Emuhaya presents denominational distribution in Emuhaya as follows:

Table 3.2: Denominations, Number of Congregations and Membership among the *Abanyole*

Name of the Denomination	Number of Congregations	Membership
COG (K)	141	180,000
ACK	90	13,000
PAG	45	10,000
African Israel Church	39	7,200
Nineveh		
Salvation Army	36	3,400
AIC	21	1,400
Jehovah Witness	17	800
Revival Church	30	2,000
Coptic Church	6	1,900
New Hope Church	6	1,200
Dini ya Msambwa	-	-
Legio Maria	-	-
Church of Christ	-	-

Source: Obwoye 2011, 43

The table above was important in providing data on the denominational strength among *Abanyole* that informed the selection respondents. Bunyore could well be described as having embraced all type of Christian expression in a varying degree. It has mainline missionary (Western), African initiated (folk) and neo-Pentecostal revival types of Christianity. There are claims that Christianity has been in Africa and in Kenya, for that matter, long enough to qualify being one of the African religions. This means that the *Abanyole* way of life is largely influenced by their ‘Christian’ philosophy. Yet other scholars have established that Christianity is not in many ways well understood among the *Abanyole* people. They fill pews in their numbers but do not display life changes befitting their Christian claim (Jenkins 2003).

In this study no effort is made to check the level of respondents’ commitment to Christianity that they profess. It is taken that participants are Christians because they say so and identify themselves with particular denominational church grouping in Bunyore. The teachings, programs, activities and behavior of these types of Christianity on the subject were blended to construe a Christian response to widows’ sexuality among the *Abanyole*.

3.3 Target Population

Widows among the *Abanyole* formed the target population. As noted by Young (2006), statistics on widowhood in Emuhaya as in other communities in Africa, are either unavailable or unreliable (cf. Alela, 2007: 225). The computation from Emuhaya District Development Plan (2009) puts their population at 4,624 while Kima Integrated

Community Initiative Project (KICIP), an NGO that works with orphans and widows in the area puts it at 740 in the same period. This study was about widows who form the bulk of the respondent. However, church leaders and other opinion leaders among the *Abanyole* were involved in the study to ensure a balanced view on the subject. Due to the nature of the study, kinds of data to be generated and the qualitative approach chosen, the researcher did not deem statistical data to be of great consequence. The Christian community among the *Abanyole* became the focus of this study's unit of observation.

3.4 Sampling Technique and Sample Size

Singleton (1988) describes a sample design as part of the research design that indicates how cases are to be selected for interviews. A combination of personal inquiry and self-selection sampling technique were employed to draw a sample size of 40 respondents. The researcher contacted respondents he knew who in the end led him to others. The researcher employed purposive sampling technique to get to the respondents who would provide relevant information. This means that respondents were hand-picked because of their experience and insight regarding the Christian influence on widows' sexuality among the *Abanyole*. (cf. Kinoti, 1998).

This research being qualitative that intended to explore the experiences of the widows in-depth, the researcher worked with a small number of respondents (Boyce & Neale, 2006).

Emuhaya District was selected because of several reasons. First, there is a prevalence of the widowhood phenomenon in this area. Second, due to its rural and peasant proletarian nature, its people, the *Abanyole*, are culturally and religiously homogeneous. Third, the

researcher as a native of this area is fluent in *Lunyore*, the language of the Abanyole people. This saved on time and resource since there was no need for a translator and already had contacts of potential respondents. Lastly, this area has a substantial number of ordained female clergy that would help shed light on Christian influence on widows' sexuality.

Three denominations that represent different shades of Christianity, (COGEA(K), AICN and NHOM) and have the highest numerical strength within *Abanyole*, were selected to give a picture of Christian influence on widows' sexuality. The representation is as follows: COGEA(K) representing mainline missionary Christianity, AICN representing the African Initiated Christianity and NHOM representing the new religious movements and Neo-Pentecostalism in Africa.

A total of 40 (forty) respondents: 16 (twenty) widows (Table 3.3); 4 (four) Emuhaya *Maendeleo ya Wanawake* leaders; 12 (twelve) Church leaders (Table 3.4); 1 (one) social worker and 1 (one) from the ministry of Health and 1 (one) from Gender, Social and Development serving at Emuhaya; and 5 (five) elders _experts' on *Abanyole* culture (Table 3.5) were interviewed and engaged in Focus Group Discussions.

Sampling was undertaken as follows: first, for widows, I began by writing down the names of widows that I knew or were suggested to me through my contact persons their age, location (either Luanda or Emuhaya Sub-County) and denominational characteristic description. It is worth noting that the age threshold for participating in this research is 18. This is because of the Kenyan statutory provision which requires that one must be an

adult to give consent. Then from that pool I picked the ones that were representative as in the table below:

Table 3.3: Representation of the Widow

Widow's Age	Total	Church Representation	Total
18-35	7	COGEA(K) 3, AICN 2, NHOM 2	7
36-59	7	COGEA(K) 3, AICN 2, NHOM 2	7
Above 60	6	COGEA(K) 2, AICN 2, NHOM 2	6
Total	20	Total	20

The above table shows the denominational and age representation of the selected widows that participated in this research.

Second is the sample for Emuhaya *Maendeleo ya Wanawake (MYW)* leaders. I required to work with women who are leaders but outside of the Christian circles yet conversant with women issues among the *Abanyole* in order to provide a balanced perspective on the subject. The *MYW* leadership within the District provided this much needed assistance. Hence, four of the Emuhaya District *MYW* leaders who were accessible, available and willing to participate in the study were selected.

Third, the sample for denominational leaders was selected by considering denominational representation in the study area. Table 3.2 provided information on the selection of the participating denominational leaders. The selection of denomination was based on its shade and strength in the study area. This explains the selection of the COGEA(K) and

AICN. Willingness and availability to participate in the study also informed the choice. This explains why NHOM was selected instead of Revival Church which is slightly numerically stronger.

The selection of participating leaders was based on denominational seniority both in age and position and availability. Hence, the senior most, willing and available denominational leaders, women leader and pastor(s) of the participating denominations were selected. I had pre-determined to work with a number of 12 (twelve) denominational leaders therefore the distribution of the 6 (six) pastor was given according to denominational numerical strength as illustrated in Table 3.4 below:

Table 3.4: Representation of Church Leaders

Church Leaders	Total
COGEA(K) (1 Senior Officer; 1 women leader & 3 pastors)	5
AICN (1 Senior officer; 1 women leader & 2 pastors)	4
NHOM (1 Senior Officer; 1 women leader & 1 pastor)	3
Total	12

The above table shows the denominational representation of the leaders that participated in this research.

Finally, the sample for the elders and government officers were drawn as follows. I had the contact of some on the members of the *Abanyole* elders' council which comprises of twenty members. A sample of five elders was drawn to facilitate a focus group of four

members and an Informant on the *Abanyole* culture on widows' sexuality. The sample selection was drawn based on geographic location, wealth of knowledge on the subject, accessibility, availability and willingness to participate in this study. Thus, the most knowledgeable, from the peers' perspective, yet well-located elders were selected to participate. A Gender and Social Development officer, a social worker, and a nurse in charge of reproductive health attached at Emuhaya District were purposefully sampled to provide information on the status of widows in the District. They were deemed knowledgeable by virtue of their interaction with widows in the cause of their work. Hence, Table 3.5 below is a tabulation of these sample categories:

Table 3.5: Representation of *Abanyole* Culture Experts (elders), Government Officer, Health and Social Workers

Designation	Total
Culture Experts (on <i>Abanyole</i> and Christian widowhood practices)	5
Social Worker	1
Government official (District Gender & Social Development officer)	1
Health Worker	1
Total	8

The above table shows the other resource persons involved in this research in order to provide an 'expert' view.

The sampling strategy employed was purposive non-probabilistic informed by the general presence of specific shade of Christianity as represented by the selected denominations

among the *Abanyole* and a special knowledge a particular respondents had pertaining the subject of study. The small sample size is recommended in qualitative study for its effectiveness to explore in-depth of the subject and not for generalization (Fain, 2013). I chose to work with a sample size of 40 respondents: 20 widows; 5 elders; 12 Church leaders; 1 Gender & Social Development Officer; 1 Social Worker and 1 Reproductive Health Nurse were selected to provide experiential information on widowhood, *Abanyole* culture on widows' sexuality and the influence of Christianity. It is also worth noting that the sample size in qualitative study do not automatically control the quality of importance to the study (Holloway & Wheeler, 2013).

3.5 Data Collection Instruments

The current study explored a variety of subtopic with different subthemes related to widow sexuality and the influence of Christianity. Methods employed to collect data included Oral Interviews, Focus Group Discussions and library research. These methods were preferred for their ability to generate a lot of information quickly from a relatively small sample. They are also best in exploring personal information, beliefs, opinions, attitudes, perceptions within a community due to an in depth interaction. They are flexible and enhance rapport between the researcher and respondents (Maseno, 2014).

3.5.1 Interview Schedule

Oral Interview is a qualitative research technique that involves conducting intensive individual interviews with a small number of respondents to explore their perspectives on a particular idea, program or situation (Boyce & Neale, 2006). It is a self-report 61

instrument used for gathering information about the variable of interest to an investigator. It is preferred because of its flexibility since questions can be repeated or explained to the interviewee (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2003) Hence, as rightly observed, it is the only way the evaluator can fully explore an audience's perspective and the reason for it (Obwoye, 2011).

The interview schedules (appendices B-E) were administered accordingly to widows and other Informants by the researcher. These comprised 8 (eight) widows; 4 (four) denominational leaders (2 from COGEA(K), 1 from AICN and 1 from NHOM), 1 (one) Social Worker; 1 (one) Reproductive Health Nurse and 1 (one) Gender and Social Development officer and 1 (one) Elder (expert on *Abanyole* culture). A total of 16 (sixteen) respondents were interviewed. They provided information relating to the traditional cultural and prevailing practice and behavior relating to widows' sexuality among the *Abanyole*; *Abanyole* widows' perception of their sexuality; Christian perception on widows' sexuality; and factors responsible for the perception on widows' sexuality among the *Abanyole*. Hence, the Christian influence on widows' sexuality as enshrined in its teaching, practice and behavior relating to widows' sexuality among the *Abanyole*.

This being unstructured interview, the researcher followed up the answers from time to time whenever the researcher felt that the information given is inadequate or the respondent did not understand the question. Notes were taken and tape recording undertaken as circumstances would allow. The recorded information was then transcribed ready for analysis.

3.5.2 Focus Group Discussions

Focus Group Discussions was preferred because of its ability to explore beliefs, attitudes and behaviors in a target group (Mugenda & Mugenda, 1999). It encourages natural communication as a result of its comfortable setting. It also gives a representative view thus best for capturing feelings, attitudes, perceptions and motives related widows' sexuality without injuring participants' moral civility.

There were a total of 5 (five) Focus Groups formed: 2 (two) for the widows (Esibila and Kima) and 1 (one) each for elders, Church leaders, and MYW leaders. All the Focus Groups comprised of four members to allow for effective participation of the Discussants and for ease management. Each of the Focus Groups discussed all the questions (appendix E) guided by the topics and themes drawn from the findings of the interviews and secondary data. However, special attention was given to the area of 'expertise' of each Group. Church and MYW leaders groups met once (8/2/17 and 24/2/17 respectively) while the elders (6/1/17 & 21/2/17) and the two widow (Esibila 25/1/17 and 3/2/17; Kima 20/1/17 and 24/3/17) groups met twice due to the bulk of information that was generated.

All FGDs were conducted in community spaces, except for the elders who met at one of the elder's home due to his ill health. Kima widows preferred to meet at the Kima Mission station in one of the halls that was graciously reserved and set by the one of the Discussants who works there. The same hall was also utilized by the church leaders' Focus group. The MYW leaders Focus Group met at Emuhaya District in the Gender,

Social and Development Office's Boardroom that they reserved for that purpose. The Esibila widows were hosted by one of the elderly widow in the group. Her spacious house and compound provide a serene environment for discussion. All Discussants agreed to meet as from 10 am but most of the Discussants would come in half to one hour late. This always caused delays because discussions could only commence after every one had arrived. Each of the eight discussions lasted between two to three hours depending on the group. The elders and widows groups were the most fruitful and lasted longer. The researcher moderated the discussion ensuring a maximum participation of respondents and that the agenda were maintained and questions were fully discussed. The researcher took as much notes as possible while recording some incidence as deemed fit.

3.5.3 Secondary Data

Finally, the researcher undertook extensive library research to enable him to understand the concepts involved in the study and to compare them with what was emerging from the field research in order to make recommendations. Literature related to cultural perception on widows' sexuality; widows' perception on their own sexuality; Christian perception on widows' sexuality and factors responsible for the Christian perception on widows' sexuality were reviewed in an effort to ascertain the prevailing cultural perception on widows' sexuality; establish Christian widows' attitudes on their sexuality; examine Christian perceptions on widows' sexuality and determine factors responsible for the Christian perception on widows' sexuality. Similarly, works on the frameworks of Feminist Perspectives, Gender Sexuality over the Life Course, sexual script, liberation theology and social reconstruction were consulted to aid understanding on Christian 64

influence on widow sexuality among *Abanyole*. Both published and unpublished Masters and Ph D thesis, books, articles, and reports were reviewed. Library research mainly focused on the Christian influences on widows' sexuality but other related issues that add to the understanding of this phenomenon were considered. The researcher carefully took and recorded notes under specific themes as they emerged in the course of the study.

3.6 Validity and Reliability of Instruments

Willington (2000) in his book, *Educational Research: Contemporary Issues and Practical Approaches*, outlines four stages in preparing and carrying out interviews. These include preparation, piloting, selection and interviewing. In the piloting stage, the questions are tried out on a small sample with the view of clarifying them. The questions are scrutinized and revised for meaning and attitude they generate. In this study took cognizance of these stages to ensure validity and reliability.

Validity and reliability of an investigation's results are foundational considerations for a research enterprise. Validity herein refers to the degree to which results obtained from analysis of data represents the influence of Christianity on widows' sexuality among *Abanyole*. The issue at stake here is whether right data is being collected in the right way. It deals with the accuracy of data obtained. Face validity is the degree to which a test appears to cover the relevant content it purports to (Robson, 2002) was employed. Mugenda and Mugenda (2003) advocates for validity of the instruments be checked by the experts or supervisors. To verify the validity of the research instruments were presented to my supervisors and later to the examination panel comprising of lecturers in

the Department of Education and Social Sciences of Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology for them to judge and make recommendation for adjustment before they were finally engaged in the field. The corrections and recommendations made were factored into the crafting of the final draft that was employed in the field. Furthermore, the preliminary data collected and analyzed was presented to the participants in this study to ascertain that it is a true representation of the phenomenon to best of their knowledge.

Reliability is the degree to which research instruments yield consistent results or data after repeated trials (Mugenda & Mugenda, 1999 cf. Robson, 2002). The concern here is as to whether if the same approach considered was taken again, the same data on the Christianity influence on widows' sexuality among *Abanyole* would be derived. To ensure reliability, interview schedules in the appendices were piloted with a small sample that was not part of the actual study. The test and retest method was used, where tests were administered to the participants for the first time then be repeated with the same participants after two weeks. This was used to test clarity and attitude conveyed before the tools were taken to the field. During the piloting stage the researcher was also checking for methods of opening interviews that establishes rapport and engages the interviewee (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2003). The interview questions were then fine tuned to produce the data that addresses the research questions.

3.7 Data Collection Procedure

The researcher preceded data collection by first acquiring a clearance letter from the University (Appendix I). This letter was used to obtain a research permit from the National Commission for Science, Technology and innovation to conduct research, and letters of authorization from the Vihiga County Commissioner and the Vihiga County Director of Education (Appendices K, L and M). The researcher, having been licensed to carry out research, sought the consent from the participating widows and other participants to participate voluntarily (cf. Appendix N).

In March 2016, a pilot study was undertaken with five widows. This aided in exploring to ascertain the more appropriate procedure to apply in data collection from widows. A settled on procedure that was employed for the eight months of field work included: identifying respondents, making initial contacts, familiarization and booking appointment. Interview schedules were administered to the respondents by the researcher at an appointed time and place (see 3.5.1 and 3.5.2). The same was done for the FGDs which met as indicated under Focus Group Discussions above (3.5.2). Field work time was spent interviewing and moderating discussions with an aim of gathering data that would effectively meet the objectives of the study. The researcher always concluded interview and discussion session by expressing gratitude to the participants for finding time and availing a wealth of information and knowledge.

Field and library research were carried out concurrently to gather relevant data to this study. Libraries of Kima International School of Theology, School of Graduate Studies of

Maseno University, Nairobi University, Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology and African Institute of Contemporary Missions and Research were visited for both print and electronic collections.

3.8 Methods of Data Analysis

Merriam describes data analysis as —the process of making sense out of one’s data. In the process of analysis, data are consolidated, and to some extent interpreted. In qualitative inquiry data collection and analysis is normally a simultaneous process (Merriam, 1988: 127-130). Deductive and inductive methods of data analysis were employed. This being a descriptive research that employs interactions and dialogue with the participants, the data analysis was preceded by transcriptions and translation of the transcripts from mother tongue to English. Data analysis is about classification of the data into particular recurrent themes and grouping them appropriately. Patterns are then identified and described as far as possible from the participants’ perspective. Finally the researcher tries to understand and explain the patterns and themes, then arrange them in categories (Cresswell, 2003).

Data collected through interviews, Focus Group Discussions and library research was assembled and grouped individually as relating to Christian influence on perception on widows’ sexuality among the *Abanyole*. Common themes were identified by trawling and searching for key words and comments and subsequently the themes apportioned into categories and subcategories (cf. Doodley, 2004). The researcher critically read and identified major themes and categorized them according to how they relate Christian

influence on widow sexuality as presented in chapters four through seven. Furthermore, the researcher undertook an analysis and interpretation of the data using the conceptual framework for this study. This process involved a critical examination and evaluation of the general Christian understanding, beliefs and practice on widows, and especially their sexuality among the *Abanyole* in the light of this studies conceptual framework. Therefore an analysis of Christian influence on widows' sexuality was also scrutinized in relation to its teachings to avoid precipitation and prejudice and hence avoiding conclusions that are more or beyond that, which is gathered. The analysis of widows' situation employed material made available by widows' self-interpretation of sexual empowerment. Apart from his analysis, the researcher sought critically for analysis of similar themes from the sources he had read. Hence the analysis entailed a critical comparative study of opinions to grasp popular opinions from the respondents and literary works perceived through the lenses of the study's conceptual framework. The findings were then synthesized systematically and compiled logically.

3.9 Reporting Findings and Discussion

The findings and discussions of the findings were presented as indicated in chapters 4, 5, 6 and 7 through descriptive design as narrated themes. The report was in the form of statement. This was used to evaluate and integrate the relationship of independent variables to dependent variable. Finally, conclusions and recommendations were drawn according to the findings of the study in the light of the objectives, research questions and conceptual framework. The findings of this study are given in eight chapters as follows: introduction, literature review, methodology, prevailing cultural perception on widow's

sexuality, widow's attitudes on their sexuality, Christian perception on widow's sexuality, factors responsible for the prevailing Christian perception on widow's sexuality and finally the conclusion and recommendations. Each chapter's length was determined by the amount of data generated on the subject both from primary and secondary sources.

3.10 Ethical Consideration

Ethical consideration is a research process deals with matters of integrity and protection of the respondents' dignity. Integrity in research is where the work is original, authentic, academic and scientific inquiry. The researcher preceded the exercise with a clear consciousness of these requirements.

A research process involves a lot of people and data that is sensitive. Caution was taken to protect the integrity and personal lives of those involved in one way or the other. This study took cognizance of ethical issues involved in research process and ensured due process is followed. This included acquiring a letter of introduction from the university (Appendix K). This letter was be used to obtain a research permit from NACOSTI (Appendix L) and clearance letter from Vihiga County Commissioner and the County Director of Education (Appendices M and N) to conduct research. The researcher, having been licensed to carry out research, sought the consent from the participating widows and other key informants to participate voluntarily (see Appendix O). This was in keeping with Biber (2005) who notes that in undertaking a study, participants' consent is a must.

As a matter of fact, having access to confidential data the researcher is bound by the professional code to respect the conditions set out in the research clearance permit. Consequently, the researcher ensured confidentiality and always concealed identity of informants when dealing with sensitive information by using the first and last letter of their first name. In addition, the researcher adhered to professional competence rule by acting in no other capacity other than that of a researcher. Furthermore, the researcher held with respect other persons' rights, dignity and diversity of values, attitudes and opinions that differed from his.

CHAPTER FOUR

***ABANYOLE* CULTURAL PERCEPTION ON WIDOWS' SEXUALITY**

This chapter focuses on the *Abanyole* cultural perception on gender and sexual script as reflected upon by the respondents to this study. The first step taken is to describe gender differentiation, then to explain the expected sexual scripts, after which, to highlight on widowhood sexual scripts and finally, to discuss the attitude and views on widowhood.

4.1 Gender Differentiation among the *Abanyole*

Villanueva in her study on females' sexuality in Puerto Rico observes:

Sexuality, being a complex and individual phenomenon influenced by social norms, culture, and personal experience, is said to be socially constructed. All these affect the way individuals define, feel and perceive their sexuality. Therefore, diverse sexualities exist even within the same environment (1997, 2).

Alati established in his study on the world view of the *Olunyole* speech community that *Abanyole* are a patriarchal community where —men are expected to take a central role in the leadership and organization of social units and cultural activitiesl (2016: 133). The same train of thought was taken by all my respondents who noted that there is a gendered distinctive and predictable pattern of behavior among the *Abanyole*. Important observations made were relating to sex differentiation and gender preference. The *Abanyole* people socialize their children depending on their gender. This ranges all the way from the attires that they put on, toys, games, company, roles and duties assigned in homes (Informants, CE, 8/8/16; FL, 14/10/16 **OI**; Discussants, Elders, 6/1/17 **FGDs**).

Boys are raised up for tough and challenging up market tasks that are made to earn a living for the family while girls are raised for the routine domestic chores for maintenance of the family. This way of socialization instills in the boys a sense of superiority while girls are made to see themselves as subordinates to the male, especially in a family setting (informants, SH, 18/8/16; FL, 14/10/16; CE, 8/8/16 **OI**; Discussants, Elders, 6/1/17 **FGDs**).

Family currency was pegged not only to the number of children it had but also their gender. Hence, gender preference is conspicuous among the *Abanyole* people as in other societies in the world. Male children are preferred against female. This is evident in the treatment of women who do not bear male children. An Informant (SE, 15/7/16 **OI**) explained that she was sent packing from her matrimonial home for giving birth to a girl for the second round while she had no male child. However, another Informant's (SH, 18/8/16 **OI**) story is different. Her mother bore five girls. Her father loved them so much. The extended family hated them and her father for that. They insisted that the father drop his pastoral duties for a second wife in order to bear male children for the posterity of his name. His father decline and kept his word to his death.

Couples that do not bear male children are despised. The women are always on the receiving end. Their husbands are encouraged to marry second wives or engage in extra-marital affairs with other women in order to have a male heir. Men who refuse to engage in such behavior are seen to be under a spell cast by their wives. The extended family, especially mothers-in-law, refers to the girls in a demeaning way. They call them frogs or toads (Informant, SE, 15/7/16 **OI**).

Such preferential attitudes flare up especially in intense emotional events like funerals. An Informant (FL, 14/10/16 **OI**) explained of a case of a couple who lost their son, a third year student at a local university. He was survived by his two sisters. In her eulogy the grand mother did not mince her words. She noted that contemporary women kill children in their bosoms with family planning pills. She wanted to bear ten children but managed seven, one died and she has six. Her son, instead of bearing ten or so, suppressed them. He has lost it all! He now has nothing! This incidence shows that gender discrimination is rife among the *Abanyole*. Women are not considered at the same level as their male counterparts.

On intimacy, affection and sexual intercourse, participants in Focus Group Discussions observed that the *Abanyole* men are socialized to be the initiators of sexual activity and remain in charge, while their female counterparts are expected to remain innocent, naive and ignorant yet, available, ready and able to quench their spouses' sexual thirst.

4.2 Intimacy and Sexual Intercourse among the *Abanyole*

The *Abanyole* as other African people groups display a particular cultural feature that characterizes their sexuality. This characterization is referred to as sexual morality.

Generally, sex is considered as sacred. Hence, the taboos allied with and the language used to refer to intimacy and sexual intercourse among the *Abanyole*. The sacredness of intimacy and sexual intercourse were further entrenched in the socialization process of their children. The *Abanyole* expected that girls remain virgins until on the wedding night, and then the couple would engage in sexual intercourse. Informant (CE, 8/8/16 **OI**)

and Discussant (Esibila widows, 25/1/17 FGDs) remembered with melancholy the discipline that young men and women in Bunyore were brought up with. This is how they recollected on the issue.

Abanyole young men and women were required to be virgins at the time of marriage. This was more so for the bride. To ensure this the young girls would be instructed never to allow themselves to have sexual intercourse before marriage. To enforce this, the girls were kept under a surveillance of a respected elderly woman, a grandmother or just an appointed caretaker (*omukonia*) who is respected in the clan.

The girls slept in her house or a common house that served as a dormitory. In this dormitory, the girls reported at 6:30 p.m. and adhered to strict code of regulation that included check-in time and other moral behavior. The girls slept on a big continuous bed made of rafter and suspended permanently in the house from wall to wall known as *esirili*. The caretaker who was an elderly woman would have a number of girls under her watch.

A young man wishing to befriend and betroth any girl under her care would approach the old woman and the old woman would allow him to meet the girl. The man would even be allowed to sleep with the girl but the girl was under obligation never to allow the man to penetrate. The act was referred to as *okhusota* [to be intimate]. Sex was strictly reserved for marriage. And in the event the man had sexual intercourse with the girl, which the *omukonia* would easily tell from the sound, both parties were punished. The man would not leave until his parents brought a sheep and he would be forced to marry the girl or the girl would be married off as a second or third wife. Such a girl would also not be married in a traditional *andere* (wedding) ceremony but would just elope.

The girls would also be subjected to routine examination by the *omukonia* to ensure that they preserve their virginity. And upon marriage the aunts and grannies of the groom would demand to ascertain that the bride was untouched. Upon confirmation and consummation of the marriage the bride would be sent to her parents with gifts to her grandmother and the mother. The bride's arrival and the nature of the visit were announced by the gifts and the women of the village would break in song and dance to serenade the mother of the bride:

Solo: Nyina mwana yeteya [Her mother trained her well]

All: Aah yeteya [Yes she trained her well]

Solo: Nyina mwana yeteya [Her mother trained her well]

All: Aah yeteya [Yes she trained her well]

Solo: Yefulungulule mufwebweywe [She is glad and honored]

All: Aah yeteya, yefulungulule mufwebweywe, Aah yeteya. [Yes she trained her well, she is glad and honored, for she trained her well]

It is evident from the sentiments expressed that the *Abanyole* concept of sexuality is that sexual intercourse should strictly within a marital union. There is a clear demarcation between sexual intimacy and intercourse. Individuals can get intimate without necessarily indulging in coital penetration. Yet such acts are reserved for those intending to marry or already in marriage otherwise they are only welcome within specified social boundaries and on a limited scale. Sexual intimacy among the *Abanyole* is taken to be a reserve for married couples. The HIV/AIDS scourge and strict widowhood rituals and monitoring, especially those that profess Christian faith, makes it difficult for widows to 'legally' explore their sexuality. Widows reported to go against the norm would earn serious public admonition and condemnation as the widows FGDs participants unanimously observed.

Sex education was part of the socialization that children got from the onset. Young boys spent most of their times with elderly men either grazing or working in the fields and at evening's bonfires. The girls would be assisting other female members of the family in their domestic chores, working in the fields or during evening time as they retired to bed under their grannies or *omukonia's* supervision. Such moments would be seized as suitable time, depending on the age and context, to transmit holistic sex education for the clan's posterity. For example, according an Informant (FL, 14/10/16 **OI**), boys and girls were required to acquire a mastery of their genealogies to establish family relationships in order to acquaint themselves with the clans they can marry from. They were also taken

through lessons on how to go about sensuality, intimacy and sexual intercourse. They were specifically taught acceptable sexual behavior and the consequences of deviating from the norm.

The *Abanyole* people do not have initiation ceremonies for girls. During their male circumcision, which was a communal ceremony, the candidates would be grouped together for nursing by an elderly man. Specialized socialization, which prepared the candidates who had undergone initiation for community responsibilities for the protection and perpetuation including the custody of procreation – sexual intercourse, was offered. For instance, a Discussant (Elders, 6/1/16 **FGDs**) observed that unmarried men would be discouraged from having sexual intercourse with married women (including widows) or with strangers for this reduced their life-force and endangered their life.

The men would be taken through genealogies to be aware of the blood ties that govern marital lines. This was accompanied with strict regulations on how they ought to relate with females in the same family line. They were prohibited from engaging in sexual activities with relatives for that would bring a curse (*olubo/omusilo/esiluchi*) which would destroy the clan. The culprits and their close allies would suffer from strange and untreatable ailments (*ebila/chisila*). This meant that the power of life and death of the clan was in the hands of its people. They would either appropriately direct their life force and multiply and subdue the earth, or indulge and head for self destruction. They were, therefore, charged with the responsibility of steering the community's posterity by being good stewards of the gates of life – their sex organs. As the Bukusu adage would have it, All open doors are yours, but all closed doors are out of bounds for you'. Every 77

Omunyole young man was encouraged to find his own wife (or wives) with whom to explore sexual relations and discouraged from any kind of illicit sexual affairs which amounted to obliterating ones name from the clan's chronicles (Informants, FL, 14/10/16; CE, 8/8/16; DH, 12/8/16 **OI**; Discussants, Elders, 6/1/16 **FGDs**).

The *Abanyole* girls, though they did not undergo any initiation ceremony, received the same education. This was passed to them by the *abakonia* (caretakers) and other elderly women that were charged with such responsibility and all who got an opportunity to do so. The girls spent most evenings with either a grandmother, *omukonia* (caretaker) or any elderly woman. This time was spent mostly listening to stories, sayings and songs. These stories, proverbs and songs carried a lot of meaning. They were used to teach moral lessons that often related to expected sexual behavior of the *Abanyole* but specifically of women. They also taught and enhanced general social life in the community (Informants, FL, 14/10; CE, 8/8/16; DH, 12/8/16 **OI**; Discussants, Elders, 6/1/17 **FGDs**).

Abanyole people have an expected sexual behavior that would be referred to as the *Abanyole* morality. As earlier stated, this is imbedded in their philosophy on sex. They believe that sex is sacred holding keys to life and death. This is demonstrated through their extensive taboos and euphemisms related to sex, sex organs and sexual activities (Informants, CE, 8/8/16; DH, 12/8/16; SH, 18/8/16 **OI**; Discussants, Elders, 6/1/17 **FGDs**).

Generally, sex as a subject is not for public deliberations or attention. Issues relating to sex are treated as private. And if one must refer to them in public, then coded language,

for example *okhukona* -_to sleep‘, [to have a sexual intercourse with] and *okhukalusibwa/okhukalusia* - _to inherit‘ (sexual intercourse by/with a widow) is invoked. Anyone who goes against this norm is considered ill-mannered (cf. Adamo, 2005 and Alati, 2016). This was not a problem for the researcher is a native with a good command of *Kinyore* conversation.

Among the *Abanyole*, sex is a private activity. The *Abanyole* way provides that before one marries, he must construct a cottage, *Isimba*, preferably far from the parent’s house, where he is to do it. Because the *Abanyole* traditionally relied on the sun for lighting, nights were the appropriate times for the act. The darkness and closed doors are employed to heighten the mystery. Children are kept in that house only up to time they are weaned. Upon weaning they were relocated to the grandparents’ house (Informants, FL, 14/10/16 **OI**; Discussants, Elders, 6/1/17 **FGDs**).

Traditional homesteads also provided for the required environment for mystery attached to sex. The head of the family’s hut was at the center and the wives huts overlooking. This made it difficult for the wives to know where the man spend a night [of course unless if he was with you in your house] and impossible for the children to think or imagine their parents’ sexual life. Therefore to the *Abanyole* a public sexual act is demeaning, prohibited and scolded at in the strongest terms possible. Issues of pornographic materials are alien to the traditional *Abanyole* (Discussants, Esibila widows, 25/1/17; Kima widows, 20/1/17; Elders, 6/1/17 **FGDs**).

Sexual intercourse is restricted within a marriage context. Any such encounter outside of this provision is deemed illicit and is discouraged and anybody caught in such an act was subjected to public scorn. Those women (*etakwa/ling'ang'ule*) caught or discovered to be engaging in sexual activities with anyone besides the husband were subjected to prescribed punishment such as being deserted by their husbands in their homesteads or sent back to their parents depending on the gravity of the offense and their status in the community (Discussants, Elders, 6/1/17 **FGDs**).

The only time a woman was allowed, within prescribed perimeters, to have sexual intercourse with another person was in the event that the husband was proven beyond reasonable doubt to be impotent either through erectile dysfunction (*esichili*) or low sperm count (*likangala*). In such situation the clan would identify a close relative who would be known for the purpose of siring children for his ‘_brother’. This would be preceded by sending a price (a cow) to the wife’s parent that permits her to find someone to sire children for the family commonly known as *eyobulimo/eyobwibi/eyolwibulo*. The price allowed for the wife to have healthy and ‘_legitimate’ children (Informants, CE, 8/8/16; FL, 14/10/16 **OI**; Discussants, Elders, 6/1/17 **FGDs**). The criteria for selection of an appropriate candidate were the known character of the individual and blood kinship. The man can never claim the children or even share the information under whatever circumstance. Such a relationship is only serving the purpose of keeping the name of a brother by providing an heir (Informant, FL, 14/10/16 **OI**).

The *Abanyole* also understood sex activity not only as within marriage but also between a man and a woman who are not relatives, of age and with mutual consent. Homosexuality,

lesbianism and bestiality were sexual perversions and as such deemed abominations (*esiluchi/omusilo*) among the *Abanyole*. *Abanyole* practice exogamous marriages. Thus, they do not marry within their family line or relatives. Genealogy is followed strictly and any marriage found to violate this regulation is dissolved forthwith. This is communicated by the elders giving the woman a white chicken with a basket of grain to take to her parents. Those who disobeyed were believed to be under a spell and their marriage would end abruptly and in chaos or a tragedy. The deviant ones were finally allowed to marry and have healthy children by removing part of the grass thatching and covering their roof top, *es'suli*, with a piece of broken pot. Sex activity should be between people of age and both of whom are willing. Rape cases, especially of minors and the elderly would be considered a curse among the *Abanyole* (Informants, CE, 8/8/16 **OI**; Discussants, Esibila widows, 25/1/17 and Kima widows, 20/1/17; Elders, 6/1/17 **FGDs**).

Bride price secured the needs of both parties in a marital relationship and guaranteed the man's lineage. It guaranteed the bride's place and needs in the groom's clan under whatever circumstances – including in death. *Abanyole* receive and pay bride price only once [any other subsequent marital relationships a woman engages in are but temporal]. A wife actually belonged to the clan. And in the event the husband passes on, her needs, including intimacy, were the concern of the clan. Every clan took care of its widows. Those elderly widows with grown up and responsible sons who would take care of their livelihood did so while their in-laws presided over matters requiring a husband/father such as bride price negotiation. An Informant goes ahead to observe that this is still the

position in the contemporary *Abanyole* but with lots of modifications courtesy of HIV/AIDS, age, individual's social status and religious persuasion and commitment. He noted that there are those who follow the cultural path of inheritance, those who opt for remarriage and those who choose to remain celibate (Informants, PR, 23/8/16 **OI**).

Those with little children requiring a father figure and support in education and other matters would either identify one of the in-laws to fulfill such roles as the husband or stay alone and just receive due assistance without such attachment. Those with a problem of making ends meet were left with limited choice without getting into some sort of marital arrangement.

Newly married women were not spared the blight of widowhood. Young widowed women in the clan were taken care of by their immediate family members which made them not to return to their parents. Those with at least an heir (a son) would choose either to enter into another marital arrangement or not depending on her status. She would be taken care of depending on her choice. Those who had no heir would be the concern of the clan. She would be talked to, to the effect that she finds at least from her in-laws a favorable one who could marry her and bear children for the late relative. If need be the clan or the family would intervene by providing a husband to ensure that the name of their deceased relative is not blotted out of the clan by ensuring an heir. Enormous responsibility and precaution accompanied any prospective sexual relationship one postulated to have with a widow. Thus, if sexual activity within marriage was deemed sacred, then sexual activity with a widow in a re-marital arrangement was much more so (Informant, FL, 14/10/16 **OI**).

Finally, sexual intercourse was deemed sacred because it primarily served as a means of life perpetuation and procreation. *Abanyole*, therefore, perceived sexual intercourse as sacred. They did not consider sex as an indulgence. This makes it remote for them to think of sex toys for self gratification; oral sex or sex involving any other organ besides sex organs; and any sexual activity with any other thing other than a human of opposite sex in a marital relationship. The *Abanyole* do not fancy or fantasize about sex as shown by their lack of words, the euphemisms, the attitude and the decorum that is used to refer to experiences such as orgasm. Also the feelings of sexual arousal or drive were never spoken of or overtly expressed, especially by the women. And acts such as exposing ones private parts would constitute a promiscuous behavior and one would be reprimanded forthwith. Hence, *Abanyole* maintained the sacredness of sex without deifying it (Discussants, elders 6/1/17; Esibila widows, 25/1/17 and Kima widows, 20/1/17 **FGDs**).

However, Alati (2016: 134-136) also notes idioms in the *Abanyole* lingua that reinforce gender-based cultural inequality and depict cultural constraints regarding the separate behavior of men and women. Citing Makokha, he observes that —In the *Olunyole* conversation, male dominance and authority over the female counterpart is evident in the expressions related to sex and sexuality.¶ The wife is expected to give into the husband's desire for sex without questioning. Sex is perceived to be a man's right and a wife cannot deny him. Any wife who fails on this is reprimanded by both families in a formal clan gathering and sent back to her parents. Women are also not expected to openly express sexual desire and emotion. Any woman who does so is regarded as immoral. This

subjugated position of a woman continues even after her husband dies where she is expected to be inherited by the husband's close relative.

However, one would wonder, if sex is a private activity, how did the in-laws get to know the details? What is the impact of women not being allowed to express their sexual desire and its overflow into widowhood among the *Abanyole*? In the *Abanyole* world view things pertaining sex are private to the extent that they are discussed in hushed tone within specified social circles only when there are issues of concern. In such situation sisters/brothers in-law, aunties and grannies intervene in view of seeking a solution. The matter becomes public only if the involved parties fail to co-operate, resulting in flaring tempers. One thing that is clear here is the communal nature of sex among *Abanyole* – as a power house for perpetuation of family life. This gives the family members the ‘right’ to intervene as need be.

With the expression of sexual desire among the *Abanyole*, women are expected to conduct themselves with decorum. Innocence and lack of interest in sexual activity among women is prized. Hence, girls learn, live and act so as to fit in the society. They have to wait for someone to ask for their hand in marriage, who prizes her innocence and expects her to remain so. This greatly inhibits their development as sexual beings. They learn not to express and explore their sexual feelings. They resent sexual feelings as evil and a source of conflict to be greatly ignored and avoided. In widowhood, the woman who has not developed a clear perspective on her sexuality suffers double tragedy by either indulgence or resentment.

4.3 Effects of irresponsible Sexual Intercourse

Abanyole philosophy explicitly relates the effects of irresponsible sexual behavior. Generally sex, among *Abanyole*, is regarded as a life-force in the community with power for life and death. Thus responsible sexual behavior enhanced and perpetuated individual and communal life while irresponsible sexual activities and behavior destroyed it. These made vigilantes of every member of the society for it was everyone's concern to guard and protect life.

Irresponsible sexual behaviors are collectively referred to as *omusilo/esiluchi* meaning the profane thing. They include bestiality, homosexuality, lesbianism, masturbation, fornication, rape, incest, and adultery. Each of these abominable sexual behaviors differs in their nature and weight. On general, they reduced the individual's and hence the community's life force.

Adultery, for example, was believed to be responsible for incurable illness and sudden deaths especially among men and children. It was believed that it is dangerous for a married woman to have sexual activities outside her marriage. It endangered her life and could render her temporarily infertile due to mixing of blood. Worse still it exposed her husband to potential sudden death in the event the husband falls ill and the secret lover visits him or shares a meal at a ceremony. Promiscuity among husbands led to sickness, *chisila* which would result in the death of their children if not treated.

Young men who fornicated with girls in their clan were wary of eating meat and taking milk in the community's functions. This was because of a belief that sharing in anything

of the nature of her bride price would lead to untreatable illness (*olubo*) and mysterious death. It was not uncommon for men and women to die of meat garrote or be taken ill in memorial ceremonies. The trend taught the wise to walk prudently: lead a life of chastity or avoid eating at and even attending memorial ceremonies, or else seek a traditional herbalist's intervention.

4.4 Widows and their sexuality

This section considers the *Abanyole* perception on widow sexuality. The respondents were required to give their views on the identity the *Abanyole* accords to widows and the resultant sexual behavior expected of them. The following issues emerged for consideration: perception as women, engendered perception, categories of women and their perceptions, categories of widows and their respective perceptions and widow expected sexual behavior.

4.4.1 Perception as Women

Abanyole have a generally mixed perception of a woman. They sing praises on how a woman is a precious and honorable thing and at the same times use derogatory terms to refer to her. The most prominent notion is that women are second best and as such, are inferior to men. There was a general observation among the respondents that women were assigned menial duties and not included in serious matters of the community.

Elders' FGDs (6/1/17) described *Abanyole* attitude toward a woman in the following terms as summarized below. On one hand, *Abanyole* celebrate a woman noting that:

- a woman is an important person in the society as
- Signs of men's status in the society – husband, father, elder, wealth [land & property].
- Manager of the family affairs (first wife) and respected by the husband, co-wives, children and the clan.
- Custodian of culture as volunteer vigilante.
- Caretaker of family wealth/properties.
- Protector of the husband – as cupbearer and advisor.
- Sign of family honor in the clan – Therefore families made collective effort in selecting the best from the best family and clan.

On the other hand, *Abanyole* do not accord a woman much respect:

- You cannot give a [your] stool/chair to a woman (*Omukhasi sasinjilwanga tawe*)
- You don't tell your wife —I am sorry!. It is a sign of weakness.
- You do not bow before your wife (a woman).
- Women are part of the property that men own.
- Woman's duty is to bear children and cook for the men (domestic).
- Women were not involved in conversations and decision making process – just bring food and warm water for their beer and leave quietly.
- Women were required to respect their in-laws.
- Women are peace ambassadors and treaty seals [signets] – given as price in marriage.
- Their currency goes up/down with child bearing, wealth creation and behavior.
- Was expected to respect and give space to their men.

A barren woman was cared for according to her industry and respect (willingness for husband to marry other women to bear children). A man was free but within limits, to marry several wives. He had a homestead, *litala* (several houses) could marry another wife, but a woman had one house.

They are considered weak not to be entrusted with clan's secrets until proven otherwise (past child bearing [as they graduate to be clansmen] and astute).

These sentiments were agreed upon by the widows' Focus Group Discussions but the *Maendeleo Ya Wanawake* Focus Group Discussions thought that most of these attitudes are barbaric, backward, and retrogressive. The Discussants, (MYW leaders, 8/2/17 **FGDs**) noted that some of these attitudes that demean and violate women rights, which are human rights, have to be eliminated through sensitizing both men and women on the development potential that lies with promoting women's affairs. This opinion was echoed by an Informant, a Social Development Officer, who observed that the region is lagging behind in development because of the negative attitude men have toward women that translates into their generally low self esteem. This greatly affects widows' sexuality particularly the component of sensuality, given their diminished awareness of and lack of appreciation for their own body. Hence, the majority withdraws from public life and neglect personal make up fearing accusation for preying on other women's husbands (Informant, CN, 13/9/16 **OI**).

Socialization among the *Abanyole* is gender specific. Hence, *Abanyole* have generally embraced a strong engendered perception of individuals. Relationships, duties, responsibilities and dealings among the *Abanyole* are always gender specific. A Discussant, (MYW leaders, 8/2/17 **FGDs**) explained that in South Bunyore and its environs it is a taboo for a woman to plant trees, bananas and a boundary hedge. This notion resembles the one depicted in Adimora-Ezeigbo's novel, *Children of the Eagle* that relates to a culture in Nigeria. The author uses the four daughters of Ugonwanyi, (Eaglewoman), as vehicles to dissolve one of the assumptions of patriarchy over a part of Igboland that women cannot preside over boundary issues. In general, all the ten

engendered assumptions, including sex enjoyment as a preserve for the male species, which are held in Igboland of the *Children of the Eagle* is characteristic of the *Abanyole* culture (Adimora-Ezeigbo, 2002; Informants, DH, 12/8/16 **OI**; Discussants, Elders, 6/1/17 **FGDs**).

Consequently, MYW leaders feel that the *Abanyole* socialization has something inherently wrong. It is bent to the women's disadvantage. They point out that, —Men wanted to rule over women, they over burdened them with numerous tasks (including parenting and livelihood), they have usurped all leadership and administrative positions and discourage their women from pursuing gainful employment and advancement yet they are failing in their responsibility as heads of the families.¶ Hence making an observation that there is need to re-examine *Abanyole* socialization of children with a special focus on how we are raising up men (Discussants, MYW leaders, 8/2/17 **FGDs**).

However, the story on gender power relations among the *Abanyole* would be untrue to assume that females to be only and always inferior. Gender is not the only determinant of one's relative power. Thus the *Abanyole* women also exercise domination to other women and even to men at all levels in their own way. Females are generally prized as source of labor, wealth (bride wealth) and social security for their aging parents. As such, they make decisions, give pieces of advice, give orders and send people on errands (Cattell, 2007).

4.4.2 *Categories of Women and their Perceptions*

Abanyole have various categories of women and related perception. A widow perception greatly depended on the perception of her just before her husband's death. They include: *omukhaye*, *omukhasi*, *omukumba*, *omukhana* and *indakwa/es'salang'ongo* (translation/explanation is subsequent). *Omukhaye* is a homestead maker with a proven track record of astuteness, self-respect, courtesy and decorum demonstrated in showing respect to her husband and in-laws, and sensibility in conversation. Her age and experience command community's respect to assert herself (Cattell, 2007). Most of women in this category have grown up children and grandchildren. The litmus test of this was the ability to successfully transition the family from monogyny to polygyny and to manage well a polygynous family. Such a woman was held with high regard among fellow women and could be involved in clan's serious deliberations and decision making. She becomes a tribesman, *omuta*, hence a custodian of the clan's way of life. This is the ideal woman that every *Abanyole* women aspire to be.

Such are the women referred to in Igbo clan, as notes Nwachukwu-Agbada citing his own earlier work:

[W]omen as a collective constitute a formidable force in the politics of any Igbo clan. And as I had had to state elsewhere, In practically all Igbo communities, women in their natal villages – addressed as —umuada|| or —umumboto|| – wielded legal, decisional rights comparable to those of a modern supreme court. The —umuada|| were last arbiters; they equally had right to intervene, even uninvited, when they believed that there had been a miscarriage of justice (2011: 89).

Omukhasi refers to any married woman. She was respected by the community as one having settled on a decision to start a family. Young men were discouraged from making suggestive jokes to such. Each one's currency depended on the status of her family of origin, current family [especially the husband], the amount of dowry paid, type of marriage and kind of ceremony held, children born, especially male. They at least belong to the clan of marriage although they were still treated as aliens (Informants, CE, 8/8/16; DH, 12/8/16 **OI**; Discussants, Elders, 6/1/17; MYW leaders, 8/2/17 **FGDs**).

Omukumba refers to a barren woman that could not bear children for whatever reason. This category was the most disregarded. They depended mostly on the good will of their husbands and the extended family. Because of the value attached to life and children among the *Abanyole*, a barren woman was considered a waste of the husband's time and resources. *Abanyole* women, especially the mothers-in-law, would insult her as a good for nothing woman just wasting the husband's time and filling his latrine. She was expected to assist her husband find another wife to bear him children, or to raise up children born out of wedlock. Her currency depended purely on submission, industry, wealth creation and management. That notwithstanding, she would always be reminded, at every opportune moment, that she is a good for nothing time waster. *Omukumba* among the *Abanyole* held a higher status than *omukhana* to the extent that she had a place to call her home and a potentially 'appropriate' graveyard (Informant, FL, 14/10/16 **OI**; Discussants, MYW leaders, 8/2/17; Esibila widows, 25/1/17 **FGDs**).

Omukhana refers to all unmarried women from their teenage that is of a marriageable

Sometimes used together with a locality to signify the natal home of 91

omukhaye/omukhasi. Example is *omukhana Mutongoi* referring to a lady who hails from among the Tongoi people. This compound term referred to married women. *Omukhana* purely refers to unmarried woman ranging from teenage. They are a little lower in status than *omukhasi* because they do not belong anywhere but more favorably rated than *omukumba* in so far as she has a hope of marriage and procreation. Those of marriageable age are always reminded that they do not belong at their parental home (Informants, FL, 14/10/16; CN, 13/9/16 **OI**; Discussants, Elders, 6/1/17 **FGDs**).

Indakwa [etakwa], *ling'ang'ule* and *es'salang'ongo* are derogatory terms that refer to women of disrepute. They show no respect to their husbands and in-laws; some are drunkard, promiscuous, and quarrelsome. Such were separated from the husband's homestead and left on their own. In some cases they are beaten and sent to their parents for good, or could be required to bring a sheep for sacrifice [restitution] depending on the offence committed. They generally have no regard in the community (Informants, FL, 14/10/16 **OI**; Discussants, Elders, 6/1/17 **FGDs**).

Suffice it to note from Cattell who explains:

For women the exercise of power and experience of powerlessness occur most commonly in daily life, particularly in family relationships and everyday household and work settings. Concerns often focus on personal autonomy or the capacity to make decisions about one's own actions; the ability to gain and control material resources such as food, clothing and money, for self and children; and human resources, or getting others do what you want them to do (2007: 99-100).

4.4.3 Widow Categories and the respective Perceptions

The *Abanyole* world view categorizes widows into two main groups: the older and younger widows. This is because for the *Abanyole* every one is important and deserves equal treatment, at least theoretically. Widows are generally categorized variously according to age, family, health, and general behavior. Hence, the categories older and younger widows, family and childless widows, healthy and sick widows, and reputable and reproachable widows.

Older widows, according to the *Abanyole* world view, are widows that are widowed past child bearing age. This age varies from one individual to the other. It is normally tied to the menopause. Sex among the *Abanyole* is primarily for procreation therefore, women who are past menstruation consider themselves and are considered as older widows. This is because they are past child bearing age. They normally describe the state as *okhurula khumukichi* (no longer engaging in sexual acts). This implies that they no longer experience sexual urge. Most of the widows in this category switch to involuntary celibacy mode either by choice or due to public demand, especially of their grown up children. Widows who participated in this study held a view that widows in this category should cease any contemplation relating to sexual activity. They argued that such activities bring disgrace to their hitherto grown up children and their families (Informants, SH, 18/8/16; DH, 12/8/16 OI; Discussants, Kima widows, 20/1/17 & Esibila widows, 25/1/17 FGDs).

Consequently, women widowed at such a period feel embarrassed at the very thought of engaging in any relationship or activity that will communicate to the public that they are sexually active. Also the majority of such widows are involved in various leadership positions in the community. Such social positions put pressure on the widow not to pursue sexual pleasure but rather direct her energies in serving the community, from whence they draw immense satisfaction and fulfillment (Discussants, Esibila widows, 25/1/17 & Kima widow, 20/1/17; Elders, 6/1/17 **FGDs**; CE, 8/8/17; SH, 18/8/16 **IO**).

Some widows at such age would have ceased from sexual activities with their own husbands. Therefore the idea of pursuing sexual activity is remote in their mind. Widows and women who participated in this study hailed widow celibacy. This is even after they noted gender discrimination affecting widows in their widowhood. They noted that widowhood is an opportunity to live out ones dream without male interference (Discussants, MYW leaders, 8/2/17 **FGDs**).

However, the participants in this study made a quick rejoinder that not all widows in this category have ceased experiencing sexual urge or successfully inhibit it. They noted that there are those who, in fact, experience an increase. They noted that some keep secret relationships, even with men who are much younger than their sons. They hailed the traditional set up that ensured sanctity by providing a means for meeting such needs in a legitimate and open way (Informants, DH, 12/8/16; CE, 8/8/17; SH, 18/8/16 **OI**; Discussants, Esibila widows, 25/1/17 and Kima widows, 20/1/17; Elders, 6/1/17 **FGDs**).

A Discussant (Esibila widows, 25/1/17 **FGDs**) related a story about her widow friend in her mid-sixties who came to her seeking to terminate a pregnancy. She was worried that her son would chase her from her home if she bore this child since her husband had passed on long ago and the pregnancy was from a secret relationship. The widow asked her friend why she was keeping the relationship. Her friend replied that her vagina does not feed on *ugali*. She needs a man to meet her sexual needs. The widows in the group agreed that widows as other women experience sexual urges which fluctuate with age and individual traits. These require community empathy.

The widows and elders involved in the study noted that widows' sexual attitudes and behavior are as diverse as are women. This notion is reflected on as the case among Niger women by Nwachukwu-Agbada who cites Amadiume to explain:

Sex was not forced on a woman; she was constantly surrounded by children and other people [...] The sanctity of motherhood meant that women were treated with respect. One woman might desire an intense relationship with her husband, another might see marital obligations as a necessary but loathsome duty. Some might abandon their relationship with their husband and shun —men and their troublel. Indigenous architecture and male/female polygyny made these choices possible. (Nwachukwu-Agbada 2011:89).

Suffice it to say that there is no single pattern of widow's sexual behavior. Yet as Amadiume notes, there is a way out to meet every ones need: the indigenous architecture. This is done by entering into a legitimate arrangement within which felt needs are met rather than living a lie.

Younger widows are the other category of widows. This is a wide category. It generally comprises of all widows who are of child bearing age. These are the majority among the

Abanyole widows, as noted by an Informant, a Government Official in the study area (CN, 13/9/16 **OI**). The same sentiments were expressed by church leaders within the study area (Discussants, Esibila widows, 25/1/17 and Kima widows, 20/1/17; church leaders, 24/2/17 **FGDs**; Informant, FL, 14/10/16 **OI**).

Widows in this category can suffer a great deal. One such widow confided that apart from the pressure of providing for her family, a widow is expected to deal with legal issues related to benefits and succession of properties to secure the future of her children. She finds this to be a very emotionally exhausting experience. She has to complete endless forms, queue for hours in administrative offices and required to seek several letters from administrators most of who are men. This long, winding and tedious exercise exposes the widow to potential snare. Suggestive talks and sexual advances are made towards such women especially when those attending to them discover that they are vulnerable widows (Informant, TA, 30/7/16 **OI**; Discussants, MYW leaders, 8/2/17 **FGDs**).

This category of widows also comes under stringent scrutiny by their fellow women for fear of their husbands. Their ways in the village become every ones concern. They are hunted by men who want to satisfy their sexual appetites and the laggards who want to derive financial benefits. At the same time every man that seems to empathize with their situation is suspected.

The other concern for widows in this category is loneliness and lack of intimacy. It is notable above all when a widow loses her husband is a close friend and a sex mate. Thus two of the problems that she has to deal with are those of loneliness and sexual urges.

Though as Kirwen, correctly observes from his study on levirate marriage among the Luo people, companionship and intimacy is only a recent consideration in marriage.

The Luo did not marry for companionship; may be these days they do - in fact, none of them was lonely! They married as a sacred duty in order to partake in life and the act of passing on the gift of life by which one is immortalized. Full life implies carrying out social responsibilities; but it can only be realized within the institution of marriage, where one shares in the procreation and nurturing of life (1987: 59).

May be these were assumed and not stated as reasons for marriage. Whatever the case, they are not part of the categories in the discourse on marriage. The two widow categories discussed above have other two sub sets: widows with Children and those without.

Widows could be without children as a result of barrenness, death or recent marriage. Such a widow was given special care. Everyone in the community was willing to help because they were deemed a source of blessings. Some had properties that they would bequeath those who had expressed kindness to them.

Whatever the category of a widow, her needs were secured within the *Abanyole* philosophy on marriage. Nyarwath quotes Riana who articulate a Luo understanding of marriage, which resonates with that of the *Abanyole* as established herein. It explicitly demonstrates the perpetual nature of marriage and the guaranteed posterity that a marriage bond gives to the couple and their offspring:

You see, when people marry, there is the unspoken agreement that this relationship will survive his untimely death. That is, the man's family pledges to carry on the marriage by caring for the wife and children in the event of the husband's death. This is a very sacred and essential part of our

marriage. This is why the families of both the bride and the groom are very concerned that the partners are properly selected and carefully scrutinized prior to any agreement for marriage (Nyarwath, 2011: 95).

4.5 Widows' Expected Sexual Behavior

Nyarwath (2012) and Oruka (1994 a) presents what can be referred to as classical or ivory tower perspective of the customs relating to widowhood. They tell us that customarily, one can assume full responsibility of a widow and her children devoid of sexual relationship alias honorific home guardianship. This is a characteristic of a classical perspective that appeals to the ear but is rarely part of the everyday life. In other words, the philosophy does not resonate with reality, at least, according to the respondents in this study.

Abanyole would generally expect a widow to either remain celibate or continue sexual activity within acceptable parameters. These options are theoretically a preserve of the widow, at least in consultation with her family. This is because according to the *Abanyole*, as for other African communities we eternally belong and owe our livelihood to one another as crystallized by p'Bitek:

Man cannot, and must not be free. _Son', _mother', _daughter', _father', _uncle', _husband', _grandmother', _wife', _medicine-man', and many other such terms, are the stamps of man's unfreedom. It is by such complex terms that a person is defined and identified. They order and determine human behavior in society. The central question, _Whom am I?' cannot be answered in any meaningful way unless the relationship in question is known (1986: 20).

4.5.1 'Voluntary' Celibacy

Voluntary celibacy is where the widow 'opts' not to enter any relationship that involves sexual union. Among the *Abanyole* there is no such regulation as to require one to cease sexual activity. It is generally respectable for and expected of women of a certain age to conduct themselves with decorum. As a result of the publicized nature of and the norms relating widow remarriage, some widows 'choose' celibacy. —This is the highest expression of respect and honor that a widow can accord her late husband, observed widows. The widow becomes a wife of the grave and commits herself to single handedly carry out the late husband's aspirations (Discussants, MYW leaders, 8/2/17 FGDs, Informant, SH, 18/8/16 OI). Such widows upon notable family success will pride themselves of their fidelity to the grave as they castigate the ones who remarry to provide for their family or while giving counsel to other widows. This is indeed puzzling as captured in Cattell's explanation of the situation among the Abaluyia women. She states that, —One interesting puzzle is the way dominant classes or groups maintain dominance without constant coercion, or why subordinate groups or classes accept and even actively participate in their own oppression (2007: 100).

Cattell is alluding to the femininity and masculinity power play during widowhood. The widows have been socialized to accept their assigned position without questioning which they do. Men who have been socialized to oppress and marginalize women and especially widows also do the same without struggle. This is because they all have come to accept such position as the norm. Hence the conspiracy of women in oppressing widows.

According to a Discussants (MYW leaders, 8/3/17 **FGDs**), most men who approach widows for union have only one aim, to exploit them. Men are simply concerned about the property that the deceased would have left behind, for the lucky ones. They also noted that others are just about gratifying their sexual appetites without due consideration of the related responsibilities. They decried the sort of men that the contemporary society is breeding today who shun responsibilities. They, therefore, strongly recommended that for those women who can find something to do for family sustenance, celibacy is the best option. The Discussants (MYW leaders, 8/3/17 **FGDs**) also regretted that many widows are preyed on by government officers who demand sexual relationship for them to be assisted in processing the deceased's benefits.

Both Kima and Esibila widows concurred with the MYW leaders' sentiments on celibacy as a preference (Discussants, Kima widows, 20/1/17 & Esibila widows, 25/1/17 WYW leaders, 8/3/17 **FGDs**). They noted that most widows are lured into relationships which do not add value at all to their livelihood. They instead find themselves with more problems to care about such as illness, children and low self-esteem.

It was also noted that not all widows that claim celibacy are actually celibate. Some of them kept 'secret' relationships with family members, friends, and even religious leaders. Asked for the reasons for keeping such relationship secret most respondents noted the shame that it would cause to the family, especially the children given the social status of the persons involved. Respondents observed that this behavior is worse than the open choice of sexuality in remarriage. The Discussants, (Elders, 6/1/17 **FGDs**) observed that

there is actually no legitimate barrier as to why one should not continue with sexual activity within prescribed perimeters.

On the other hand, celibacy does not negate sexuality. Even those who choose abstinence following the demise of their spouses are capable of satisfying their sexual needs at a level of sensual pleasure. As Hillman (2012: 11) explains, sensual activities that generate a sensual pleasure are part of sexuality. He lists examples of sensual activities such as:

Taking a hot bath or shower, noticing the breeze against one's face, having a massage, listening to music, lighting candles, getting one's hair done, eating a wonderful meal, molding or shaping clay, dressing up in beautiful clothing, splashing in puddles, lying in a feather bed, wearing silky underwear, singing in a resonant choral group, holding hands, using fragrant body lotions, dancing, engaging in foreplay, feeling muscles warm and loosen during exercise, or appreciating artwork.

He, however, observes that, —While sensual activities may induce sexual excitement, the inherent goal of the activity is not sexual intercourse or climax.‡ His sentiments resonate well with that of majority widows involved in this study. They all pointed out a variety of means by which they are meeting their sexual needs without being intimate or engaging in sexual intercourse. They include involvement in church work, and community work, keeping oneself busy with domestic chores, hanging out with other women, working on decorations and a good meal, singing and listening to good music and motivational messages, and working on their fields.

This is how a Discussant (Esibila widows, 6/1/17 **FGDs**) and an Informant (PH, 7/7/16 **OI**) reported to draw a lot of satisfaction and personal appreciation that is sensual pleasure from their service in church:

I experience a lot of pleasure from the warming of my spirit as I serve people in the church. There is inexpressible peace and elation I derive from waiting upon the clergy and the needy in church. Every time I find an opportunity to prepare a meal for the clergy and serve the needy I do it with all my energy and skill and return home an exhausted yet fulfilled woman. I always seek opportunity to do this for it gives me, as a widow, a window to appreciate myself.

Similarly, an Informant (SE, 15/7/16 **OI**) acknowledged to have experienced a lot of pleasure and fulfillment through spiritual discipline of devotions. —I feel my spirit warming up as I read the word of God, sing praises to him, make prayers and surrender to his will. I feel his comforting hand around me as I know that he is in charge of my life. It excites and fulfills me so much.¶ She also observed that her involvement in the church choir gives her a lot of pleasure. The songs they sing, the dancing and especially her percussion give her all the pleasure she requires. In view of that, the experiences listed here are substitutes for sexual pleasure but they do not in themselves give sexual pleasure.

4.5.2 Sexuality within Marriage

The second expected behavior is that the widow continues with her sexual life with a new partner. The *Abanyole* expect that after burial and observation of the required death rites, the widow remarry if she is to continue with her sexual activities. As noted earlier, though it is well acknowledged that sexuality encompasses —any combination of sexual behavior, sensual activity, emotional intimacy, or sense of sexual identity,¶ [male or female] popular western culture of the media and advertising has reduced the concept to imply —penetrative heterosexual intercourse¶ (Hillman, 2012: 11, 22). Such is the case among the contemporary *Abanyole*. Sexuality to them means penetrative sexual

intercourse. This is state despite the traditional *Abanyole* sophisticated sexual discourse that encompasses broad understanding of sexuality embracing intimacy (both emotional and sexual), sensuality (experiences of pleasure –sexual or otherwise) and sexual intercourse.

The widow chooses her suitor from within her husband's family, clan and only outside these peripheries if none them is willing to take on her. The union is commissioned and blessed by the family upon satisfying all requirements which include performing all the after burial ritual for the late husband. This is the legal institution within which a widow can engage in sexual activity. Any other form of sexual escapade is a breach of the norm and is illegal.

Such has been the acceptable institution within which one could engage in sexual activity among the *Abanyole*. The *Abanyole* believe in the importance of marriage. They acknowledge the far reaching needs it meets that they cannot imagine a sound adult life outside such a union. In fact such an individual that opts against it is regarded with suspicion. Even those who hailed celibacy did not do so because of any innate evil in remarriage but the corrupt trend of husbands exploiting widows instead of taking their responsibilities as men (Discussants, Elders, 6/1/17 & MYW leaders, 8/3/17 **FGDs** cf. Nyarwath 2012).

An Informant (PR, 7/7/16 **OI**) explained that so long as two people agree to live together in some sort of marital relationship, then such agreement is binding and no one should interfere with it. Thus widows and widowers just as any other singles have a right to enter

such relationship for the sake of maintaining sexual purity of the society. He noted that his church has no legislations for marriage that bars widows and widowers from pursuing sexuality following the demise of their spouses. He noted that such legislation would only complicate the situation and life for the widows.

Discussants (Church leaders, 24/2/17 **FGDs**) observed that the church recommends that as much as it is possible a widow remain at her original matrimonial home for the sake of her children. However, a widow is free to pursue another chance to pursue her sexual life. They noted this should be within the moral standards and provisions outlined in scriptures. It should not be for self-gratification but to honor God and with the family's best interest. They accepted that the matter of widow sexuality is thorny requiring continual reflection that takes serious the biblical teaching and contemporary realities. They pointed out that widowers, including the clergy, simply remarry while widows' fate remains unaddressed with a lot of sanctions.

It is worth noting that the middle-aged and older widows crave for intimacy, sensual pleasure and intercourse to a varied degree despite popular stereotyping. This might be with or without the explicit goal of achieving sexual pleasure and with or without a partner. A Discussant (Esibila widows, 6/1/17 FGDs) recollected that, —Life is too sweet and too bitter for one to be alone. Everyone needs a hand, just in case. This could be another spouse, a true comrade or an intimate group for a widow. Hence, there is a need to honestly engage widows on this matter to expand the horizon for meaningful and fruitful living.

4.6 Reasons for the expected Widow's Sexual Behaviour

Respondents in this study stated many reasons for a sexual behavior expected from widows according to the ways of the *Abanyole*. These reasons are a blend of both the *Abanyole* cultural and the Judeo-Christian beliefs and practices. The reasons include the perception that sex is a need, sex is sacred, the need for maintain family line and purity, for good health and posterity, averting early and sudden deaths, and for accruing respect and honor.

4.6.1 Sex is a Need

According to an elderly female widow Informant (CE, 8/8/16 **OI**) on the *Abanyole* culture, sex is a basic need according to the unwritten-*Abanyole* cultural manual. Its agency is assigned to the men yet the intensity of urge and its fulfillment is also experienced by their female counterpart. As a result, widows are perceived as women on the loose. All widows involved in this study observed that there is an intense monitoring of widows among the *Abanyole* compared to other categories of women. The reasons given include a perception that widows have intense sexual urges and are poor, and as such in need of men to bail them out. These make them a loose lot, requiring stringent measures to check their behavior.

Pointing to the fluidity of widows' sexuality, especially the young, an elderly widow Discussant (Esibila widows, 6/1/17 **FGDs**) wondered what will befall the current generation where women are widowed at a very young age. She noted that the elderly women are able to manage their sexual urges since they can control their agency. She 105

warned that unless God came to the aid of the contemporary society, ailments related to sexual behavior are bound to wipe out our generation. She explained that widows have sexual needs to be met. She noted that one widow, in her sixties, expressing the reality of sex as a felt need responded to her advice to desist from keeping secret sexual relationship by exclaiming, does a vagina feed on *ugali*!

Consequently, as an Informant (FL, 14/10/16 **OI**), observes, some widows resort to a double standard life. They keep secret sexual relations whilst in public they claim to be celibate. He notes that some do so with members of the community such as religious leaders, close relatives and domestic workers. In agreement with the elderly widow informant, he rubbishes widow celibacy, especially for religious purposes as a sheer joke. He claims that sexual urge for a widow is human and should be met just as other necessities for a healthy living.

Others withdraw completely from public life fearing misconception and false accusation. As such they cease or slow down on rendering their services to the society. This position can retard their personal growth and that of the community. As an Informant, a Government Officer (CN, 13/9/16 **OI**), observes that widowhood experiences among the *Abanyole* weakens their ability to engage in gainful activities for the development of the society.

Consequently, the very thought that widows, as other older citizens, should/have cease(d) sexual activity impacts negatively on their access to reproductive health. According to an Informant, a healthy worker in the study area, widows cease to seek reproductive related

information and services because they believe they do not need it. This puts such widows and their potential partners at risk of contracting sexually transmitted diseases and infections as well as conceiving unwanted pregnancies which may eventually lead to deaths related to unsafe abortions (LN, 8/9/16 **OI**).

4.6.2 Sacredness of sex

Sacredness of sex is another reason cited for the expected widow's sexual behavior. As earlier explained, *Abanyole* perceive sex to be a means of life and death. Thus, it requires a proper safeguard. The expected widow's sexual behavior should ensure that the name and the family of the late husband prosper and increase. It is also to assure the widow of her place in the society. Widows who subscribe and master this philosophy, graduate to become caregivers for other widows as custodian of the *Abanyole* ways of life (Church leaders, 24/2/17; Elders, 6/1/17 **FGDs**; SS, 21/9/16 **OI**).

4.6.3 To ensure Family Purity

As earlier noted, sex among the *Abanyole* is a means for procreation. Family purity is very important to *Abanyole*. This is assured through observing sex codes. Issues of incest, single parenting, a family with children belonging to different father from different clans/families, were not entertained. It was honorable to have children belonging to the same father and if he passes on and there is need for having other children, they had to belong to the same family/clan. This required that widows either subscribe to particular sexual behavior: celibacy, or have someone of her choice who is related to her deceased husband.

4.6.4 Good Health and Posterity

Good health and posterity is another reason for the widow observing a sexual code. It was generally noted by the respondents that sex code is made to ensure good health and prosperity of the widow and that of her children and the community at large. The widows who made themselves available to men were seen not only to be in danger of contracting venereal diseases but also endangering involved families, especially if such arrangements were not undertaken in accordance with tradition. Hence, ardent voluntary vigilantes were always in place to ensure that no such thing happens (CE, 8/8/16; PH, 7/7/16; RY, 4/7/16 **OI**; Kima widows, 20/1/17 and Elders, 6/1/17 **FGDs**).

4.6.5 Perpetuation and Preservation of Life

The *Abanyole* have held on to understanding of the mysterious nature of sexual activity, and more so that of a widow. The mourning and burial practices and required ritual cleansing which widows are subjected to attest to this fact. It is believed that inappropriate sexual relationship would result in early and sudden deaths of culprits. To avert early and sudden deaths, probably as vengeance from the deceased husband, proper procedure is followed and herb concoctions administered to both families.

According to an Informant, (CE, 8/8/16 **OI**), a herbalist and traditional healer, families are subjected to strange and incurable ailments and sudden deaths related to widow inheritance and sexual activities with widows and widowers. She noted that she has had to avert many such impending deaths by administering concoctions. Hence, observing a sexual code is seen to preserve and perpetuate life among the *Abanyole*.

4.6.6 Increase Widow's Currency

Observation of the *Abanyole* sex code by widow increased their currency in the community, hence their respect and honor. Widows that took their time to mourn their husbands, gave them befitting burial, and after burial rites managed their family and estates well earned respect and honor from the community. The litmus test to the widow's morality came after the burial of her husband. It was expected that the widow would either uphold celibacy or remarry within the husband's family/clan as would be feasible. Higher premium was placed on voluntary celibacy but younger widows and those without proper means of livelihood would be encouraged to remarry so as to appropriately manage their sexual life (Informants, SH, 18/8/16 **OI**; Discussants, Esibila widows, 25/1/17 **FGDs**).

Nyarwath writing about the Luo care of widows crystallizes this notion in his apt conclusion:

The *parents* and *brothers* of the deceased ought to fulfill their sacred moral duty to protect the bereaved family. This requires at least two conditions:

1. That the *chi liel* (widow) chooses a guardian, but presents him to the parents-in law and brothers-in law (in other words, to her family in the wider sense of the term).
2. That the brothers-in-law must never allow the guardian, be it one of them or not, to exploit or oppress the immediate family of their deceased brother. The so-called guardian should not be allowed to perform only the cleansing rite or sexual duty, but should be committed to the care of the family of the deceased.

However, *chi liel* should also develop a warm relationship between herself and her in-laws. In other words, there should be a family spirit. This calls for mutual respect and care within the family (2012: 108).

4.7 Summary

This chapter presented the findings and discussions on *Abanyole* cultural perceptions on widows' sexuality. It is ascertained that cultural perceptions on widows' sexuality are rife among contemporary *Abanyole*. Sex is sacred and a preserve for marital relationship which is primarily for procreation. Marriage bond is so strong that even death cannot brake. Morality prescribes that intimacy and sexual intercourse be celebrated within marriage bonds. Irresponsible sexual intercourse is punishable. Men are perceived to be the custodians of sex while women are their subject. Widows, as women belonging to the family and clan by virtue of marriage bond sealed by bride price, have their need for intimacy and sexual intercourse met within the late husband's clan. Their sexuality is reigned on by men and clouded with taboos and rituals. It is expected that a widow either _finds' another _husband', who is not actually her own, within her matrimonial clan, become celibate or loose marital status and the accruing benefits. These perceptions stems from the *Abanyole* way of life. They are transmitted to subsequent generations' by way of gender specific socialization that skew sexual power and privileges toward masculine gender.

This reveals that *Abanyole* culture views female sexuality in general and specifically that of a widow as being subordinate to male sexuality. This is evident through sanctions and restrictions on widow behavior, practice, imposed humility and chastity. Men are never subjected to such requirements.

CHAPTER FIVE

ABANYOLE WIDOWS' ATTITUDE TOWARD THEIR SEXUALITY

In order to arrive at a clear picture of Christian influence on widows' sexuality among *Abanyole* one has to be familiar with *Abanyole* widows' attitude toward their sexuality. This entails the widows' self-opinions, perceptions, feelings, emotions and general behavior. It is important to determine the worth, value, position/status, social space and identity that widows espouse first as women, and then in their status as widows. It is also important that one examines the expectations and norms that exist and how they influence widows' attitudes about sex and sexual behavior. Last but not the least is the consideration of women's socialization among the *Abanyole* and its influence on widows' sexuality.

5.1 Widows' self- perception of their sexuality

In considering widows self-perception the researcher sought to establish widows' gendered self-rating and how it contributes to their overall discrimination in the society. The data generated related to widow's sensuality, widow's views on their identity, widows' views about intimacy and widows' views on sexual intercourse. Overall, it could comfortably be said that widows have low rating of themselves by comparison with their male counterparts.

5.1.1 Widow's Attitude on her Sensuality

Hillman describes sensuality as follows:

Sensuality can be defined as the experience of pleasure from one's senses leading to an increased awareness of and appreciation for one's own body. Such pleasure may be generated via sexual activity specifically, but also from any activation of the sensory organs. It is essential to note that sensual pleasure can be experienced with or without another person, and that expressions of sensuality are vast and quite individualized. Examples of sensual activities may include taking a hot bath or shower, noticing the breeze against one's face, having a massage, listening to music, lighting candles, getting one's hair done, eating a wonderful meal, molding or shaping clay, dressing up in beautiful clothing, splashing in puddles, lying in a feather bed, wearing silky underwear, singing in a resonant choral group, holding hands, using fragrant body lotions, dancing, engaging in foreplay, feeling muscles warm and loosen during exercise, or appreciating artwork. While sensual activities may induce sexual excitement, the inherent goal of the activity is not sexual intercourse or climax (2012: 11).

Women among *Abanyole* have a generally low self-rating in relation to their male counterparts. The women that participated in this study thought and acted as though there is something special about being male. This may be attributed to their socialization which imprints in them the idea that male is the default and superior sex (Discussants, MYW leaders, 8/2/17 FGDs).

Women in Bunyore accrue their identity from males. Therefore they always emphasize their husband's name in their introduction. In fact some will go all the way, when using English, to insinuate that his name is their _addresses'. Some, upon marriage, change their name by inserting their husband's name on their official documents. Failure to do so is deemed to be a sign of noncommittal.

Another observation to that effect is the title with which women [wives] in Bunyore refer to their husbands. The standard title is *omwami wanje* which directly translates to, my lord. Such a title is not just in word but enacted in day-to-day family life. The women care and serve men among *Abanyole*. They do all the domestic chores which include food

production on the farm and trading to earn a family's living. They can only own anything through their men.

During one of the elder's FGDs (6/1/17) the researcher observed a general acceptance of low rating among *Abanyole* women. As we were settling down for our discussion, his wife showed up to greet us. One of the elders requested our host to give his wife a chair. He replied that, *omukhasi sasinjilwanga ta* meaning, 'a man is not supposed surrender his seat to a woman'. He also noted, *omukhasi sabolwa m'mbela ta, alol'le m'mbikhole* meaning that a husband is not supposed to apologize or confess any wrong doing to his wife, just demonstrate it in kindness. I thought that such sentiments would irritate the wife or at least evoke a discussion but to my surprise the wife and all elders present confirmed it to be so.

Discussants (MYW leaders, 8/2/17 FGDs) observed that women in Bunyore are perceived to be part of properties in the name of their fathers which eventually change hands to their husbands in exchange for bride price. They noted that women in Bunyore, regardless of their status, are overburdened and get exhausted early in the day. The family pressure greatly affects how women in Bunyore feel about themselves. They rarely experience pleasure as there are hardly opportunities to familiarize and appreciate their own bodies. They said that it is time that women in Bunyore broke the shackles of low self-esteem perpetuated by male chauvinism and take seriously their role and responsibilities as women for the community's prosperity. They noted that days of exclusivity are long gone and what men can do, women can do it better. They illustrated

that sanity has been restored and progress realized since Emuhaya began to deploy women in Provincial Administration and other leadership positions.

One senior widow and a church leader seemed to be at home with the notion of women playing a second fiddle as they assume their rightful position in marriage. While explaining the position of a woman in a marital relation among the *Abanyole* she emphasized that the wife's academic and economic status does not count in a marriage institution. —When it comes to the institution of marriage, you put down your academic credentials. You are now going to be someone's wife. Do not regard yourself in light of your credentials, position or the amount of money you earn, she advised. She went ahead to illustrate with her own situation noting that when at home she is a wife and nothing more. She has to undertake the domestic chore including the care of the farm above and beyond her employment where she earns a living. —You are a helpmate and as such do not usurp the man's position and glory. *Wacheni mume awe mume, bibi awe bibi*” which means that each spouse take their rightful social space (a Discussant, Esibila widows, 25/1/17 **FGDs**). In essence the man is rightfully the head and default leader. On a whole, the exhortation intimated that marriage will thrive in the context of female spouse's unequivocal submission, respect and honor to the male. And thus, these are a must virtue that every woman ought to cultivate.

5.1.2 Widow Views on Identity

The generally low self-esteem women have becomes worse in their widowhood. This is due to the emotional and psychological pressure that she undergoes during funeral and

burial rites and subsequent reality that dawns on her that her spouse is buried and she has to face life on her own (PH, 7/7/16 **OI**). Widows both in Esibila (25/1/17) and Kima (20/1/17) **FGDs** agreed that such a reality is the most difficulty to come to terms with.

During funeral widows eulogize their deceased husbands noting their duties and responsibilities which will henceforth not be effectively attended to. A husband is described to be like a hedge whose demise opens up a floodgate of discrimination and intimidation to the bereaved family. Widows feel inadequate to challenge such intimidations that arise from cultural assumption that discriminate against them (Kima widows, 20/1/17 and Esibila widows, 25/1/17 **FGDs**; PH, 7/7/16; SH, 18/8/16 **OI**).

Among *Abanyole* a widow acquire a new not so coveted title, *omukhasika*, *omukhuchakhili* and *omulekhwa* meaning a woman who has buried (some refer to it as having eaten) her husband; one with bad omen resulting from death/contaminated and a deserted one.

A Discussant (MYW leaders, 8/2/17 **FGDs**) explained that most women in Bunyore are widowed long before their spouses actually die. She noted that most men in Bunyore have failed in their responsibility as providers and family beacons. They have left their wives to fend and provide for families. They also have failed to provide much needed inspiration to the family, especially to the children. As such the boy-child in Bunyore requires attention for the stability of family. These very sentiments were also expressed by the elders in their Focused Group Discussions (Discussants, 6/1/17). They noted that

most social institutions beginning with the family are now manned by women. Men are relegating their duties in family, church and civil society to women.

However, it is notable that these sentiments are reactionary. What the respondents are communicating is that men have relegated their duties as heads of social institutions such as family. The women complain that their men are no longer responsible subjecting them to widowhood-like experiences long before they actually die. Discussants (8/2/17) in the MYW leaders FGDs were categorical on this. Even in such redefinition, the women note that widowhood transcends the sum total of the social responsibilities accorded to either gender.

On the contrary, there are those whose breakthrough comes with the demise of their spouse. Some confess that when their spouse passed on they felt a big load removed from their lives opening up a new horizon in life. Informant, (JA, 20/7/16 **OI**) confided that her husband was an impediment to the family's progress. He was given to drinking and would squander family resources. As she could not take any more of that, she opted to separate with him for a while. She took her children to her parents and left to find a job. The husband lived a deplorable life as a pauper. Upon his death the family recalled this wife, with the community offering to put up a temporary house for her. She has since changed the family narrative. Her family is well and in an established homestead.

These sentiments also emerged from the Discussants (8/2/17) at the MYW leaders FGDs. A Discussant (8/1/17), a widow among the MYW women leaders, recounted how her late husband vehemently opposed her of services to the community through the *Maendeleo*

Ya Wanawake initiative. He seriously fought her involvement in the movement accusing the group of being spearheaded by prostitutes, divorcees and single mothers who have no morals. He threatened her colleagues and also threatened her against taking up a secretarial job that she had been offered at the then Vihiga District office. All this happened while that husband could not foot for his children's fees and adequately provide for the family.

The widow is now able to take on various responsibilities including the one at the *Maendeleo ya Wanawake* office. The family is well in an established homestead. Children are in good schools and their fee is guaranteed courtesy of her salary and honoraria. Women in general and specifically widows have the capacity to run their families and as such do not require sympathy but opportunity.

5.1.3 Widow's Intimacy

Hillman defines intimacy as,

Quality of the interpersonal relationship among two people in a romantic interpersonal relationship, who may or may not be actively engaged in sexual activity. Attachment style, prior family dynamics, sexual identity issues, and self-esteem may all contribute to the level of intimacy experienced (or desired) by an individual. In practical terms, intimacy could be manifested by a subjective feeling of love or satisfaction when in the partner's presence or when thinking about the partner, the degree of appropriate self-disclosure between partners, and the willingness or ability to value the partner's needs and desires as well as one's own. For the purposes of this text, intimacy will be used to refer exclusively to emotional intimacy (i.e., interpersonal satisfaction and subjective feelings of closeness) (2012: 10-11).

As observed by Alati (2016), the *Abanyole* world view perceives sex as a preserve for men. The wife is expected to satisfy the husband's desire and it is not expected for a woman to publicly express sexual desire. This subjugation of women by men worsens in widowhood. The general observation is that women in Bunyore shy from discussing matters of sex because they feel ill equipped to handle the subject (cf. Musara, 2016).

However, as earlier on cited from Amadiume, the *Abanyole* culture had an in-built mechanism that aided a woman, whatever the assumption, to still emerge on top of the game all the same:

Sex was not forced on a woman; she was constantly surrounded by children and other people [...] The sanctity of motherhood meant that women were treated with respect. One woman might desire an intense relationship with her husband, another might see marital obligations as a necessary but loathsome duty. Some might abandon their relationship with their husband and shun —men and their trouble!. Indigenous architecture and male/female polygyny made these choices possible (Amadiume, 1987: 114).

5.1.4 Widow's Sexual Intercourse

The attitude of culture towards widows' sexuality is varied from positive to negative and from permissive to restrictive. This significantly affects the expression of sexuality among the widows. The majority of widows and other respondents engaged in this study saw celibacy as the default sexual behavior for a widow. They observed the cultural and social complexities surrounding widow's sexuality with pity and just hoped that she could be able to abstain from sexual activity altogether.

All the respondents were of the opinion that widows have a freedom to choose either the way of celibacy or sex within marriage. The second option, noted is open to all young

widows, that is, those below sixty years of age. She, however, observed that this must be within Christian teachings and principles of sexual purity. Accordingly, sexual behavior of a widow is not any different from that of other women or Christians (Informant, JE, 3/10/16 **OI**).

5.2 Gender and Sexual Agency

Here the discussion is on gender as a factor of sexual agency among *Abanyole*. Generally in the *Abanyole* thinking there is only two genders: male and female. They do not have such thing as transgender. Sexual agency among the *Abanyole* is understood to depend on ones gender. It is similar to what is indicated by Villanueva in her study on female sexuality in Puerto Rico. She explains:

The concept of sexual agency was defined by Laws (1980) as the power to choose and control one's sexuality. Feminist argue to what extent are women's sexualities shaped by socio-cultural forces; and to what degree are women agents of their own sexualities, redefining existing constructions of female sexuality (Osmond & Thorne, 1993). Baber (1994) suggests that sexual agency can be developed in order to reshape sexual beliefs and behaviors. Sexual agency is not static, it draws from past experiences, and has the potential to modify previous sexual scripts and behaviors (Villanueva 1997: 19).

5.2.1 Men

The Discussants (Elders, 6/1/17 **FGDs**) noted that the *Abanyole* expect that men take the lead in matters concerning sex. They are expected to be the ones to ‘see’ and ask a good woman’s hand in marriage. It is assumed that a woman can live anywhere and with anybody. In fact, they are said to be clan-less and tribe-less. The *Abanyole* men are also raised to know that women have no decision to be taken serious. This therefore gives men

a sense of entitlement to sexual activity and the enjoyment thereof (Alati 2016). This may explain the *Abanyole* men's insensitivity to the emotions of women. So far men are the custodians of matters concerning sex among the *Abanyole*.

5.2.2 Women

Among the *Abanyole* it is unthinkable for a woman to initiate sexual activity. A woman behaving suggestively to a man is deemed a prostitute and so abhorred by the society. Women are socialized to wait on and serve their men. This makes women among the *Abanyole* disadvantaged when it comes to standing their ground in matters relating to their sexuality (Discussants, MYW leaders, 6/1/17 **FGDs**). Their views are in line with what is observed in Carpenter's study that adolescent boys have an upper hand compared to girls in sexual negotiation skills. She notes that some women gain this skill as they mature through life experiences that include dissatisfying sex in their marriage, psychological and social development that come with age. She laments that some of these experiences erode women's sexual agency (Carpenter, 2010).

5.3 Categories of widows

According to the widows there are three main categories of widows depending on their age and status in their clan. These are *omukhaye* (elder), *omukhasika* (widow) and *omulekhwa* (free and available for marriage) (Informants, FL, 14/10/16; CE, 8/8/16; SS, 21/9/16 **OI**; Discussants, Elders, 6/1/17 **FGDs**). Each category accords a widow a specific status in the community and influences her sexuality in specific way as demonstrated below.

5.3.1 *Omukhaye*

According to Discussants in elders (6/1/17) and widows (20/1/17 & 25/1/17) **FGDs** and Informants (CE, 8/8/16; SS, 21/9/16 **OI**) this is a woman of status in the society. She could be a widow or not. She stands out from the rest because of the space and privilege earned in the society as a result of her character. Normally they are first wives in polygamous marital arrangement that have successful grown up children [most of which have established their own families], aided their husbands in earning honor in the society through their industry and wisdom and smoothly transitioned their families from a monogamous to a polygamous marriage arrangement. Women who are widowed while in this category are considered elders in the community. They are therefore unlikely to be dragged into marriage. An Informant (DH, 12/8/16 **OI**) fondly referred to such as *mtoto misa*, altar boys/girls, meaning that they no longer experience sexual urge.

5.3.2 *Omukhasika*

This refers to a widow that is available for remarriage but on her terms. Her priority is to care for her former matrimonial home and the children of the deceased husband. She only gets into a temporal ‘_marital’ arrangement to meet particular needs of her family. In such marriage arrangements she remains on top of the game determining who she can marry, terms and conditions. They usually terminate the relationship at any opportune time. A Discussant (elders, 6/1/17 **FGDs**) recalled Kinyore songs that castigated a man who married a widow as the only wife. Such men were deemed unmarried for such unions

could be ended in the middle of the night at slightest provocation and when the widow feels that her ‘_inheritor’ no longer adds value to her life.

5.3.3 Omulekhwa

This is a widow available for marriage to whoever that is willing. Such widows are willing to abandon their matrimonial homes to start over again in a new marriage arrangement. Discussants (Elders 6/1/17 & widows 20/1/17 & 25/1/17 **FGDs**) participating in this study maintained that any woman that has survived of a husband and buries him according to her culture is a widow. Discussants (elders, 6/1/17 and Church leaders, 24/2/17 **FGDs**) specifically invoked the provisions in the Marriage act of the Kenyan Constitution 2010 that provides for the declaration of the marital status of the candidates at the time of solemnization. They noted that the lady is categorized as a spinster, a divorcee or a widow. Thus, *omulekhwa* refers to any such a woman that has survived of her husband and is available for unrestricted remarriage.

5.4 Widows’ Attitudes toward Sex

As earlier noted, women, especially widows, among the *Abanyole* have been socialized to refrain from conversing about or exploring matters of sex. Anyone who freely speaks about it or seems conversant on the subject is deemed ill-mannered and suspected to be a whore. Hence, they are suspicious of sex and any related activities.

Lorde (1978: 3) writing about the uses of erotic power, she observes as a woman:

We have been taught to suspect this resource, vilified, abused and devalued within western society. On one hand, the superficially erotic has been encouraged as a sign of female inferiority; on the other hand, women have been made to suffer and to feel both contemptible and suspect by virtue of its existence. It is a short step from there to the false belief that only by the suppression of the erotic within our lives and consciousness can women be truly strong. That strength is illusory, for it is fashioned within the context of male models of power. As women, we have come to distrust that power which rises from our deepest and non-rational knowledge. We have been warned against it all our lives by male world, which value this depth of feeling enough to keep women around in order to exercise it in the service of men, but which fear this same depth too much to examine the possibilities of it within themselves. So women are maintained at a distant/inferior position to be psychically milked, much the same way ants maintain colonies of aphids to provide a life-giving substance for their masters.

Likewise, the majority of widows among the *Abanyole* espouse a negative and restrictive attitude about sex which breeds their seemingly naïve and incompetence in negotiating sex issues (Discussants, widows, 20/1/17& 25/1/17 **FGDs**).

5.5 Expectations and norms that influence widows' attitudes

Expectations and norms that influence widows' attitudes toward their sexuality emanate from peoples' philosophy and the socio-cultural values attached to sex and sexuality.

Generally widows as women have a particular socialization that instills a second fiddle player mentality in them. Norms and expectations cement this perception in relation to their male counterpart.

A widow is expected to mourn her husband for a period of time. During mourning, the widow is supposed to find a fellow widow to cook and do most of the domestic chores for her. The caretaker widow also instructs and advises her on the expectations and norms relating to widowhood and accompanies her on all her errands. The widow is expected to

visit the place that the late husband lived [if different from their matrimonial home], church, and her native home as a way of ‘taking back his ghost’. It is during the mourning period that fidelity of the widow is put to test. Due to the *Abanyole*’s belief that people do not just die and that infidelity, especially of the wife, is the leading cause of the deaths of husbands, the wife is expected to demonstrate beyond reasonable doubt that she is innocent. This is done by requiring the widow to sit by the corpse for the entire period before burial. If one she was unfaithful she would develop ill health and die as a result. The widow is also required to bear a flower wreath which is believed to signify fidelity and in the event that she was unfaithful, she would fall sick and eventually die. Discussants and informants reported to have witnessed such deaths (Discussants, MYW leaders, 6/1/17 **FGDs**, Informants, CE, 8/8/16; DH, 12/8/17 **OI**). The events related here by the women resemble what the Bible records about in Numbers chapter five on the Law concerning jealousy.

A widow is expected to observe seclusion until she re-married or at least cleansed. A widow is expected not to go to people’s homes or cross through their fields for a period of time. It is believed that death is a bad omen and a bereaved widow carries with her impurities (*obukhucha*) and bad omen related to death. The seclusion period is intended to protect the entire family from sharing in the deceased husband’s vengeance in case the widow’s promiscuity was responsible for his death. This is done by ensuring that the widow’s utensils, beddings, and clothing are separated from the rest of the family members. The widow is also restrained from entering any of the houses around or crossing through crop fields for this would lead to other deaths and crop failure. One

widow related that it was explained to her that her urine burning up grass whenever she urinated illustrated her bad omen. A widow is understood, among *Abanyole*, as someone carrying a curse or death with her (Discussants, Esibila widows, 25/1/17 FGDs & Informants, CE, 8/8/16; FL, 14/10/16 **OI**).

According to the widows involved in the study, it is expected of every widow to remain faithful to the deceased husband by caring for their matrimonial home (Discussants, Esibila widows, 25/1/17 & Kima widows, 20/1/17 **FGDs**). Among the *Abanyole* the bride price cements marriage that even death cannot undo it. Therefore love and commitment of any woman reaches its zenith in the maintenance of their matrimonial home and care for their children in the event that the husband passes on. Hence, any subsequent relationships are temporal and at best carried out in the widow's first matrimonial home. To cement this expectation the *Abanyole* have a ceiling of only one cow (*yelikokhe*) given to the widow's parents in the event that a subsequent relationship has children. It is not a bride price but a legal seal for the ownership of children born out of a widow. Otherwise, she remains the deceased's wife, and in the event she dies she is buried next to the late husband. One widow expressed her disappointment that she was the only foolish one of the widows that had broken this norm by leaving her matrimonial home and moving into her brother-in-law's home following the death of his wife. This is in spite her children's care and her frequent visits and maintenance of her matrimonial home that is less than a mile away (Informant, TA, 30/7/16 **OI**).

A widow is expected to observe chastity until all the burial and funeral rites for the deceased husband are concluded. Among the *Abanyole*, burial of a family man takes

place within four to twenty-one days depending on his age and status. There are several funeral rites that follow and might take between one to ten years also depending on age and status. Meanwhile, the widow is expected to remain chaste otherwise she won't be able to lead or fully participate in such occasions. It is held that widows who involve themselves sexually before finishing these rites break their promise and would die if they eat or use any of the proceeds from such a rite. Others opt for cleansing herbs but one widow who is an herbalist and an expert in *Abanyole* traditions refutes it attributing many untreatable ailments and premature deaths to such actions (Discussants, Esibila widows, 25/1/16 & elders, 6.1/17 **FGDs**; Informant, CE, 8/8/16 **OI**).

A widow is expected to respect and honor her in-laws (Informant, PR, 23/8/16 **OI**). It was noted that marriage among *Abanyole* is not just about the couple in question but involves the entire families or clan. As such the wives do not just belong and submit to a husband but to the entire family and clan in the pecking order. A widow is expected to show respect and honor to her in-laws by working with them, consulting with them and at times submitting to their demands in order to have their support and assistance in matters of her family. One widow recounted how her brother-in-law forced her into accepting him to remarry her by threatening that if that was not granted nobody else should remarry her. Since she had a very young family, without income of her own and depended on the family to process the late husband's benefits, she gave in (Informant, SE, 12/7/16 **OI**).

A widow was expected to lead and fully participate in all rites in honor of her deceased husband. The *Abanyole* have many burial and funeral rites. During these rites the widow is the center of attention. She leads the entire family into honoring her deceased husband.

Many of the rites have severe implications to the widow's life depending on whether she was faithful to the deceased (Informant, PR, 23/8/16 **OI**).

Younger widows were expected to be re-married within the late husbands' clan and bear children. Most widows among *Abanyole* are those in child bearing age. Such widows would be under pressure from all quarters to re-marry and have children. In case of remarriage the script is clear: It is within the clan. The widow is expected to choose one of the brothers or first cousins of the late husband that she deems responsible and that she can live with. The two are then expected to go public so that everyone is aware of the 'marriage' for sexual sanctity. Young widows who are not re-married are looked at with suspicion and their relationships monitored closely by the volunteer female village vigilantes (Discussants, Elders 6/1/17 **FGDs**).

Re-marrying widows are expected to undergo a cleansing rite. An Informant, (JA, 20/7/16 **OI**) reported that an elderly woman in her village organized for a male cleanser to fulfill the rite on her in preparation for the son re-marrying her. She explained that this woman got information that her son was interested in her. She was young and had just been widowed. The woman feared that her son would be the first to have sexual relations with her risking a wrath of her deceased husband. The woman talked to Jessica and they agreed that she negotiates and pay a cleanser to pave the way for her son's 'marriage'. This shows the heightened concern and community's involvement to ensure wellness and prosperity by observing sex code.

This scenario was related to the two widows' Focus Group Discussions. Asked of their opinion on the act, the women seemed surprised that such acts are still happening and denounced it as bizarre. They noted that such code dehumanizes widow because of the exposure and emotional strain of engaging in a sexual act with a person that is not ones choice not to mention the number of people involved. However, the researcher noted from their facial expression that the women have no problem with the practice except for the shame it creates in public discussion.

5.6 Factors for Widow's Self Attitudes

Several factors have been noted to be responsible for the widows' self-rating. They include Self-esteem, prevailing culture and the family environment.

5.6.1 Self Esteem

Discussants noted that women among the *Abanyole* have a generally low self-esteem compared to their male counterpart. They put forward that the low opinion accrues from the kind of socialization and status ascribed to women by the culture. They observed that the *Abanyole* culture is characterized with gender power that naturally subjugates their women to their male counterparts. This characterization is cemented in varied degree by institutions such as churches, schools, and government (MYW leaders, 8/2/17 **FGDs**).

Men among the *Abanyole* own and control all the factors of production. Many women among the *Abanyole* still think that a woman cannot own land and other properties, except via a man: the father, husband, or son. Discussants (25/1/17) in the Esibila widows

FGDs emphatically noted that the home belongs to a husband (man). A wife (woman) is only brought in. For that reason, anything this woman accrues as a result belongs to the husband. The MYW leaders FGDs Discussants (8/2/17) also noted that some men are threatened by their women's progress and industry that they become stumbling blocks in their way. They intimidate them with flimsy accusations calling them names and threatening them with violence, separation and divorce. As a result many women learn not to compete in acquiring education and properties.

This is the situation of widows among the *Abanyole*. They feel inadequate in many ways. Many of them are not well endowed in terms of education and life skills to negotiate the murky waters of life without their husbands. Some do not have basic literacy skills, are ignorant of their basic rights and do not know where to seek justice. Hence, they find themselves at the mercies of their in-laws and government officials who often take advantage. The sense of loss of their spouse and the tedious hustles to keep the family wears their self-esteem even more.

This is how one young widow painted a picture of a widow's self-esteem among the *Abanyole*,

A widow among *Abanyole* is nothing but a statistic [*Siabukulwamo oluchendo ta*]. You can't stand in the cause and successfully defend yourself. Your fate is in the hands of your in-laws. Sometimes you just overhear of the family's resolutions concerning you from their wives. You are accused of all and sundry [*ochikhwanga kosi, oli ebarabara*]: husband stealing, promiscuity, name it....My experiences after husband's death included: unfair land subdivision, lack of proper healthcare, lack of school fees and feeling of insecurity. The pain intensifies at the times he used to come back home, now that he is not. You miss him. The family menu changes suddenly [for me as a house wife because the bread winner is no

more]. Thus widows see themselves to be of no value [low self-esteem]. They are not respected and anybody can point them an accusing figure (Informant, TA, 30/7/16 **OI**).

Thus widows among the *Abanyole* suffer low self-esteem. This is aggravated by their widowhood experiences that amplify gender power that marginalizes them the more. This is conspicuous in the event a widow is not endowed with education and negotiating skills with which to stamp her authority (cf. Azuike, 2009).

5.6.2 Cultural perception

Musindarwezo's article, *‘Affirmative Action: Women Rights still a far Cry in Africa* aptly portrays a contemporary cultural behavior toward women:

If women's right were to be measured by the number of laws and policies so far initiated towards that specific goal in Africa, the African woman would be liberated on earth! The reality, however, is far from this. Policy makers at high levels in the continent continue to put women's right on the agenda but with negligible or hardly any positive impact.

In fact with the glaring gender gaps in economic, political, and social platforms much more still need to be done. Women and girls in Africa are unaware, disempowered or denied opportunity to access economic, political, social and cultural rights. Women are exposed to gender based violence (GBV), harmful traditional and religious practices, denied rights to employment in a favorable and just condition, right to food, housing and quality healthcare as well as social security and employment benefits.

Women further lack access to and ownership and equitable benefit of resources such as land and other means of production that is necessary for suitable development. It is therefore time for African governments to put actions where promises are and fulfill the urgent need for respect and total rights for women in Africa (Musindarwezo, 2016).

There is a profound lip service promotion of women agenda by most institutions, including family, schools, governments and churches. Any spot check reveals a culture of

gender power relation always in favor of men. As such it is a norm that everything, including women, is at men's disposal. Women are just behind successful men! Any independent and successful woman is looked at with suspicion and mistrust. This attitude is prevalent among the *Abanyole* and could be responsible for the delayed development of its people as observed by an Informant (CN, 13/9/16 **OI**) and the Discussants (MYW leaders, 8/2/17 **FGDs**) in the study area.

Disillusioned by this dilapidating state, most women jealously and ignorantly guard and support the cultural perception that associate a woman with meekness that is characterized with innate weakness. They in turn perceive themselves to have emotional impairment that cannot be trusted with any strenuous and challenging task. They see themselves as beings that can easily be cheated, convinced, coaxed, emotional, and undiscerning (Discussants, MYW leaders, 8/2/17, **FGDs**).

5.6.3 Environmental Influence

The prevailing social environment greatly influences the way women and widow's attitudes toward themselves. Positive and enabling environments breed positive and efficacious attitude of the widows. On the contrary, the negative and demeaning surrounding create negative and dependent attitude among women about themselves. The attitudes that significant institutions (family, government, church and media) and people communicate about women shape and affect their perception. The elders, church and women leaders and widows who participated in this study noted that a lot still needs to be done to create an enabling environment for gender parity among the *Abanyole* as in the

global society (Informants, LN, 8/9/16; CN, 13/9/16 **OI** and Discussants, Elders, 6/1/17; Kima widows, 20/1/17; Esibila widows, 25/1/17; MYW leaders, 8/2/17 **FGDs**).

A woman has always been associated with family and domestic chores. Her success is always sought in that region. Consequently, women who have excelled as politicians, entrepreneurs and professionals appearing for interviews on any the media are never let off the hook without being asked how they juggle their public life with family.

Intimidation of women in families contributes to their generally low esteem. Families where women are physically or verbally abused breed emotionally impaired women. In most families women are treated as cheap things that can be picked and discarded at will. Sometimes their value is trivialized to baby industries as in Jacqueline Mwendé's case whose hands were mutilated because she could not bear children. However, while consoling with Mwendé, a victim of gender based violence, Machakos Governor's wife Mrs. Lilian Ng'ang'a assured her that, —You are a woman by the role you play in the society and not the number of children you have. Such is true for church institutions and leaders that wink at women's abuse. Federation of Women Lawyers in Kenya (Fida) chairperson, Josephine Mogire observed that religious leaders may be contributing to violence in families by urging partners to just keep praying. Mogire said, —Pastors should stop telling people to continue staying in their marriages to a point that they are killed because of women who find themselves in abusive relationship should have the courage to walk out. (Ngure, 2016: 8).

Another, elderly retired pastor, Informant (FL, 14/10/16 **OI**) did not mince his words while addressing issues pertaining to women and the church of his days. He fondly recalled,

There was no female among the leaders in the church when I began ministry in 1968. The pastors then never allowed a woman to preach. A woman cannot bless [*okhubita*] or grace/preside over a rite/ritual [*okhwem'mel'la omulukha*]. A 1996's Yellow Paper [a manual for conducting COGEA(K) sacraments] outlined six ordinances: baptism, Holy Communion, Baby dedication, Laying foundation, House dedication and burial rite. None would be presided over by a woman. Even preparation of the Holy Communion elements was undertaken by men. They believed that menstruation made women unclean. Hence unfit to preside over any sacrament.

The Yellow Paper sought to preserve the sanctity of the church. It is only a stubborn woman [*Omukhasi owe imbichi yenyene*] who would want to preside over these rites.

Today the church has accepted female pastors and leaders because of the desire to please people. Even our own culture does not permit a woman to demarcate a boundary – it is an abomination. Generally, women are not allowed to preside over sacred rituals.

Governments also have a duty of protecting women against violence and creating enabling environment for gender parity. An example is the plan by the County Government of Mombasa to separate male and female Ferry passengers following cases of sexual harassment at the Likoni channel crossing. This was even after the National Government gave the Kenya Ferry services sh. 250,000 to install powerful cameras to monitor sex pests among other criminals aboard the vessels (Beja, 2016).

The international scene holds lots of hope for women. Apps (2016) in his article, —Women Leaders taking over Super powers| observed that by mid-January 2017 three of the six largest economic powers of the world will be led by women. These are Angela

Merkel of Germany, Theresa May of England and Hillary Clinton of USA. He noted that these are a deserved leadership responsibility since each of the women has competed for the position. He observed that each of the women have made it in very unlikely fronts given the gendered political and social landscape in their nations. He underscored that only Rwanda and Bolivia are above gender parity in national level political representation. Germany is at 37%, United Kingdom at 29% and United States at 19% and at position 96 worldwide. He cited Hillary Clinton's sentiments at the 1995's U.N. Conference in Beijing that, —...human rights are women rights and women rights are human rights‖ (Apps, 20016: 5).

Although Clinton did not clinch the American presidency as was widely predicted, thanks to the mind boggling USA polling system and tsunamic political landscape, a strong statement was sent. It was an achievement enough for Mrs. Clinton to win a nomination and endorsement of a major political party. This means that regardless of uneven playing ground, women are effectively playing the game of politics and making use of every opportunity thereof.

Generally *Abanyole* culture, as in other societies, has created an environment that intimidates women and widows in particular.

5.6.4 Women Socialization

During field research widows and women opinion leaders were required to reflect on specific attitudes and perceptions communicated to women in their socialization among

the *Abanyole*. The following assumptions were found to be held strongly among the *Abanyole*, both men and women, and impacted greatly on widows' sexuality.

Male child is preferred to the female. One widow (Informant, SE, 15/7/16 **OI**) related that an average home among the *Abanyole* displays preferential treatment in the way it brings up their children that is always in favor of the male child. She narrated of how she was sent out of her matrimonial home because she only had two daughters. Her mother-in-law mourned the son noting that he had *gone with his head*. This is because male children are heirs to the man's estates and carry on his name in the clan. A senior clergy and a widow in the study area related of her experience of male child preference in her growing up this way as previously cited,

Our father was a Quaker pastor and our mother a very devoted women leader in the same church. Their marriage was blessed with five girls only. We lived a very happy life in our family. Growing up I realized that something was not right. My mother and father were the talk of the extended family because they did not have a son. They would be reminded of that at every opportunity. I remember one day my grandmother came to our house and told my father to drop his pastoral duties and marry a second wife in order to have an heir. She even offered to talk to my mother for him if need be. My father told her in our hearing that that would never happen and that we [her daughters] were heirs enough. She turned to our mother accusing her to have cast a spell at my father that he would not marry another wife. She also used to refer to us [girls] as frogs. My father kept his word to his grave but life in the extended family was not conducive for us girls and our mother (Informant, SH, 18/8/16 **OI**).

Patriarchal attitudes ingrained in the Western system of education as administered by missionaries and colonial governments set up in Africa served to discriminate against women. The majority of the widows that are in their fifties and sixties are illiterate and without means of income. One widow (Informant, CE, 8/8/16 **OI**) noted that her father

could not send her to school simply because she was a woman and taking her to school would make her grow a big head thus be unfit for marriage. He instead educated his sons.

These sentiments are aptly captured by Azuike,

Western colonization, unfortunately, had very little or no respect for women. For instance, when missionaries established the formal educational system in Africa, they did so by infusing some patriarchal ideologies into the educational system, one of which was the belief that boys, rather than girls would benefit more from the school system. For years, women's history became that of docility and sheer domesticity. Consequently, young girls were to stay at home to practice and perfect their domestic skills which included how to behave as appropriate Christian housewives who knew how to sew, cook and maintain proper hygiene. The boys, on the other hand, were taught how to read and write. This ushered in the first gender gap between boys and girls that has apparently persisted over the years, particularly in Africa. ...Odenigbo's elderly mother, popularly called Mama, abhors Olanna for being well educated, polished and highly independent. In her estimation, 'educated women' are abnormal women who have received 'too much schooling which ruins a woman'. (2009: 81, 88)

Girls are raised up to be married away in the neighboring clans. Women are referred to as *abakoko* meaning bridges. They bridge two communities. Hence their place is guaranteed not in the community of birth but of marriage by way of bride price. Every normal women of marriageable age is expected to get married and start her family by bearing children. Therefore the *Abanyole* do not expect their daughters of marriageable age to remain among their clans. Women in the village ensure that the community does not suffer a loss of burying any of their daughters for lack of husbands to marry them.

Sometimes the marriages were arranged and on basis other than love. One widow recalled of a song they used to sing, *Ing'ombe yambila andaloba* (loosely translated as, I married in the community I did not like because of the bride price). She noted that long

time, women were given in marriage to those who could afford to pay bride price. And because many families were poor and could not afford the cows, many women were available and could be hawked around (Informant, CE, 8/8/17 **OI**).

In many cases when marriages faced problems the extended family intervened insisting that the stability of any marriage depended on the wife not the husband. This resonates with Proverbs 14:1 which suggests that success of family/marriage is depended on the wife.

The MYW leadership (Discussants, 8/2/17 **FGDs**) noted that the assumption that women are weaker sex has been exploited to their disadvantage. They are making efforts to correct such mentality which has been used to sideline women in socio-economic development programs. One of them reported to have fought this mentality until she is now happy that Emuhaya is bringing its women to the limelight. She noted that the organization has worked closely with the government to ensure that women are considered for administrative positions for which they have proven effective.

The Discussants (Esibila and Kima widows, 20th & 25th/1/17 **FGDs**) seemed to agree with weaker vessel and sex assumptions. They pointed out that women could not be entrusted with enormous and strenuous responsibilities on their own. They claimed that women are driven by emotions and cannot keep secrets. They also noted that women lack cunningness and shrewdness required in political sphere. They observed that women work well under the authorities as God intended it according to the Holy writ.

One of the informants on the *Abanyole* culture on widowhood and a widow also observed that women bear the burden and blame of all sexual acts. She wondered whether men are objects that are only acted upon that always go scot-free on their sexual behavior (Informant, JE, 3/10/16 **OI**). Like the biblical woman caught in the act that was brought to Jesus deserving stoning while the man was let off the hook (John 8: 3-11), *Abanyole* women bear all the blames and responsibility of sexual acts. They are accused of luring men, being irresponsible, loose, and opportunists while men recoil as innocent babies dragged into the act.

Generally widows are on the receiving end of the village vigilantes. This is because they are perceived to be sexually starved and on the loose hunting for other women's husbands (Informant, JA, 20/16 **OI**). Thus, they are suspected and sometimes bitterly confronted by peers on sheer suspicion.

Another widow observed that among the *Abanyole* as in other cultures of the world, women are at the service of men (Hillmans, 2012). Terms such as *esiombo*, *esichong'o* and *eburi* (Informant, FL, 14/10/16 **OI**) as the *Abanyole* would fondly refer to their women/wives suggests their assigned place and value. They are perceived as ornaments, precious objects, soothers and relievers of stress for men. They are also seen as maidservants assisting men to accomplish domestic light routine tasks that make life comfortable.

A Discussant noted that a wife become a property of the husband and by extension his family and clan upon payment of bride price. It is common among the *Abanyole* to hear a

husband refer to his wife as my property or a man to fondly refer to a sister-in-law as my property (Discussant, Esibila widows, 25/1/17 **FGDs**). As noted earlier, the bride price guarantees the bride of her place and her needs in the community that she marries into. This applies whether the husband is alive or dead.

And as a property the woman has freedom within specified provisions. They are bound to the norms and expectations of the communities within which they are married. Among the *Abanyole* it is provided that the wife submits not only to the husband but to the entire family. And as a property, there are procedures of changing ownership in the event that the original owner is deceased. Marriage and bride price for a woman among *Abanyole* is a onetime event in her life time. It is, therefore, expected that in the event that the husband dies the woman is automatically taken up within the same clan in order to maintain the late husband's home, family and name.

Finally, according to *Abanyole*, a woman's worth is in her ability to give birth to children, preferably male (Discussants, MYW leaders, 8/2/17; Esibila widows, 25/1/17 & Kima widows, 20/1/17 **FGDs**; Informant, FL, 14/10/16; DH, 12/8/16; SH, 18/8/16 **OI**). The women involved in the study noted over and over that a woman's currency in the study area goes up with the bearing and naming of male children. One widow caused laughter when she illustrated that her late husband almost returned meat he had bought the family when a birth attendant met him with news deceiving him that she had delivered a fourth daughter in a row. They also noted that the bride price was for bearing children. In the event of marriage dissolution the issue of bride price did not feature in cases where there were children. Women who could not bear children for some reason were considered to

be wasting their husbands' time. In some cases they would be insulted as just filling the husband's toilet.

In most cases such a situation was resolved through polygamous unions where the husband would marry another woman that was able to bear children. Or, in case the husband was responsible, a close relative of the husband would be able to sire children for that man with his wife. In this case the family would in agreement with the wife find a 'good' person for the task and seek the consent of her family by sending one more cow known as *eyobwibi/eyobulimo/eyolwibulo* that allows her to bear children for the husband by another man of her choice within the clan and with the family consent. The person siring children is under obligation not to claim or even mention the act under whatever circumstance (Informant, PR, 23/8/16 **OI**).

In case of a remarriage, a husband who sired children would pay one cow to the widow's parents as a seal of ownership of these children. Otherwise the children belonged to the deceased by virtue of the bride price paid (Discussants, Esibila widows, 25/1/17 & Elders, 6/1/17 **FGDs**; Informants, FL, 14/10 **OI**).

5.7 Summary

Chapter five explored *Abanyole* widows' attitude toward their sexuality. *Abanyole* widows' self-opinions, perceptions, feelings, emotions and general behavior were examined. It was important to determine the worth, value, position/status, social space and identity that widows espouse first as women, and then in their status as widows. It was also important to familiarize with the expectations and norms that exist and how they

influence widows' attitudes about sex and sexual behavior. Last but not the least the chapter considered women's socialization among the *Abanyole* and its influence on widows' sexuality.

The findings and discussions thereof revealed that women in general and specifically widows among *Abanyole* have a generally low self-rating that contributed negatively to their overall discrimination in the society. The primary and secondary data generated related to widow's sensuality, widow's views on their identity, widows' views about intimacy and widows' views on sexual intercourse. Overall, it could comfortably be said that widows have low rating of themselves.

There is need to rid *Abanyole* society of sexism. This requires a concerted effort but women who are nurtured for the same are better placed champion it. There is need for the transformation of deep-seated, stereotyped and long held attitudes which tend to hinder progress in the lives of African women. In other words, it is imperative to address all oppressive structures and situations in our societies in order to encourage and to sustain lasting peace in our homes and in the world at large. The biblical story of creation reiterates that men and women are made in the image of God! Therefore, wouldn't the most peaceful solution be for both genders to co-exist peacefully without one subordinating the other?

CHAPTER SIX

CHRISTIAN PERCEPTIONS ON WIDOWS' SEXUALITY

Christian perception on widows' sexuality forms the crux of this study. The study seeks to establish Christian perceptions on widow's sexuality among the *Abanyole* of Emuhaya, Western Kenya. Thus, this chapter presents the findings on the opinions and perceptions of Christians, both laity and clergy among the *Abanyole*, on the widow sexuality phenomenon.

It is worth noting that the contemporary *Abanyole* Christians have blended traditional, Christian and Western beliefs, attitudes and practices. However, as Mbiti (1969, 1) alludes, the religious aspect wields the most influence on the thinking and living of *Abanyole* people as on most of the peoples of Africa and the world. Bunyore is extremely religious and for that matter Christian, going by the number of churches and people who flock therein every Sunday. Even those who do not attend any church worship service identify with one by virtue of the immediate family's membership. Therefore no one among the *Abanyole* is without church membership and no one thinks of them self as an atheist.

As a result it is impolite to inquire on whether one is a Christian or not in Bunyore. Rather, the question is which denomination one subscribes to. This is true even with the Islamic faith making inroads into Bunyore. Its adherents are statistically insignificant while there are no acclaimed African traditionalists among the *Abanyole*. Suffice it to say that Bunyore and its people, the *Abanyole* are Christian in their way of life.

That notwithstanding, it is a notable fact that the degree of commitment to one's profession is important. It has ably been demonstrated that Christianity in Africa is one mile long and one inch deep (Kapolyo, 2007). Those who have made such conclusion say that Christian profession and spirituality demonstrated by the majority of Africans does not translate into their daily living. In times of trouble, it is not uncommon to find well-meaning Christians seeking solutions from very 'unchristian' sources. And more often than not, solutions are sought from traditional culture which prescribes solutions that are 'contrary' to Christian profession.

The claim also relate to the knowledge and understanding of Christian faith by the majority of Africans. There is a general observation that Christian faith has not been fully apprehended by the majority of Africans. Little effort has been made to enable African Christian to interact with the Christian Scripture to draw lessons and teachings that are true to the scripture and relevant to their contexts. The gap is such that Africans remain alien to the practice of a faith they have professed for over a century. They do not feel authentically Christian hence revert back to traditional African way of life which seems to resonate with their quests. This the Most Reverend Dr. Byrum A. Makokha, the archbishop of COGEA(K) vividly illustrated while preaching on the closing service of the National Convention of the Women of COGEA(K) 2016 at Kima. He cited a case where even pastors reverted to traditional ways of dealing with cases such as the disposal of the remains of those who commit suicide.

In addition, the various shades of Christianity stir up the already mucky waters. Missionary, African Initiated and Neo-Pentecostal Christianities differ in their teaching

and practice on key issues. Apart from the Roman Catholic Church that has official belief on specific matters communicated from the Holy See, the rest do not seem to have established positions. Or the position is rarely effectively communicated to the entire following. This leaves room for unorthodox positions in belief and practice of the faith. Or worse still, opens up a lacuna to strange practices. This study was undertaken conscious of such situation among the *Abanyole* Christians.

Descriptive data was acquired using a qualitative methodology from the respondents who comprised of widows, church leaders and other opinion leaders from the study area, and from libraries. The resultant primary and secondary data generated were perceived through the stated theoretical and conceptual frameworks and themes drawn thereof for discussion as they emerged. The following themes stood out deserving a deeper consideration: Sex and the Bible, Women and the Bible, Widowhood in the Bible, the Contemporary *Abanyole* Christian perspectives on widowhood, Widows in the church today, and Sexuality of Widows: A quest for identity.

6.1 Sex in the Bible and in Christian Thought

We have established that sex was a very important part of *Abanyole* life that carried a lot of meaning and significance. This belief led to the intense training and caution undertaken in its administration and management. This research work pursued this train of thought to find out what the Bible teaches about sex and the degree to which it was acknowledged by the respondents. The probing was also to examine the impact of such teachings and acknowledgement to widows' sexual life.

Generally, it was observed that most of respondents had limited knowledge of the Bible teachings on widows' sexual life. This was evident as they misquoted texts, displayed lack of knowledge at all, ignored context, failed to differentiate between didactic (prescriptive) and descriptive passages and read their general knowledge into the Bible. Others felt that the Bible is not a place to seek for such information. Both clergy and laity seemed to grope in darkness over the biblical position on widow's sexuality. In general, they hold a patriarchal perception that generally subjugates women due to the patrilocal marriage arrangement.

The Bible which is the authority of Christian faith is foundational in development and dissemination of its teachings. It contains two covenants: the Old and the New Testaments. The first starting out with a universal fit and narrowing down to a specific people group, while the second has a local setting but with universal point of view. It is important to 'see' how the respondents perceive the phenomenon under study from a biblical perspective.

6.1.1 Sex in Old Testament

The Old Testament concept of sex is imbedded in the Jewish way of life. It is portrayed as the deepest and most intense of human fellowship that is preserved for a marital context and more often as a means to procreation. The Jewish people revered this expression of intense human fellowship as sacred. Igboin cites Adamo to aver that euphemistic linguistic characterization of sex, sex organs and related sex activities in the Old Testament explains the importance and sacredness of the function of sex in ancient

Israel. He observes its sacredness and mysteriousness in its functions as a means of procreation, perpetuation and oath-taking (Genesis 24: 2-3, 9 cf. 47:29). Hence, indicative that —sex organs are authentically symbolic, mysterious, sacred, powerful and fearsome^{ll} (Igboin, 2011: 351)

Unlike the *Abanyole* who espouses exogamous marriage the Bible seem to encourage endogamy. The tribe of the people of God is encouraged to marry close relatives, especially cousins. While those who marry from the neighboring communities become liable of sin or their wives perceived as foreigners and duly discriminated against (Genesis 24; 27:46ff; Numbers 12:1; Ezra 9 &10). Hence, impure sexual relationship would also constitute marrying a foreigner as illustrated in the passages of the book of Ezra this is sinful and attracts God's wrath.

The standard of sexual purity in the Bible is high (Exodus 20:17b). It is not just the sexual act but even the imagination and a lustful gaze at an individual constitutes sexual impropriety. Job (31:1-12) relates of his life of chastity. He notes of his covenant to be true to God by checking on his morality. That he resists a temptation to lustfully glance at a woman or to be enticed of a woman or to lurk in search of his neighbor's wife.

Adultery is a —sexual intercourse ... of a man, married or unmarried, with the wife of another^{ll} (Douglas, 1987: 19). It is one of the sexual pervasion that the Old Testament sternly warns against. The book of Exodus lists it in the Decalogue as one of the sins that the Israelites must desist from in order to maintain their covenant relationship with God (20:14). In Leviticus 20:10-16, a death penalty is pronounced against the culprits of

adultery, incest, homosexuality, and bestiality, in order to cleanse sin from among the people of God. Other related sins like incest and defilement were to be punished through banishment and barrenness (Leviticus 20:17- 21). Proverbs 5 warns against adultery. The Old Testament strongly advises against this sin that seems to be so powerful in bringing down kingdoms. The advice notes that sexual pervasion is so enticing yet is a sure path to destruction. It draws and wastes one's strength and resources. It then reduces one into a state of desolation and regret of having despised discipline. Finally, the reader is exhorted to choose discipline by drawing sexual satisfaction from within a marital bond which is blessed.

The book of Song of Solomon balances the Old Testament view on marriage, sex and sexual activity. The book centers on the —joys and distresses of the love relationship between a man and a woman. Among many other interpretations and views held about this master-piece is the fact that it —presents the purity and wonder of true love. It, thus, teaches —the holiness and beauty of the marriage-love relationship that God ordained (Douglas, 1987: 956-957). Hence, the integral place of the divinely designed intense emotional release that results in mutual satisfaction that is meant to soothe and renew the parties involved.

The Old Testament prescribes marriage as the befitting context for sex (cf. Genesis 2:18, 25). It is demonstrated to be the most revealing of relationships that requires an assuring security wall. Such a wall, in this context, can only be provided for by marriage which ensures both parties, especially the woman, of protection from abuse.

Such is demonstrated in the legal provisions and reprimands relating to sex, marriage and family in the Old Testament. The Old Testament provides regulations upholding virginity, according punishment to sex pets who rape young virgins (Deuteronomy 22:13-30) or misuse them (Exodus 22:16-17), governing divorce and remarriage (Deuteronomy 24:1-4), the right of the first born (Deuteronomy 21:15-17), against unlawful sexual relations [sex with a married woman, a close relatives, either through blood or by marriage, and related women] (Leviticus 20:10-21; Exodus 20:14, 17b), same sex relations, and sex with animals. Such acts are portrayed to defile the land and attract God's wrath against its inhabitants. Hence, the culprits must be punished; otherwise the entire people face the wrath of God (Leviticus 18).

According to the Old Testament, sex is a means. It is the means by which God brought forth new creation (Genesis 4: 1, 2, 17, 25). It was not only a means for procreation among human race but for the other creatures. Each member of the creation was commanded to be fruitful and to multiply as a means to populate the earth (Genesis 1:22). Hence, the sexual act is sacred because apart from its intense emotional release and satisfaction, it leads to fruition which perpetuates the work of creation.

Suffice it to say, therefore, that sex and sexual activity is a subject that is treated with awe in the Old Testament. This is because of its sacred nature as ordained of God for human intense emotional release, pleasure and procreation. As a tool in human hand the outcome depends on the beholder's relationship with God and attitudes towards life. When properly appropriated it yields abundant life, while in perverted state it results in destruction.

6.1.2 Sex in New Testament

Having surveyed the Old Testament concept of sex we now turn to the New Testament. In this covenant, sex is portrayed as a mutual fellowship between a man and women in a sacred institution of marriage. Any alteration to this portrait is deemed a sexual disorder [read sin] which includes: fornication, adultery, incest, homosexuality, rape, bestiality, masturbation and pornography (lustful looking and imagination).

The New Testament lists sexual perversion as pointers to individual's and societal godlessness (Galatians 5:19; 1 Corinthians. 5:1f.). A godly life is one characterized by chastity and righteousness which entails the purity and sanctity of one body, mind and soul (1 Thessalonians 2:23; 1 Corinthians 6: 12-20).

Sexual disorders are also a sign of God's wrath upon his people (Romans 1: 18-32). Paul insists that since godliness is evident yet people have chosen godlessness, God's wrath is set against the people, as demonstrated by their moral corruption.

Sexual immorality is punishable by God. This is because committing an immoral act is self-destructive (1 Corinthians 6: 18). It is a basis upon which many may not inherit the Kingdom of God (1 Corinthians 6:9). Similarly, those excluded from entrance into the city of God include the sexually immoral (Revelations 22:15).

Therefore, the Bible clearly presents principles of sex. It shows that sex is precious within its perimeters, marriage (Hebrews 13: 4). It is powerful and passionate (1 Corinthians 7:

2-5). It is private (Genesis 2: 25). It is pure. It is physical. It is procreative. It is a gift which must be honored and jealously guarded.

6.1.3 Sex in Christian Thought

Macharia (2010: 55) gives a classical summary of the contemporary Christian understanding of sex as follows:

Sex continues to be an integral part of a good marriage. It is much more than just a tool for procreation. It however remains the power of procreation, the drive that perpetuates the race, the source of humanity's most intense pleasure, and the single source of the most pervasive anxiety. It can, in its abused form, hurl the individual into sloughs of despondency and when allied with Eros, it can lift humanity into orbits of ecstasy. It colours everything else – dull grey if it is poor, or passionate pink if it is rich.

Douglas (1987: 19) observes that in New Testament teaching, Jesus and the apostles tells us that, —all sexual impurity is sin against God, against self and against others|. As such, sex is ordained of God and is holy to be received with thanks giving within a marital relationship.

6.2 Women in the Bible and in Christian thought

The Bible presents a mixed perception of a woman. First from the creation story, the two accounts give us divergent views of a woman. The first account (Genesis 1) gives a sense of equality that God created man, male and female to both rule the creation. On the other hand, the second account (Genesis 2) portrays man to be superior having been created before the woman and from man, seemingly as an afterthought coming in to help meet him in his loneliness. The two strands have been exploited as references by the various

schools of thought relating to the engendered position of a woman in the society. Often, the Bible, which —draws upon Middle Eastern and patriarchal contexts interpreted through a patriarchal lens that assumes that European white, heterosexual, physically healthy male as normative has served as a tool for (Dyrness, 2008: 805).

6.2.1 Women in Old Testament

The accounts of creation (Genesis 1 & 2) portray a woman as part of the human race superior to the rest of the created order. She is a helpmate to, co-creator with and co-ruler of creation with man. Though the Old Testament does not celebrate many women as important, a few are listed as having played important roles in bringing to fruition of the divine plan for their generation. These include: Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel, Miriam, Deborah, Hannah and Esther. The Old Testament also highlights some women who led to the down fall of kingdoms due to their cunning and perfidious advice and acts.

In primordial Israel, women were treated as properties belonging to men (Genesis 12: 10-20; 19: 1- 11). They accrued their identity as daughters, wives or mothers of particular men. As daughters they followed their fathers, as wives their husbands and as mothers their sons. This overshadowed the women's identity a great deal. In fact, pious Jewish men would pray and thank God every morning that He created them men and not women.

The Laws of Israel concerning ceremonially unclean and purification were skewed toward women (Leviticus 12 & 15). Menstruation, pregnancy and child bearing made a woman ceremonially unclean. This required seclusion for at least seven days and a purification ceremony that required an offering. The period taken before purification and

the offertory made were engendered. For male children, the mother was unclean for seven days after which she had to wait for thirty-three days for purification. The period was double for women who gave birth to girls. Thus they remained unclean for 14 days and would be cleansed after sixty-six days. Upon purification the woman was to bring a one-year old lamb for a burnt offering and a dove for sin offering.

Women were subjected to unfair treatment in order to test for unfaithfulness (Numbers 5: 11- 31). In the event a husband suspected his wife of impropriety, he would bring her to the priest who would administer an oath. Such an oath was discriminative because it only served the male while subjecting women to demeaning treatment. The injury was aggravated by the fact that priesthood was an all men affair. Hence, to a larger extent, women suffered in the hands of men without recourse. Men began to divorce their wives under the guise of unfaithfulness as they married other fair ones. This led to intense sobbing in the temple by the affected women that God had to speak out against this act (Malachi 2: 13- 16).

6.2.2 Women in New Testament

In the New Testament, Jesus gives a revised version of the identity of women. He demonstrates how women ought to be understood and treated in the society (Luke's Gospel). Devoted women were appreciated and involved in Jesus life and work of ministry (Luke 1, 2: 36- 38; 7: 36- 40; 8: 3; 12: 12; Acts 1: 14). The new social order by Jesus was less patriarchal than that of the wider society (Acts 10: 34- 48).

In the Apostolic ministry, women played an important role in the furtherance of the Gospel. They were the first converts in Europe (Acts 16: 13- 15). They formed part of the congregation at Rome (Romans 16). Apostles exalt the believing women while arguing against subordination for Christian women (1 Corinthians 11: 2- 16; I Peter 3:1- 6).

6.2.3 Women in Christian Thought

Contemporary Christian thought on women has developed over the years. Dyrness (2008) summarizes the historical development of Christian thought follows: Jesus created a new social order that was less patriarchal. This was embraced by the apostolic Church, but this was short lived since the early church readopted the patriarchal social gender relationship of the first Century AD.

This is illustrated in the opinion of Reverend Dr. David Oginde, the bishop of Christ is the Answer Ministries (CITAM). He cause a stitch on his audience while addressing a prayer breakfast meeting comprising of leaders from Kisumu and Vihiga Counties on 28th July 2016 congregating at Wigot Gardens. Addressing the women in the congregation he cited Delilah who brought down Samson (Judges 16) to say, —This feminist thing will take you nowhere. Your strength is in weakness – being a woman, not fighting. This kind of weapon disarms and dislodges men rendering them powerless in your hands If I were a woman, I would be very successful. He argued for the proverbial virtuous woman of Proverbs 30: 10- 31 that is referred to as the wife of noble character. Such a notion assumes and downplays the already existing gender disparity in men’s favor.

Among missionary mainstream churches the researcher observed such disparity enacted in the church. Women are expected to marry through church wedding while it is fine for the men to elope. Thus a woman member of a church who elopes and stays in her marriage for sometimes is expected to go back to his church and parents to seek for ‘_forgiveness’ to be ‘_reinstated’ in the fellowship. An Informant (SS, 21/9/16 **OI**) observed that such an occasion was very solemn for the girls who were brought up under the care of a church. A man on the other hand is not perceived to be guilty of sinned. She claimed that men are headstrong. She noted that men’s way of seeking ‘_forgiveness’ is to pay bride price and to perform a church ‘_wedding’.

6.3 Widowhood in the Bible and in Christian thought

The Bible gives us a picture of widowhood from both the Old and New Testaments. The Old Testament picture comes from the ancient Hebrew culture which gives special privilege to men. The New Testament picture though blended with the Greco-Roman civilization still presents a patriarchal system centered on and serving men, though, with some gender consciousness from Jesus and Paul. Peoples’ Christian thought has always been derived from prevailing cultures to the degree that they encounter Christ through the Scripture within their specific contexts.

6.3.1 Widowhood in Old Testament

The Old Testament gives us a glance into the life of the Hebrew people for a long span of time. There is a general characterization of women and widows that is evident in the

cultures of the nations, people and families represented. A casual reading of the Old Testament suggests a general marginalization of women and especially widows.

The Old Testament insists that widows are endowed with God's favor (Psalm 68: 5; 146: 9; Proverbs 15: 25). It is widely demonstrated in the Old Testament scripture that God is the husband for the widows and His ear is inclined to their prayer. Thus widowhood is perceived to be a status of special privilege from God. Widows were encouraged to commit themselves to loving and serving God who in turn would respond by meeting their needs.

The Old Testament also shows that God contends for and defends the cause of widows. It clearly demonstrates that any injustice meted against a widow is directed to God who in turn defends them. Widows are considered to be under weak people that cannot defend themselves and so find defense in God (Hosea 14: 3).

Widows in biblical times are shown to have presented an opportunity for others to demonstrate godliness. The book of Ruth relates a story of widows and how they were treated. Rich people like Boaz harvested their fields with the poor, especially widows, in mind (Deuteronomy 24: 19- 21). They even went ahead to ensure their posterity in the event they had no heir (Deuteronomy 25: 5- 10). In some incidences we also meet widows pressed down with debts to pay threatening their very auction (2 Kings 4: 1- 7). Thus every God fearing person took special cognizance of widows and aiding them in every way possible. For in so doing they knew they were lending to God by averting calamity (Exodus 22: 22- 23; Deuteronomy 14: 28- 29; Isaiah 1: 17; Jeremiah 7: 6).

The Bible in the Old Testament depicts widows as a snare for the proud. The haughty ones would trample down the down trodden widows at their own peril (cf. Deuteronomy 25: 5- 10; Ruth 4: 2- 12). The Old Testament encourages people to be alert and defend the cause of the widows, especially for those who seem to have no capacity to do so (Isaiah 1: 7; Jeremiah. 22: 3). Thus discrimination, intimidation, or taking advantage of widows in whatever way is alien to what is presented in the Old Testament.

Widows in biblical times also wore a distinctive garb (Genesis 38: 14). This was to announce their status. It attracted sympathy and prejudice in equal measure. The essence was to put any one dealing with a widow on alert. This is because God expected justice and mercy especially for such one to be championed by all.

6.3.2 Widowhood in New Testament

The New Testament perception of widows is a continuation of the Old Testament one except for the Levirate marriage practice where a brother of the deceased was under obligation to marry a widow without a son for the preservation of his name. Widows and practices related to widowhood were a common knowledge (Matthew 22: 23- 32; Cf. The Theological Advisory Group 1994: 164).

The church looked after the poor and widows in apostolic times (Acts 6: 1f; James 1: 27). There was an established body of policy and specific directives on the church's widow care ministry (1Timothy 5: 3ff.). To be enlisted for the church's care a widow needed to have attained a minimum age of at least 60 years. They needed to have married only once

and should have had a reputation for good works (5: 9- 10). Young widows were expected to remarry and bear children (I Corinthians 7: 8; I Timothy 5: 9- 16).

There is a noticeable element relating to female in the New Testament. Widows belong to a larger category that is women. Women, apart from incidental mention given in the scripture, receive very little attention. One widow according to Luke's record was pursuing godliness as she waited on God in prayer (Luke 2: 36- 38). Another gave sacrificially (Luke 21: 2). Thus it could be said that even in the biblical times (including New Testament) majority women (especially widows) lagged behind their male counterparts, with a few exceptional cases.

6.3.3 Widows in Christian Thought

Christian thought here refers to the Christian philosophic reflection about widowhood developed over time. As earlier alluded to, widowhood has been around with man ever since. And as such it is prior than Christianity. Christianity can be described as a way of life as demonstrated in the person of Jesus Christ and contextually lived out by all called out ones over the years.

According to Douglas (1987: 1064) widow ministry in the church reached its zenith in the 2nd and 3rd century. During this time there was an order of widows in the church. Its members looked after the widows of the congregation. This order, unfortunately, was abolished by the synod of Laodicea in A.D. 364.

6.4 *Abanyole* Christian Perspective on Widows

A consideration of the *Abanyole* Christian perception on widows must take cognizance of the prevailing socio-cultural realities. To explore this subject it is prudent to divide it into two: perspective through the years (colonial and independence) and contemporary perspective (post-independence era). Both the primary and secondary data collected reflect a general gender power relation in favor of men. There is a great difference in perception, attitude, provisions and prohibitions toward widows and widower regardless of the era.

6.4.1 *Perspective through the Years*

The history of the church among the *Abanyole* is connected to that of colonialism. As recounted earlier, Christianity started among the *Abanyole* in 1905 at Maseno and Kima by the Church Mission Society and South African Compound Missions respectively. It spread like wild fire. At this time those who responded to the call and converted to Christianity joined the other believers in isolated communities referred as *amatala* (homesteads).

An Informant (SS, 21/9/16 **OI**) explained that, these communities developed distinctive patterns of life informed by their new found faith. The communities had codes of regulations that governed their entire social life including the care for widows which had already been engraved in the *Abanyole* philosophy. In essence, the Christian communities baptized *Abanyole* way of caring for widow ridding them of practices that they deemed cultural, archaic and backward.

Discussants (Elders, 21/2/17 **FGDs**) and Informants (PR, 23/8/16; SS, 21/9/16 **OI**) recalled the way the church took central place in the life of widows especially their sexuality. A widow depending on her standing with the church would be required to make a choice of either remaining celibate or remarrying. In the event of remarriage the church would let the widow choose a suitor or consent to marry the one the church leaders had appointed. The marriage would eventually be solemnized in church. This kind of arrangement mainly targeted to get rid of polygamy as the widows were required to either be remarried by widowers or willing and single young men in church. The location of the newly wedded depended on whether the widow had children or not. On overall, the arrangement resonated with the *Abanyole* culture.

The church had its vigilante who kept its faithful in check. Those who went contrary to the norm were subject to disciplinary action including excommunication. Discussants (Elders, 21/2/17 **FGDs**) cited an example of a certain widow who was excommunicated having been found to have been cleansed of *oweingo* (non-Christian). She eventually deserted her matrimonial home because of the shame.

Widows who choose life of celibacy and gave themselves to the life of the church were accorded double honor. They were involved in church work as a way of engaging them in community service and in turn received honoraria from the church. The church generally showed concern for the widows and orphans. The orphans were sponsored to school, as widows were engaged in gainful activities by the church.

It is notable that this era led to crystallization and cementing of gender disparity. Education and key responsibilities in church and schools were a reserve for men. The women were taught to be good obedient and submissive wives with skills on carrying out simple domestic chores. Women who excelled had to pay a higher price. Gender disparity both at home and marketplace has remained a thorny issue (cf. Nwachukwu-Agbada, 2011).

6.4.2 Contemporary Perspective

A Contemporary *Abanyole* perspective on widowhood refers to the attitudes that have characterized the post independent society in Bunyore. This society has held mixed views of a widow depending on individuals in question. In general, the attitudes are characterized by gender power play in favor of men at all levels of the society.

The contemporary *Abanyole* society has not been spared of the forces of social change. Informant (FL, 14/10/16 **OI**) observed that widowhood practices and attitudes have greatly changed due to Western education; government supported social nets (orphan and vulnerable children and elderly fund), HIV/AIDS, poverty (due to money economy), gender equality activism and alcoholism and drug abuse. These factors affect the practice of widowhood putting the society at risk (Informant, CE, 8/8/16 **OI**).

This means that wife inheritance and related practices are persistent among the *Abanyole*, only that they has been changed to suit the socio-economic realities of the day. These changes as perceived through the eyes of an Informant (CE, 8/8/16 **OI**), a traditional healer and elderly widow, are detrimental to the society.

This is how one Key Informant (PR, 23/8/16 **OI**) explained the contemporary attitude and state of widows today:

We have so many widows in our churches that we try ministering to through our Compassionate Ministry. Widows are whole persons with a wide range of needs but we majorly train them on how to be self-sufficient. We only deal with the needy. Biblically a widow is a source of blessing, a ministry opportunity; in need of our care. They become the talk of the village mainly being accused of men stealing, self-pity, lack basic needs, perceived as snares etc. Widows are accused of men stealing because they are perceived to be on the loose.

Some leave church, others decline responsibilities because of the challenges they encounter. It is better for widows to remain celibate but if they can't stand it, they rather remarry. They have been freed by death. Our church does not give direction on how to remarry nor is it involved in the process; it is an individual's choice. Our pastors offer counseling services to the remarrying widows that seek such service.

There are many cases in our church where widows are mistreated and threatened with disinheritance for turning down in-laws' proposals for remarriage/inheritance. Others leave their matrimonial homes and raise their children in towns while others defy and stay.

In general widows suffer more hatred from in-laws who keep an eye on and reign in on their sexuality. Some widows, for lack of livelihood or defiant behavior, turn their sexuality into a trade causing havoc in the community.

Some widows opt to remain in their matrimonial homes, meet their own needs and keep secret relationships to meet their sexual needs. This is never public especially where there are grown up children and the widow is involved in church work. It is only a few bold ones that come out in the public as opting for remarriage. Widows are normally advised to consecrate their lives to Christ.

Widows are also secluded for fear of contaminating or imputing impurities on the rest of the family and clan. Death is perceived as a bad omen and a widow is seen to bear impurities/the ghost of widowhood/deceased who seeks vengeance.

These sentiments raise a few issues of concern worth noting. First, who are the needy widows as conceived by this church through the mind of its leader? And what is the sum

total of the widow need? Who are the self-sufficient widows? Does that factor her in as a sexual being with specific sexual needs? And if so, how does the church expect such needs to be met? To this question the pastors' response displayed grey areas that open a window for a double standard lifestyle as is evident in the excerpt. Secondly, what are the implications of the advice to widows to assume a life of celibacy? Having considered the concept of sexuality and noted that even celibacy does not free one from experiencing sexual drives, this idea provides a rich fodder for discussion. Taken on face value, it is the easier way of telling people to find solutions elsewhere for their needs. Consequently, it encourages double standard in the practice of Christian faith. However, with a sound theological education and training that espouses freedom for the widows to explore meaning and alternatives of meeting their sexual needs, such an advice is effective. Finally, what is the implication of a belief in the late husband's ghost hounding the widow or avenging on subsequent suitor on the marriage vow, —Until death do us part? As earlier, noted the church in Africa is yet to develop contextually sound theology to inform its practice. Thus the —Until death do us part! vow seems not to have taken root on the African Christian marriage practice. The spirit of the deceased husband lives on and to whose homage is to maintain the first matrimonial home and perpetuate his name.

6.5 Widows in church Today: Widows' Perspective

Widows have found a safe haven in church. The church provides a place they can at least express themselves, as encapsulated in the opening remarks of one widow while preaching at a Widows' Special Service at the NHOM on the 18th December, 2016. She noted that women had no audacity to speak before men and were counted among the 162

properties men had. Christianity [church] has freed women from those shackles and now they are free to love and serve Christ in His church. She noted that they can speak and teach and be heard because of Christ's events.

The contemporary church has fully incorporated widows into the mainstream ministry. There is a ministry for and by the widows. Ministry for the widows entails what the church is doing to enrich widows that are in its congregation. On the other hand, ministry by the widows includes all that is allowed and accomplished in the church by the widows.

6.5.1 Ministry for the Widows

There is a general feeling from among the respondents that widows are an integral ministry frontier for the church today as it has been throughout the Christian history. The Widow ministry reached its zenith in the 2nd and 3rd century AD. This ministry came to abrupt end and the contemporary church has strived to serve its widows with variant degree of effectiveness. Generally, the ministry has not performed well. However, as one Informant (JE, 3/10.16 **OI**) observes the ministry of the church to widows is still far reaching meeting, to some degree, both their physical and spiritual needs.

The participants in this study noted that some denominations show concern by providing widows with material goods, but this is very limited. They recalled with longing of the Dorcus Ministries that sewed clothing for widows and orphans. They also remembered how church elders and deacons waited on widows and orphan through the church's grain basket and offerings. They pointed out that deacons, in the study area, are mainly pastors' servants waiting upon the pastorate. Discussants (Church leaders, 24/2/17 **FGDs**) noted

that the church is currently under financial pressure that it is barely able to pay its own bills. This resonated with the views of Discussants (Esibila widows, 3/2/17 **FGDs**) that the church's receipts have gone down and that it cannot attend to such demands as looking after orphans and widows which characterizes a true religion (cf. James 1: 27). However, an Informant (DH, 12/8/16 **OI**), widowed in 1957 and a beneficiary of church's kindness to widows squarely placed her finger at the changed emphasis of Christian witness from being and doing to saying (preaching) and the current generation of pastorate that is egocentric.

Widows also benefit a lot from church's Spiritual programs. These programs include the Sunday church worship services, seminars and workshops, counseling, prayer meetings, Bible Study meeting, discipleship classes, and cell church fellowships. In these programs the church strives to nurture its members spiritually. Widows, as part of the church membership, equally benefit from the teachings, counsel, exhortations and spiritual nourishment available through such programs (Discussants, Church leaders, 24/2/17 **FGDs**).

In the same way, one Informant (JE, 3/10/16 **OI**) observed that Widow Ministry in the church in Bunyore, as with the rest of the church as lacking in a sense. She acknowledged the general principles with regard to sexual discipline that the church teaches its member that widows apply to their specific situation. She, however, noted that more could be done if the church embraced and included scientific findings in its teaching ministry to the widows. She noted that widows can benefit a lot if they can be brought together through forums, workshops and seminars where Christian professionals and widows with

various experiences interact with them to demystify sex and educate them on appropriate and honorable ways of dealing with their sexuality. She decried the overuse and abuse of sex drive suppressants that many widows are accustomed. She noted that any intense physical exercise that leads to exhaustion is able to take care of sexual drives while not compromising the libido for the young and aspiring widows.

The assessment of the church's widow ministry by one widow serving in one of the congregations in the study area is herein captured,

The church has no specific and intentional program for widows. They are statistics. Their needs transcend the material/financial and child rearing and property inheritance: they are whole persons.

Most marriage officers and pastors have a casual relationship with the couples they marry. Hence no follow up and sound counseling and teachings is given to couples who eventually become widows. Such is the experience I had with our marriage officer [registrar]. He assumed that since we were already living together we did not need premarital and marital counseling. I have never had time with him ever since despite all that I have been through. More so, I am yet to hear of any church forum, seminar or workshop for widows where widowhood is explored meaningfully.

Widows, especially young ones, need counseling and teachings that will establish them throughout their life. They also need to be supported in their ministry endeavors. Unfortunately, they are left on their own subjected to all manner of accusations and suspicions (Informant, PH, 7/7/16OI).

These sentiments were also echoed by another Informant (PR, 23/8/16 OI) who strongly recommended the introduction and embracing of sex education in the church. He observed that it is currently tabooed and requires guts. The church has shied away from nurturing its members on marital life which explains the unprepared state of young people for marriage, the rate of divorce of Christian marriages and other eventualities of marriage including widowhood. Musara's (2016) story of Fiona Okandia is a case in 165

point. Okandia relates of her naïve Christian upbringing which nurtured her sex education's ignorance. This made her innocent and an easy prey and it took grace and intervention to pick up her pieces. She is now helping others. Similarly, Kimeto (2016: 15) points out that church's —Refusal and denial to be dynamic and pragmatic in presenting its claims including its inability to tap into the huge pool of intellectuals in the congregation will continue to expose the Christian faith to being vulnerable....‖ Thus, on overall there is no particular denomination or church organization in the Study area which prides itself in having a functional widow program.

6.6 **Ministry by Widows**

Christian widows among the *Abanyole* are not just committed to the church as recipients of its ministry but also as partakers thereof. Widows as other women are a pillar in the church among *Abanyole* in all sense. They give offerings, are involved in prayer and intercessory ministry, teach discipleship classes and do most preaching, are involved in visitation, and lead various ministries and departments of the church (Discussants, Kima widows and Church leaders, 24/2/17 **FGDs**).

Discussants (Esibila widows, 3/2/17 **FGDs**) categorically stated that widows do very well in most of the church offertory. Citing Luke 21:2 they noted that widows offer their best out of gratitude for what God does in their lives. Most widows whose children and grandchildren have excelled in life seize this opportunity to thank God for having remembered them. They do so by offering tithes and other offering to support the work of the church. These views were also held by most of the respondents interviewed. The

Discussants (Elders, 21/2/17 and Church leaders, 24/2/17 **FGDs**) also noted the exemplary performance of widows in church offerings.

Prayer and intercessory ministry in many churches in Bunyore is run and attended by women, the majority of whom are widows. A Discussant (Kima widows, 24/3/17 **FGDs**), a senior women Leader in one of the denominations in the study area, confirmed this notion in the case of the monthly prayer meeting held. She noted that widows readily come for prayer meetings and commit longer hours in prayer and intercession.

Another area of widow ministry is teaching and preaching. Widows readily volunteer in the church's teaching and preaching ministry. They teach in Church Sunday Schools, lead Bible Studies and discussions in cell church and preach in the Sunday and mid-week services, besides giving exhortation during special functions as duty calls. Informants (HN, 26/8/16; SS, 21/9/16 **OI**) observed that widows are so committed to the work of the ministry and always make time for the same. This could be explained by the fact that they, in their widowhood, owe no one an explanation as to when they are going out and coming back. A Discussant (Esibila widows, 3/2/17 **FGDs**) also mentioned the joy and fulfillment that widows accrue from such ministry, as their driving force.

Visitation is a further area of ministry in which widows thrive. This ministry requires individuals to set apart time to call on the members of church in their homes to pray and encourage them. It requires a lot of sacrifice and dedication. Discussants (Kima widows, 24/3/17 and Esibila widows, 3/2/17 **FGDs**) were of the opinion that widows volunteer a great deal in such ministry. They noted that most of the cell church leaders in the

surrounding congregations are widows, so they take upon themselves the responsibility of visiting members or taking pastors around during pastoral visits.

Finally, widows in the church serve in various leadership capacities. One Discussant (Church leaders, 21/2/17 **FGDs**) observed with pride that widows form the bulk of the Church of God pastorate and general local church leadership. She also noted that widows perform exemplarily in their ministry assignments due to their commitment and dedication. These views were supported by the MYW leaders FGDs (8/2/17). However, a spot check on top and middle level leadership of most of denominations reveals gender disparity in favor of men. An example is COGEA(K) of which women form a paltry eighth of the top eight positions. The only woman leader at the top hierarchy is the National Chairlady for the Women Ministry. Similarly, out of the thirteen Chairpersons of Departments and heads of institutions, only two are women. Finally, there are only ten women of its ninety-three directors, associate directors, overseers and associate overseers (COGEA [K] Daily Reminder 2016).

For the Israel Church of Kenya and Jerusalem Christian Church widows' leadership is restricted to women ministry. Women in these denominations do not serve as clergy and in general leadership positions. Informants (PH, 7/7/16; HN, 26/8/16 **OI**) from these denominations observed that women's involvement in ministry in their denominations is restricted to leading songs and peer education among fellow women.

As for the NHOM and Revival churches, widows as other women find every opportunity for ministry. Informant (JE, 3/10/16 **OI**) noted that widows, despite their manifold

predicaments, form a formidable ministry resource. She observed that widows, as any other member of the congregation, are free to participate in any kind of ministry in her church. She explained that gender or marital status is a non-issue as far as the administration of sacrament is concerned. Nonetheless, the informant explained that widows in her Church still struggle shedding off the stigma related to widowhood. This she attributed to the cultural influence that dictates the socio-economic environment of widows. She noted that re-educating the entire society on gender sexuality would go a long way to ensuring its posterity (JE, 3/10/17 **OI**).

6.7 Sexuality of a Widow: A Quest for Identity

In sexology discourses, sexual identity refers to an individual's particular sexual orientation. They include heterosexual, homosexual, bisexual and transgender. Hence one is referred to as gay, lesbian or straight. However, this study considers sexuality and identity for the widow from a self-realization perspective where a widow explores her true identity as a woman. This is because the *Abanyole* have embraced heterosexual relationship.

Many people struggle with the question of identity. And so the pertinent question here is who is a widow? And to this question many answers are given and it is important to examine attitudes communicated in those answers and what exactly a widow is for the *Abanyole* Christians. First, a widow is a sexed being; she is a gendered being; she has needs; her needs accrue from her identity [can include the sexual]; and there is an acceptable way a widow should express herself sexually.

6.7.1 Widow as Sexual Being

Both field and library research pointed to the fact that a widow is a sexual being. The researcher had a benefit of training from a philosophical background that linguistically distinguished a widow and widower. However, the researcher established that the *Abanyole* have no term or word for widower. For the *Abanyole*, *omulekhwa* refers strictly to a widow. In their philosophy, it is only the woman that can be an *omulekhwa* since she is married [‘brought’] by the husband to his home, family and clan and as such, an alien. Notable also is the fact that there is no limit as to how many a man can marry [‘bring’], it is inconceivable that a man can be an *omulekhwa* (Discussants, Esibila widows, 3/2/17; Elders, 21/2/17 FGDs). Thus a widow, among the *Abanyole*, is a sexual being. It is a woman or a female; of a particular gender.

6.7.2 Widow as Gendered Being

A widow as a sexed being is also gendered. Every people’s culture assigns a specific social space and roles to their women. Thus widows fall in the category of women with specific social space they occupy and roles they ought and ought not to play. The *Abanyole* have a specific space for women in a gendered sense. There are roles that are played by women and those that are strictly a male affair.

When a woman/widow undertakes a role or occupies a space that is reserved for men among the *Abanyole* it is referred to as *omusilo*. That means that what has been done is an abomination and unacceptable. It attracts a curse to the individual, family, clan and even community which the elders say can only be blotted out or averted by way of a sacrifice

to appease the ancestors. Such an *omusilo* include a woman representing a family in boundary demarcation and disputes, bequeathing inheritance, presiding over important rites such as marriage, burial, initiation, and religious festivities (Discussants, Elders, 21/3/17 and Esibila widows, 3/2/17 **FGDs**).

Discussants (MYW leaders, 8/2/17 **FGDs**) observed that such notion from the traditions of the *Abanyole* have been held on by men who use them to suppress and oppress their wives. They also noted that the same is used to oppress and subject widows to demeaning rites and demands which leave them divested of dignity.

6.7.3 Widows and her Needs

Widows' needs only get magnified or diminish due to the social space they occupy first as women and second as widows. An Informant (FL, 14/10/16 **OI**) noted that widows have need for upkeep [food, shelter clothing etc], security, companionship, intimacy, father figure for her children, headship (family convener). He noted that the *Abanyole* culture has very effective mechanism and ways through which such widow's needs are guaranteed.

However, in a rejoinder Discussants (MYW leaders, 8/2/17 **FGDs**) felt that the contemporary *Abanyole* men are ill prepared to meet such needs. In fact one of the Discussants did not mince her words in her observation that most of the married women in Bunyore experience widowhood long before their husbands actually die. They pointed out that *Abanyole* men have literally relegated the home, church and now community responsibilities to women.

6.7.4 Widow and her Sexual Need

An Informant (a widow) painted a picture of a typical contemporary widow among the *Abanyole* in this way: her husband is dead; she has no money; she has several hungry mouths to feed; has a house to maintain; has no companion; has no friend; she is scorned at by not a few; and pitied by many others. She goes ahead to explain that a widow is a helpless woman. Exploring their plight, she notes that most of them have no access to factors of production. Moreover, she also notes that above all the challenges and concerns; a widow is first of all, a woman who has needs – sexual needs. She experiences urges, that craving and that feeling of wanting to have a man satisfy her sexual needs. Thus, her cries and mourning is not only for a helpmate; but importantly because she has lost a friend, a companion and of course, a lover, a sexual partner (TA, 30/7/16OI).

The above sentiments resonate with the observations made by a Key Informant on widowhood among *Abanyole* (CE, 8/8/16 OI). She noted that widows have needs including sexual needs that need to be met in one way or the other. She laughed out at the very idea that very young widows would opt for celibacy for the sake of their service in the church. In fact she felt that it is against the Biblical teaching for young widows not to remarry.

6.7.5 Widow's Acceptable Sexual Expression

The way of sexual expression among the *Abanyole* is within a marital relationship. The observation of burial and after burial rites is meant to usher in a new lease life. For a young widow with children it is expected that after completing the observation of the 172

mourning period she finds someone within the late husband's family to care for her family and meet her sexual needs. Such an arrangement is undertaken in consultation with and blessing from the in-laws. Others opt to go back to their parents to start a new life altogether. The second option used to be the very last resort where families did not agree and the late husband's family failed to support the widow (Discussants, Elders, 21/2/17 **FGDs**).

Any sexual expression outside of marital relationship is deemed sinful and defiant and is discouraged. Widows who opt not to enter a marital arrangement of any kind are expected to remain celibate. It is not only sinful but very dangerous, according to the *Abanyole* Christians, for a widow to engage in unrestricted sexual affairs in the community. It is a root cause of most deaths among the *Abanyole* (Informant, CE, 8/8/16 **OI**).

6.8 **Summary**

This chapter considered *Abanyole* Christian perspective on widow sexuality. The discussion was undertaken under the following themes: Sex and the Bible, Women and the Bible, Widowhood in the Bible, Contemporary *Abanyole* Christian perspective on widowhood, Widows in the church today and Sexuality of Widows: A quest for identity. It is evident from the data collected and the discussion thereof that culture is a formidable force in sexual scripting among *Abanyole* Christians. The cultures of the Biblical World of the Bible and that of *Abanyole* people which are largely patriarchal assigning a subservient position to the women and their sexuality prevails. Christian widows as any

other, align to the cultural dictates embodied in prevailing sexual scripts. They do so whether in remarriage, inheritance or 'voluntary' celibacy.

CHAPTER SEVEN

FACTORS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE CHRISTIAN PERCEPTION ON WIDOWS' SEXUALITY

The chapter discusses factors cited by the respondents and/or that have been highlighted by researchers and scholars that bear on the perception on widows' sexuality. For the sake of discussion the factors are categorized as physiological, psychological, social and religious.

7.1 Physiological Factors

Physiological factors relate to the appearance, fitness, and general wellbeing of an individual. Physiological factors are very critical in determining general life and specifically sexual behavior of any woman. This is also true of a widow. This factors influence the individual's self-image and the judgment of the society of the individual's behavior. These include age, health, physical appearance and libido.

7.1.1 Age

Informants (CE, 8/8/16; SH, 18/8/16 **OI**) and Discussants (Kima widows, 24/2/17 **FGDs**) cited age as an important factor affecting the attitude widows and the entire society has on their sexual activity. Citing Paul's advice (1Timothy 5:3-16) on widow care which resonates with the *Abanyole* practice, sixty years seem to be the age at which a widow is thought to be sexually inactive.

Widows that are below sixty years of age are perceived to be sexually active. This means that they are still in their child bearing age. Thus the church is very hesitant to appoint or elect them to leadership or assign them sacramental responsibilities. An Informant (SS, 21/9/16 **OI**) noted that the church exercises a lot of caution because in the event that the widow is overtaken by desires and remarries or engages in sexual activity the church is put in disrepute. He observed that many pastor and other church leaders have been on a receiving end of this matter. They rush into committing young widows to the work of ministry without due consideration. Such young widows are seen as a stumbling block to the public witness of the gospel. He confessed to have consecrated only one widow of less than sixty years due to her longstanding testimony both in the church and from family members during his ministry tenure that spanned over thirty years.

On one hand, it is demonstrated that physiological aging may negatively affect sexual agency as when women who believe their physical attractiveness has declined with age feel less comfortable pursuing sexual activity (Koch, Mansfield, Thureau, and Carey, 2005). On the other hand, it enhances sexual agency when a post-menopausal woman feels more in control sexually because they no longer have to worry about pregnancy (Barbre, 1998).

An Informant (PR, 23/8/16 **OI**) narrated a story of an eighty-five year old widow in his village who is accused of keeping a thirty year old young man in her house. The villagers claim that they are living as husband and wife, yet she had employed him as a herd's boy before the demise of her husband. The respondent explained that it is not about age but the nature and nurture of individual women. There are those who are sexually active to a

very old age while others cease early. He also observed that women who have been in a marriage relation experience sexual urgency that has to be correctly channeled. This notion was confirmed by an Informant, a health worker in the study area. She reported to have noted widows seeking family planning pills who confided that they assist in suppressing their sexual desire (LN, 8/9/16 **OI**).

Thus age as a factor was only limited to those who engage in sexual activity for the purposes of procreation. Many do so for other reasons such as economic, social (to belong or achieve certain end), therapeutic or cultural. Discussants (Kima widows, 24/3/17 **FGDs**) observed that one's sexual conduct is determined by character and not age.

No matter the motivation for sexual activity, widows' age is an important factor. It impacts on one's sexual agency. It also makes one conscious and as such behave in a particular way. Therefore one must be cognizant of one's age, yet avoid stereotyping about it while handling widows' sexuality. Hillman observes such stereotyping in the media in the West. He explains:

In fact, aging men are more likely to appear in mainstream media as primary characters than aging women. What is interesting about this gender bias is that it portrays a reality that is opposite of what is actually true; with advancing age, aging women significantly outnumber aging men. In essence, middle-aged male sexuality is tolerated or even expected, whereas female middle-aged sexuality is —muted.¶ Another notable gender difference in the media is that with advancing age, men continue to command respect and demonstrate sexual prowess, whereas aging women literally lose the ability to be seen as agents of sexual desire and attraction. It bears repeating that the only form of sexual expression valued in popular culture for middle-aged adults is limited primarily to that of penetrative intercourse among attractive, white, middle-class, heterosexual couples,

including women who typically appear younger than their chronological age. These unrealistic and circumscribed portrayals, if internalized, pose significant challenges for middle-aged adults who do not, cannot, or choose not to model the consistently narrow range of behaviors modeled by individuals in the media. Because both middle-aged and older adults represent a demographic that spends a significant amount of time in contact with mass media, it is important for clinicians to review and potentially refute the cognitive schemas that middle-aged and older adult patients have consciously or unconsciously adopted from popular culture (2012: 22, 25).

Generally, as noted by Cattell from among the Samia older women, age and experience enables women to resist the male domination, to assert themselves (1992a). This is also true among the *Abanyole*.

7.1.2 Health

Health is an important influence on one's sexuality. Health concerns the state of soundness of the body, mind and soul. Thus it comprises of the physical, social and spiritual dimensions of an individual. Widows noted that health is a factor in consideration for sexual activity. They noted that the current HIV/AIDS has greatly reduced widows' options and affected their sexual behavior. They noted that it is no longer safe to engage in any sexual union because it entails a long process including medical examination which most men are not willing to undergo (Discussants, Esibila & Kima widows, 3/2/17 & 24/3/17 **FGDs**).

Discussants (elders, 24/2/17 **FGDs**) noted that ailing widows are expected to embrace celibacy. In fact the women vigilantes will always monitor movements of such to ensure that she is not involved with their men. They noted that men are also weary of ailing

women especially those with conspicuous symptoms. Therefore, chances of approaching such are minimal.

One's health also affects self-rating. Ailing widows are always withdrawn from the public. As such they harbor little thought about sexual activity.

7.1.3 Physical Appearance

One's physical appearance enhances or suppresses sexual agency. A widow who thinks that she is attractive enough is more likely to initiate or respond to sexual advances. An Informant (SE, 15/7/16 **OI**) advised that modesty must remain a call word of every widow. She observed that people are extremely conscious of widows and whenever a widow adorns herself to attract the attention of men they will definitely come running.

However, another Informant (HN, 26/8/16 **OI**) was quick to observe that such stereotyping has been employed to victimize widows. He noted that beauty is the nature of God. Thus widows should be encouraged to give attention to personal grooming for it is good for them. He also observed that the problem would be more of personal disposition rather than physical attractiveness. Hence advising for discipleship rather than uncalled for vigilante.

This train of thought would not go unchallenged. As earlier noted from studies on sexual culture in Africa, external beauty was rarely a factor for a marriage and for that matter a sexual partner. Family background, track record of industry and respect (for husband and other male relatives) were more important. This was confirmed to have been the case by

one of the respondents (Informant, FL, 14/10/16 **OI**). She noted that for men bride wealth was very important. Without which one had to be content as a bachelor. Thus she explained that physical appearance would not deter one from pursuing sexual activity. However, the modern-day society that is driven by consumerism, as presented in advertisement, is drawn toward outward looks. It portrays the young, slim, and light skinned women as sexy. This is different from the *Abanyole* idea of sexuality. However, when a widow wears makeup it raises concerns. Such a widow is monitored to ensure that she adheres to sexual norms.

7.1.4 Libido

The strength of one's urge is referred to as libido. Libido in both men and women changes with age. Women tend to lose their libido faster than men but the urge for sexual activity does continue. Widows differ in the manner in which they experience sexual urge. Some experience intense desire, others moderate while still others have very low desire. It also varies over life span. Libido greatly determines widows' sexual behavior (Discussants, widows, 3/2/17 & 24/3/17 **FGDs**).

A Discussant explained that she had long ceased intercourse by the time her husband died. Before her husband died, she had undergone tubal ligation (TL), which in her mind, destroyed her urge for sexual intercourse. Therefore sex for her case was already a none-issue even before her spouse passed on. She wondered and sympathized with the younger widows that are widowed while still experiencing sexual urge. She noted that life has greatly changed and it is only God who can help them. Thus the widows strongly

recommended that younger widows should commit themselves to God and church ministry where they would find true satisfaction (Esibila widows, 3/2/17 **FGDs**).

Another Informant (SE, 15/7/16 **OI**) who has since remarried reported that sexual urge was not one of her reasons for remarriage. She noted that family demands and cost of living have pushed her sexual urge to a remote corner, so that it would take a miracle for her to be sexually aroused. She confided that the reason for her remarriage is to nurture her children who are her future hope.

Still another Informant (TA, 30/7/16 **OI**) explained that she used to experience a lot of sexual urge flushes and it would be a good thing to satisfy her sexual need through coital penetration. She had found out a better way. She noted to find some fulfillment in keeping herself busy with her domestic chores and church ministry. She reported to draw a lot of satisfaction from her singing and dancing in the church choir, reading the word of God, praying and enjoying coffee just before going to bed.

Another Informant (RY, 4/7/16 **OI**) explained that her libido could be reason as to why she has never thought of remarriage. She reported to have had bad experiences that would best be described as rape with her late husband. She observed that sexual urge was not one of her experiences. Hence she fears any thought of remarriage for fear of failing to meet the sexual demands of her would-be suitor.

Finally, a Discussant, (Kima widows, 24/2/16 **FGDs**) not remarried, advised that marriage is not just about sexual intercourse but about two people intimately sharing life's pilgrimage. That life's cares are so much that one requires a partner to confide in

and pour ones heart to. She caused a stitch during one of the FGDs meeting by saying that in fact aging people desperately require someone to stroke their backs at night. She observed that there are many benefits in marriage that one would not afford to miss by concentrating on libido and any ability for a sexual intercourse. She, however, noted that there are remedies for low libido that are as simple as observing right nutrition, taking supplements and enhancing self image (Discussant, Esibila Widows, 3/2/17 **FGDs**). These sentiments were also expressed by two other respondents: a health worker and a remarried-lady senior pastor (LN, 8/9/16; JE, 3/10/16 **OI**).

In general, it was observed that widows cite other reasons other than sexual needs for remarriage. A study on sexual desire among *Abanyole* couples will be of interest. Hillman reported as follows on sexual desire among the Japanese in his article, Sex and Aging,

McCurry (2008) of sexual behavior in Japan suggests that one quarter of all married couples (of all ages) did not have sex with each other within the last year, and that more than one-third of married Japanese couples over the age of 50 stopped engaging in sex completely. Other ethnographic studies (Moore 2010) suggest that among older Japanese married couples, a wife's anger and resentment about her husband's infidelity in prior years account for the couple's significant decline in sexual activity. For even well-educated Japanese men over the age of 65, participation and interest in sex was associated with increased vitality in life and passion at work. Various myths about sexual functioning and desire were espoused, in which many Japanese older men blamed the lack of meat in their diet for a decline in sexual desire (2012: 15).

As already cited herein, Amadiume candidly illustrates a variety of African woman's libido and remedies as follows:

Sex was not forced on a woman; she was constantly surrounded by children and other people [...]. The sanctity of motherhood meant that women were treated with respect. One woman might desire an intense relationship with her husband; another might see marital obligations as a necessary but loathsome duty. Some might abandon their relationship with their husband and shun —men and their trouble. Indigenous architecture and male/female polygyny made these choices possible. (1987: 114)

Her sentiments affirm that any kind of generalization about women's libido may be inaccurate. There are women that have a high, moderate and lower affinity for sexual intercourse. It also demonstrates the sexual choices that women consciously or unconsciously make but must be accepted and met within a generally acceptable means. Finally, it affirms the woman's power and privilege in a sexual relationship. She is a queen and in charge; not an object and an underdog as most patriarchal cultures of the world would want to portray. Hence her decision must be respected. This is indeed a contradiction.

7.2 Psychological Factors

Psychological factors are factors relating to the state of the mind. Sexual behavior is largely determined by the state of an individual's mind. Widows undergo a lot of emotional and traumatic experiences which negatively affects their ability to make sound judgment. This greatly affects their perception of their sexuality. Such factors include security, grief, self-esteem, and loneliness.

7.2.1 Security

Security means the absence of, or assurance of containing, of any threat. The loss of a spouse subjects the widow to a myriad threat depending on her social status. It exposes

her to potential dangers of sex pets or opportunists seeking to take advantage of her situation. Therefore security status affects ones sexual behavior. As Discussants (MYW leaders, 8/2/17 **FGDs**) noted, some widows will choose a suitor because of insecurity. The insecurity could be social, economic or otherwise. Others would do so because they are secure and all they need is someone to explore life together.

7.2.2 Grief

Widows participating in this study displayed intense emotions while recounting the circumstances that led to their husband's death, but emotional intensity grew even greater as they recounted their experiences following the death. Every widow had a story which related that she was accused as the killer, openly oppressed, suppressed, afflicted or insulted by her in-laws, or required to observe some suspicious widowhood customs and traditions. They noted that the complex situation following their spouses' death led to their going through intense grief. An Informant (RY, 4/7/16 **OI**) described her condition thus:

When my husband died and was buried, I felt like the world had come to a standstill. I spent many hours just alone imagining life without him. I considered the children, the bills, the neighbors, the hostile family members and our friends and wondered how I was going to manage all these alone. For moments I felt numb and breathless. I blamed myself; I felt that I could have done something to have him with us. Alas! I was but a walking corpse.

An Informant (JA, 20/7/16 **OI**) confessed that she nearly ran mad. She noted that her world literally tumbled down at the demise of her husband. She spent many hours crying and cursing.

Citing Lindermann and Parker, Fasoronti and Aruna (2014: 56) explain grief in widowhood in the follow way:

Grief is the complex emotional reaction arising from a loss of a spouse and the attendant difficulties and distress are apt to be very great.... Grief consists of a pattern of physiological distress including sighing, shortness of breath, tightness in the throat, fatigue and loss of muscular strength. The griever is occupied with images of the deceased, often feels guilty about real or imagined rights to the deceased and can be irritable and angry when others try to be soothing. The grief reaction comes in waves, especially when the griever is reminded of the deceased and his grief reaction may last any length from days to years.

Such intense grief impacts negatively on one's sexual behavior. This is because during grieving, one's perception is affected hence self-image and character. Some widows reported to have ended up in the arms of men who drew closer to them during their intense grief. Conversely, other widows reported abhorring any subsequent marital relationship due to the grief caused by the loss of their spouse that they were yet to come to terms with (Discussants, Esibila and Kima widows, 3/2/17 & 24.3/17 **FGDs**).

7.2.3 Self Esteem

Self-esteem is the sum total of the widow's self-rating. This has to do with the nurtured individual character that makes a woman take individual action with self-determination. Self-esteem entails a widow's self-worth as she judges from her inner person and from attitudes of significant others. This greatly affects sexual behavior of individuals. Discussants, (Esibila and Kima widows, 3/2/17 & 24.3/17 **FGDs**) observed that this factor affects the widow by exacerbating or suppressing her sexual agency. A widow who

feels that she is not good enough yet craves acceptance might adopt a kind of sexual behavior that will earn her the approval of significant others.

This significant others would be her in-laws or a group of other women or widows. Therefore the widow will act like another person just to fit in her social setting. As Hotvedt (1983: 9) observes, sexuality of elderly women is greatly affected by the doubts and fallacies prevalent among men. They include a pervasive belief that sex is ‘dirty’, sex is linked to fertility which is lost after menopause, negative feelings, loss of worth and a nagging feel of immorality, would seem to be mutually reinforcing.

On the contrary, a widow with a strong character and self-determination will make sexual decision based on facts and the posterity it brings them and those around them. They would not bow to the pressure from the peers, family, significant others or any institution. They know and widely consult on what is good for them and pursue it with due decorum.

7.2.4 Loneliness

Widows in the study area reported to experience loneliness. One widow explained that she never knew loneliness as she came to know it upon the demise of the husband. She said that in the day when she is going about her duties and interacting with people she felt well. This was not the case for the nights. The closing of the bedroom door opened up realizations that she was indeed alone. The house and especially the bedroom seemed bigger than it used to be. The nights became darker and longer. The creeping and croaking of insect and crickets become louder and intense. There was generally no ear to

off load her intense fears and share aspirations. She felt alone (Informant, RY, 4/7/16 **OI**).

The widows and elders note that life's pilgrimage is better navigated together. Widows face temptations of considering remarriage due to the lonely state they find themselves in on the demise of the spouse. Some widows simply slow their active participation in community life.

7.3 **Social Factors**

Human beings are social animals and as such accrue their identity from the sum total of what their communities assign them. An African adage of 'I am because we are and because we are then I am' applies. Stated social factors affecting the Christian perception of widows' sexuality include status, family, children, education, matrimonial locality and engendered roles.

7.3.1 *Status*

As earlier alluded to, the *Abanyole* philosophy categorizes women. Women accrue their status from their persona, their family of origin, academic credentials, financial or asset base, status of their children and their age. Therefore different categories of widows (women) will differ in their sexual behavior depending on their status. As a result some widows wield lots of authority in the community to the extent of being consulted on community issues (Informants, SH, 18/8/16; CE, 8/8/16 **OI**; and Discussants, Kima

widows, 24/3/16 **FGDs**). This was true among the *Abanyole*. Nwachukwu-Agbada (2011: 88) relates writing about Igbo women from a Nigerian case:

...[W]omen in Igboland had not always been a helpless sex as recent Igbo feminists are wont to paint them. As indicated earlier, women as a collective constitute a formidable force in the politics of any Igbo clan. And as I had had to state elsewhere, In practically all Igbo communities, women in their natal villages – addressed as —umuadal or —umumgbotoll – wielded legal, decisional rights comparable to those of a modern supreme court. The —umuadal were last arbiters; they equally had right to intervene, even uninvited, when they believed that there had been a miscarriage of justice.

7.3.2 Family

Family is an important consideration and a determinant for widow's sexual behavior.

Family refers to both the nuclear and extended. As significant people in the life of the widow they influence her sexual decisions. There are various family related factors that affect widows' sexuality. They include: number and age of children from the previous marriage, extended family relationship, and family status (Discussants, FGDs).

An Informant (HN, 26/8/16 **OI**) related that his daughter-in-law lost her husband. The family sat and resolved to assist her with the schooling of the children and other family basic needs. None of the sons was going to claim her for a wife. She was free in case she needed to find someone to remarry her. They assisted her to claim and access the deceased husband's benefits and she is now settled at her farm in Kitale.

7.3.3 Children

The presence and age of children influences a widow's sexual behavior. Two Discussants in the elders FGDs have a firsthand experience of a church organized remarriage 188

following widowhood. They lost their mothers and their fathers being church ministers needed to remarry. They note that the welfare of children is always a priority. They explained that children present a challenge especially to the widow because young children are under the mother's custody and the consent of those of age must be sought. In case of sons, a widow is expected to remain in her matrimonial home as a sign of commitment to the aspirations of the deceased husband and to ensure their inheritance (Discussants, elders, 21/2/17 **FGDs**).

The same is affirmed to be true in a report on Indian situation. It is noted:

The only way a widow could retain a position of honor was to stay as the elder mother in the home of her sons. Widowed man, however, could marry without restraint and gentry, men sometimes elevated a concubine to the status of wife on the death of their first wife (Fasoranti and Aruna, 2014: 56).

All widows participating in this study noted that children are always opposed to any proposal made for a remarriage. This situation leads to strife and anarchy threatening family's cohesion. The elders hinted that it is important to involve children in the process of remarriage by seeking their consent. The two elders who reported having had firsthand experience noted that their parent remained indebted to them for supporting their quest to remarry (Discussants, Elders, 21/2/17 **FGDs**). Hillman clearly captures the emotion of remarrying widows as reported by Nyanzi from Uganda thus,

For older widows in Uganda who do not engage in this practice of widow-inheritance, the social consequences can be severe. If an older widow does not remarry, her adult children are expected to monitor and oversee her sexual behavior. Because traditional Ugandan beliefs indicate that sexuality is acceptable primarily for procreation, most adult children actively scold,

chastise, or actively prohibit their widowed mothers from dating and having other sexual relationships.

As noted by one of Nyanzi's participants, an adult daughter of a widowed, older mother who wished to remarry someone other than her brother-in-law, —Imagine how mad I got...to have another man, ah ah no! I told her off in no uncertain terms that this was not going to happen. I was crude. I said to her, _Mama, do you really want to have another wrinkled body climbing on top of you...?' Many adult children insist that their widowed mothers move in with them, which also allows them to monitor their whereabouts and limit their privacy (Hillman, 2012: 14).

This is the case among *Abanyole*. Hence, children are a critical factor in a widow's sexual behavior. Their presence, status, age and attitude toward their mother's sexual life greatly determine her subsequent sexual behavior. Those with no children or with younger children are more likely to consider remarriage or inheritance as compared to the ones with grown up children.

7.3.4 Education

UNDP (2016) report on literacy depicts that two-thirds of illiterate people in the world are women. This statistics are a concern given the glaring gender discrimination already existing in most societies in the world. A good education opens up opportunities and possibilities for women which make them better and authentic persons able to take charge of their destiny.

Informants (SH, 18/8/16; SS, 21/9/16 **OI**) and Discussants (elders, 21/2/17; MYW leaders, 8/2/17; **FGDs**) in this study noted that widows' sexual behavior is greatly enhanced by their level and nature of education. Most of the widows who participated in this study have a minimal or no literary education. They noted that educated widows with

established career were more in charge of their sexuality than those with no or little education who are unemployed.

They also noted that schooling opens one to begin to interrogate many things around her. As such those with formal education and established career naturally escape the village sexual innuendoes. However, as reflected in other literatures, literary education only puts an individual at another level of encountering male domination (Azuike, 2009 and Nwachukwu-Agbada, 2011).

As demonstrated by Adimora-Ezeigbo (2002), the best remedy to issues connected with widow sexuality is re-education. It is by re-socializing the women (widows), by nurturing their character, and arming them with effectual arsenals, enabling them to discern and counter patriarchal assumptions with zeal and acumen. This can be done at all levels as is demonstrated by the Okwara sisters of the Adimora-Ezeigbo's *Children of the Eagle* novel.

7.3.5 Matrimonial Locality

Matrimonial locality is an issue that greatly affects widows' sexuality. The *Abanyole* as most of other societies are patrilocal. This entails that the wife joins the husband's family upon marriage. As such she is deemed an alien with no power to make decision. Most of the families claim ownership of the late son's or brother's estates including the wife. Such was a case for a young widow already alluded to (Informant, TA, 30/7/16 **OI**). Her in-law suggested moving in with her but she declined. The in-law latter threatened her that if she was not willing to have him, then she should never think of anyone else 191

coming to his brother's compound. The widow latter gave in for the sake of her children, but she demanded that the union be solemnized in church.

7.3.6 Gendered Roles

Culturally ascribed gender roles affect sexual behavior that a widow embraces. Discussants (MYW leaders, 8/2/17 **FGDs**) noted that there are roles among the *Abanyole* that are a preserve for the men. An Informant (DH, 12/8/16 **OI**) confirmed that in South Bunyore a woman is not allowed to plant a banana stem, trees and demarcations for land boundaries, and bequeath wealth to her children. She also cannot preside over or represent her family on an important family function. Fazoranti and Aruna describes Nigerian situation as portrayed by Ahosi which concur with the views of my Informants,

It has been rightly observed that the differential between men's and women's role in Nigeria as with other societies as one of complementary and superior relationship in favor of men. It involves a hierarchy in which men are given greater leverage over decision making and resources than women. The result is a cultural setting that invariably supports male domination and female subordination (Fazoranti and Aruna, 2014: 53).

7.4 Religious Factors

Religious factors here refer to the religious reasons given for or against widows expected sexual behavior. Widows and communities applaud voluntary celibacy as the highest good for every widow while others oblige them to remarry under certain conditions. Factors given for such positions include religious commitment, God's grace, celibacy as a higher good, and terms and conditions of marriage.

7.4.1 Religious Commitment

Discussants (Widows 3/2/17 & 24/3/17 and Elders, 21/2/17 **FGDs**) noted that religious commitment affected widows' sexual behavior. Widows already committed to the work of the church more easily embrace celibacy than others. This research also found out that because of the criteria used to elect and appoint leaders both laity and clergy in the church many widows who are already in or aspire for such responsibility choose celibacy as a way of life.

It was also observed that widows empowered through formal education, controlled factors of production and/or endowed with spiritual powers and held senior position within their denominations are freer in making decisions that went against the norms. Such widows are fully in-charge of their destiny and easily rally their society to support their cause.

7.4.2 God's Grace

In Christian teaching, grace is depicted as the kindness, unmerited favor and sustaining influence of God to man (Douglas, 1987). It is the basis upon human relationship with God is founded, sustained and eternally secured. Christians often pray for God's grace whenever they are faced with hurtful moments in life such as are brought about by widowhood.

An Informant (SE, 15/7/16 **OI**) pointed out that it is the grace of God that has kept her. She pointed out that she used to experience intense sexual urges following the demise of

her husband. The urges came at times when she fanaticized about the rich and fulfilling life they had led with the deceased. This would gradually disintegrate into intense hatred and grief.

This she said lasted for such a long time that she became concerned. Finally she resorted to committing herself to God in prayer. She noted that gradually the experience vanished. She explained that since this happened at night she could wake up freshen, read her Bible and spend most of her time in prayer. This discipline stepped up her commitment to God and His service. She has since found peace and helps other widows facing the same challenge (SE, 15/7/16 **OI**).

These sentiments were reflected upon by Discussants (Church leaders, 24/2/17 **FGDs**). They noted that God's grace is sufficient to embrace widows in trouble. They said that it is of great importance for widows to commit themselves to God in prayer, to study the Bible, to attend church functions and to serve in the church in order to grow in the grace of God. This will, they observed, sustain them through all manner of challenges they face and will make them humble and wise.

Discussants (Kima widows, 24/3/17 **FGDs**) noted that God's grace play an integral part in a widow's ability to move on with life. They related that the pain of widowhood is so intense and sharper than birth pangs. It renders them numb. Therefore some widows go through life-motion as mere objects. It actually takes the grace of God and kindness of those around to restore them to sanity.

7.4.3 Religious Attitude towards Sex and Sexuality: Widow Celibacy as the Higher Good

The discussions and interviews made pointed out an emerging script among the *Abanyole* Christians, that widow celibacy is the higher good. This has become a popular trend that even young widows committed to their Christian faith are opting not to enter any marital relation. Informants (SE, 15/7/16; RY, 4/7/16; TA, 30/7/16; JA, 20/7/16 **OI**) and Discussants (widows 3/2/17 & 24/3/17; MYW leaders, 8/2/17; elders, 21/2/17 **FGDs**) explained that the reason for the trend especially for Christians is that remarrying is deemed sinful and a sign of weakness. Those who remarry are considered ‘weak’ Christians who are unfit for leadership and teaching positions in church. This position is supported by the Discussants (24/2/17) in the Church leaders’ FGDs which noted that the church is not opposed to widow remarriage but does not consider such ones for leadership opportunities.

Informants (HN, 26/8/16; PR, 23/8/16; SS, 21/10/16 **OI**) suggested that instead of a widow indulging in sexual immorality; she should find a husband and remarry. These sentiments were echoed throughout the study by the widows, elders and other opinion leaders. An Informant (DH, 12/8/16 **OI**) decried this trend, noting that it is unusual with a potential of inhibiting procreation. She felt that younger widows should marry and bear children. The problem is that the church in Bunyore has not demystified widow remarriage. She said that long ago the church played a leading role and encouraged and embraced young widows who remarried. The contemporary church ‘discriminates’ those who remarry. They are perceived as sinners especially since it is difficult for a widow to

find a single man. She illustrated this with a case of a widow in her village that was forced to renounce her marriage for her to be considered for a leadership position in her church. She found this to be discriminatory against women in view of their special family attachment.

7.4.4 Terms and Conditions for Continual Sexual Gratification

Sexual gratification in human beings is relational and as such entails fulfillment of certain terms and conditions. Sexual activity of an *Abanyole* widow is highly loaded with taboos. These taboos can repel widows and the would-be suitors from pursuing remarriage. First, According to the Christian faith and practice, sex is sacred and is to be practiced within the confines of a marital relation. This necessitates that any widow wishing to continue to engage in sexual activity to remarry. The remarriage of a widow is loaded with a lot of cultural implications.

The very thought that a widow is sexually unclean with the late husband's ghost requiring to be cleansed by another man to ward-off the ghost repels potential suitors and reduces widow's self-esteem. Cleansing is a process requiring precision and commitment in ritual performance. This process does not spare Christians as elicited from the respondents (Informants, SS, 21/9/16 **OI**) and observed in the study area.

Second, according to Christian faith and practice, marriage is a strictly monogynous institution. It does not allow for polygamous arrangements that would accommodate widows wishing to maintain their previous matrimonial homes. This makes it difficult for

widows who have children, especially male, and are committed to their maintenance and to guarantee them an inheritance.

Third is the condition for being enlisted on the widows' roll and church leadership opportunity. According to the Christian teaching it is only widows that have been married ones (I Timothy 5:9) and in good standing with the church that qualify to be enrolled as beneficiaries of church aid. The same criterion is employed in the qualification of leadership. Widows that are allowed to serve in the church are those who have been married only once. This condition puts off most of widows' pursuit for sexual agency (SH, 18/8/16; FL, 14/10/16 **OI**; Church leaders, 24/3/17 **FGDs**).

7.5 Summary

This chapter discussed factors responsible for Christian perception on widows' sexuality among the *Abanyole* of Emuhaya. These factors are categorized as physiological, psychological, social and religious. It was established that these factors affect widows' decision on matters of sexuality to various degrees, depending on an individual widow. The study noted that *Abanyole* socio-cultural factors, that are patriarchal, greatly impacted widows' decisions leading to the perceived infringement on their rights. Religious factors which have their root in ancient Judaistic culture of the Old Testament, Hellenistic culture of the Septuagint and New Testament which were interpreted and transmitted through European culture that was male dominant only served to reinforce the *Abanyole* Christian widows' plight. However, despite all these factors, widows are demonstrating power in their daily lives to wither all kind of oppression. They resist male

dominance, especially that which touches their sexual life by making public declaration of their displeasure.

CHAPTER 8

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 Summary of the Results

The first objective of this study was to ascertain the prevailing cultural perception on widows' sexuality among *Abanyole* of Emuhaya. This objective sought to answer the question: What is the prevailing cultural perception on widows' sexuality among *Abanyole* of Emuhaya? The study established that *Abanyole* Christian widows suffer gendered stigmatization from their cultural milieu. Various sources, both primary and secondary, identified both historical and contemporary cultural characterization of widows' sexuality. A woman is regarded as a weaker vessel deriving her identity from her father, husband or son in that order. She is raised to be given up in marriage thus considered an alien in her natal home. Upon marriage, as an acquired asset, she has to maintain her social space, domestic chores, until proven able to participate in decision making process as a listener and only later as a custodian. As a custodian, the woman assumes conveyor and vigilante responsibilities that justify, cement and propagate female stigmatization.

Gendered stigmatization and humiliation wielded against females is epitomized in the culturally expected sexual behavior among *Abanyole*. An ideal wife is the sexually naïve woman submissive and ready to satiate the husband's sexual desire. Such a woman is expected to be reserved and modest as far as sexual urgency is concerned. Her obedience reaches its zenith in her ability to sacrifice her personal needs and aspirations for the sake

of her husband and family. The degree of subjugation and kind of sacrifices to be made among the *Abanyole* vary depending with the status of the female in question.

As a result, widows have had to put up with various degree of dilapidation depending on their status in their family and clan. As women, and as such aliens in their matrimonial home, they struggle with property inheritance and general family livelihood. The highest degree of humiliation is that which touches on their sexuality. As a lesser sex they have to either contend with the cultural inheritance way where they choose their spouse from the deceased husband's clan if they have to continue sexual expression or embrace voluntary celibacy.

Consequently, widows suffer in silence and have to learn early enough either from the senior fellow widows and women gatekeepers their rightful place in the society and the befitting sexual behavior. Those who do not toe the path are maligned and eventually smoked out of their matrimonial homes for threatening the very existence of the community by their sexual escapades. The worst frontier for widows is their own grown up children who, as earlier demonstrated, are always against their widowed mothers' dating and remarrying.

The second objective was to establish widows' attitudes on their sexuality among the *Abanyole* of Emuhaya. The objective answers to our second research question: What is the prevailing widows' attitude toward their sexuality among the *Abanyole* of Emuhaya? This study found out that the *Abanyole* widows, as other women, prefer the biological

male sex. They have hence become their own enemies by perpetuating a notion that they are a second best sex.

However, the study also ascertained that just as was in African traditional societies, empowered women among *Abanyole* Christians are challenging this patriarchal dominance. First, such empowerment is politico-religious where women endowed with spiritual powers and in top leadership positions of their denominations redefine womanhood and wage war against patriarchal oppression. Second, this empowerment is through education (rounded, not just literacy). Widows endowed with quality education are freer. They have the capacity to know what they want and have the ability to reach out for the same in an honorable way. It is worth noting that in traditional African societies holistic education was provided that catered for the needs of women who experienced trajectories in life such as widowhood. Such education considered the breadth of sexual needs and expression providing for acceptable means and avenues for its satisfaction. Such Indigenous Knowledge (IK) as reflected on in the *Abanyole* way of life, provided for alternatives for a widow's sexual life. Last but not the least is economic empowerment. This refers to a widow's ability to freely generate and exploit economic resources. Widows endowed with such capacity are able to manage their affairs, including sexuality, authentically.

Consequently, this study established that widows among the *Abanyole* have a generally low self-rating. This consciousness has contributed a lot to their plight. They conform and conspire with perpetrators of widow oppression. They effectively accomplish this task by accepting and/or not speaking out against the vices fashioned against

The third objective was to examine the Christian perception on widows' sexuality among *Abanyole* of Emuhaya. The objective answers to our third research question: What is the Christian perception on widows' sexuality among the *Abanyole* of Emuhaya? This research established a continuity of the traditional *Abanyole* and Judo-Christian views crystallized through western civilization of the nineteenth century white missionaries with slight changes orchestrated by socio-economic pressure and HIV/AIDS.

First, *Abanyole* Christian view on sexuality is conflicting. It is celebrated as sacred while in the same vein, male domination in favor of male gender flourishes. This is attested of by the number female followership verses female leaders and the positions they hold in their denominations. Women's top leadership seems possible only within ministries and churches founded by women. This gives limited room for the church to address women issues in its theology. Mary Akatsa's Jerusalem Church of Christ is a case of a female founded and led denomination among *Abanyole* that is redefining womanhood and addressing widows' plight head-on.

Second, *Abanyole* Christians have embraced 'voluntary' widow celibacy as a norm. The study found out that *Abanyole* Christians expect that those widowed among them not to date, remarry or engage in sexual activity. A widow who violates this norm is either excluded from some opportunities such as leadership responsibility or is excommunicated depending with the magnitude of her act and denominational affiliation. This explains the eulogies given by Christian widows during their deceased husbands' burial ceremonies. They publicly announce to mourners that they are widowed but not available. Some go as

far as declaring that Jesus Christ has become their husband. Whether they live up to their declaration is another matter altogether.

Third, this research established that very little has been done among *Abanyole* Christians in the area of developing an authentic *Abanyole* Christian theology pertaining to widowhood. There is a lack of or mix of knowledge on widowhood which subjects its victims to abuse by the very institution that exists for their peace. Therefore the church in Bunyore must see itself as such and evolve to stamp its authority by honestly allowing Christ to abide with and speak to its widowed women adherents in their specific contexts. Suffice it to say that whatever denominational affiliation widows ascribe to among *Abanyole* of Emuhaya, they all experience and suffer gendered stigmatization, especially relating their sexuality.

Finally, the fourth objective was to determine factors responsible for the prevailing Christian perceptions on widows' sexuality among the *Abanyole* of Emuhaya. It sought to answer the research question: What are the factors responsible for the prevailing Christian perceptions on widows' sexuality among the *Abanyole* of Emuhaya? The study established that there are many wide range and context specific factors responsible for the perceptions on widows' sexuality among *Abanyole* of Emuhaya. These factors were categorized as physiological, psychological, social and religious. Physiologically, one's age, general health, physical appearance and libido were noted to influence one's sexual perception and behavior. Psychologically, one's sense of security, grief, self-esteem and loneliness was found to impact on an individual's sexuality. Socially, the individual's status in terms family as in the number and age of children, academic qualification and

economic ability, matrimonial locality and engendered roles were found to impact on one's sexual behavior. Finally, from a religious perspective, an individual's sense of religious responsibility and aspiration, influence and entitlement greatly influences his or her sexual perception and behavior.

8.2 Conclusions

This study concluded that Christianity wields an influence on widows' sexuality among *Abanyole*. This influence is double pronged; it is both redemptive and oppressive, as demonstrated by the following conclusions of the findings on the objectives of the study:

First, *Abanyole* have a culture pertaining to widows' sexuality that is rife. This is an important aspect that defines them as a particular people. This aspect of life cannot be wished or washed away easily. Some of the cultural practices are good while others are bad. The good cultural practices that support and perpetuate life have to be encouraged while those that undermine life discouraged. It is notable the most cultural practices wielded on widows' sexuality among *Abanyole* are dehumanizing and as such, have to be discouraged. Thus, Christianity in its teachings and practices will either positively or negatively reinforce a particular practice or behavior. The persistence of dehumanizing practices on widow's sexuality is evidence that a lot more needs to be done by the church.

Second, *Abanyole* widows' low self-rating negatively impacts on their perception on their sexuality opening a floodgate for abuse from their male counterpart and even fellow women. Widows contribute to their own marginalization by accepting, repeating and not

speaking against the vices wedged against them. Self-rating is enhanced by academic (education), social and economic empowerment.

Third, Christian perception on a widows' sexuality is double pronged. It is both oppressive and liberating. There are some anecdotes and examples drawn from the biblical and European missionary cultures that serve to cement dehumanizing cultural practices and behavior toward widow sexuality. Equally, Christian teachings are redemptive setting widows on edge to freely explore life in the fear of God. It is imperative that the church remains relevant in every generation by freeing its followers to experience fullness of life by discovering and embracing the message of redemption.

Forth, religious and non-religious factors influence prevailing widow's sexuality among *Abanyole*. These factors are related to the socio-economic status of the widow and her community. Christianity reinforces a particular practice and behavior by either sanctioning it or against it. Therefore those factors that resonate with Christian thinking are maintained.

Outlined factors determine the perception of widows' sexuality and accrue a particular sexual script for Christian widows among *Abanyole*. They form reference point for the expected widows' sexual behavior and activity in terms of who, when, what, where, and how. However, these factors are perceived by some as stereotypes only serving to subjugate women, hence a valid battle front. This calls for Christian women to resent their recipient position and engage the Bible cognizant of both the historical and

contemporary realities in order to contribute to their liberation which is the church's freedom.

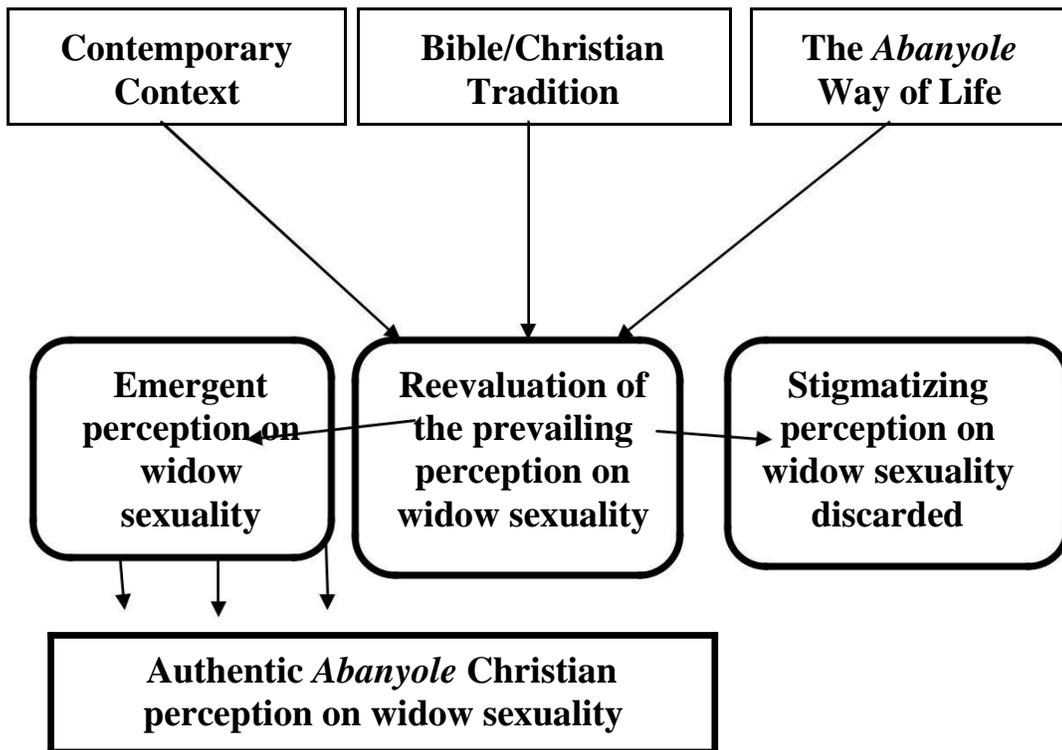
8.3 Recommendations

The first recommendation relates to the first objective which sought to establish the prevailing cultural perceptions on widows' sexuality. The study found out that traditional cultural sexual norms, values, and behavior on widows' sexuality are prevalent and influential among contemporary *Abanyole*. Some norms, values and behaviors on widows' sexuality are good while others are negative and dehumanizing. This study therefore recommends that Christian communities among the *Abanyole* and other agencies that advocate for gender parity engage the *Abanyole* institutions to mitigate negative and dehumanizing cultural practices on widows' sexuality. This could be through open forums that discuss these cultural practices and affirmative action plans that highlight, educate and empower on widows' sexual situation.

The second recommendation relates to the second objective which sought to establish *Abanyole* widows' attitudes on their sexuality. The study found out that *Abanyole* widows' low self-rating negatively influences on their perception on their sexuality opening a floodgate for abuse from their male counterpart and even fellow women. Widows contribute to their own marginalization by accepting, repeating and not speaking against the vices wedged against them. This study therefore recommends that Christian communities among *Abanyole* review the manner in which children, especially girls, are socialized. Family enhancement programs need to be developed to train Christian parents and the society on appropriate ways of raising up children to embrace a liberated view on widow sexuality. The church in Bunyore would also do well to tap from Indigenous Knowledge (I.K.) on nurturing young people to embrace the responsibility of blossoming

and jealously guarding their sexuality for the posterity of the society. This has to be blended in with the contemporary scientific knowledge to prepare its following to appropriately address issues on sexuality during life trajectories such as widowhood. Following process will greatly enhance such education:

Figure 8.1: showing Re-education process that would result in an authentic *Abanyole* Christian perception on widows' sexuality



Source: Author, 2018

The above figure demonstrates a hermeneutical process that would result in an authentic *Abanyole* Christian perception on widow sexuality. It takes cognizance of the fact that there exist both good and bad practices in the traditional and contemporary *Abanyole* cultures and Biblical and Christian traditions. These teachings and practices have to be reevaluated in the light of Jesus' redemptive gospel which foresees a free and just 208

society. Hence, stigmatizing and discriminatory teachings and practice dissuade in favor of the redemptive ones.

The third recommendation relates to the third objective which sought to examine the Christian perception(s) on widows' sexuality. The research established a continuity of the traditional *Abanyole* and Judo-Christian views crystallized through western civilization of the nineteenth century white missionaries with slight changes orchestrated by socio-economic pressure and HIV/AIDS. This presents both redemptive and oppressive view on widows' sexuality which is embraced according to the prevailing circumstance. This study therefore recommends the following:

Moment of intense sorrow and pain such as the grief for a spouse tend to reorient the bereaved to culture, our tested and true ways of life, for solutions. The church should therefore craft a sound discipleship program that both sanctifies Christ as Lord in the hearts of its followers and transforms them in a culturally specific way for sound Christian living. Such programs do not hoodwink followers to ignorantly surrender to fate or hang on to wishful thinking, but empowers them for a victorious living through intelligent engagement with life challenges, accepting and overcoming their situation and sojourning on.

There is need for the society, especially the church, to listen more attentively and resolutely and to honestly seek to understand widows by creating channels and forums for free dialogue on issues pertinent to their life, especially their sexual life. This will provide authentic curriculum content for the training of pastors, religious instructors and

other Christian workers on widowhood and the Christian mandate thereof to avoid sloppiness when handling this tender and significant sub-group in the church. It also provides a basis for sound counseling, educating and supporting widows on their status, sexual behavior, provisions and expectations from both religious and scientific expertise. Conversely, churches and church organizations in the study area should set up and facilitate functional widow support groups that will open up widows to the world of possibilities in the fear of God.

The church among the *Abanyole* ought to develop a biblically sound and contextually relevant doctrine on widowhood to avoid piecemeal, farfetched empty verbal diarrhea that is a characteristic of addresses directed toward widows. There is seemingly a lack of a sound and contextually relevant biblical teaching on widow sexuality. This creates a *lacuna* of knowledge that everyone fills in, most often than not, with cultural male chauvinism.

The fourth recommendation relates to the fourth objective which sought to determine factors responsible for the prevailing Christian perception(s) on widows' sexuality among the *Abanyole* of Emuhaya. The study found out that factors are related to the socio-economic status of the widow and her community determines the perception on widows' sexuality among the *Abanyole*. Christianity reinforces a particular practice and behavior by either sanctioning it or against it. Therefore those factors that resonate with Christian thinking are maintained. This study therefore recommends that the Christian communities among the *Abanyole* mitigate those factors that negatively impacts on widows' sexuality.

The study finds that a genuine gender mainstreaming and empowerment program that takes serious cognizance and purpose to mitigate gender power play.

8.4 Suggestions for Future Research

This study centered on Christian religion and widows' sexuality among the *Abanyole*. There is an interesting trend of remarriage among widower clergy in the study area. This trend provides knowledge that is important and so it should be gleaned. Still other groups such as widowers, divorcees, single adults among the *Abanyole* and the role of other religious groups or specific denominations on their sexuality will go a long way in providing important information. It will also be of great value to study sexual scripts among the *Abanyole* women in general and specifically in the advent of HIV/AIDS era. A historical study of sexual scripting among the *Abanyole* women will also pay a lot of dividends.

Furthermore, a quantitative approach based on more refined procedures to explore factors that contribute to the resilience of 'voluntary' celibacy among Christian widows among the *Abanyole*.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Widows' Interview schedule for *Christian Influence on Widows' Sexuality among the Abanyole of Emuhaya, Western Kenya.*

Dear respondent, this study in which you are about to participate is being conducted by a student from Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology. The study seeks to examine Christian Perception to widows' sexuality among *Abanyole* of Emuhaya, Western Kenya. I am grateful that you have made time to avail valuable information the subject. You are the expert in this matter and if you do not help write your story, someone will misrepresent it.

1. What are the sequences of events and activities that a bereaved woman in this area has to undergo?
2. What were the circumstances that led to the death of your husband?
3. What were immediate thoughts after you new knew that your husband is dead?
4. What are some of the experience of widows in this area?
5. What are the similarities and differences between you as widows?
6. What are the similarities between widows and widowers?
7. What are the difference between widows and widowers?
8. Where do you seek help on matters concerning sexuality? Why?
9. How do widows view their body sexually?
10. What does sex and sexual expressions mean to you as a widow?
11. What sexual experiences have you had since you lost your spouse?

12. Have you ever considered remarriage? Why? Why would widows live without sex?
13. Do you feel the church is a place for you as a widow? Why?
14. In what specific ways has the church assisted you as a widow?
15. What difference does your Christian faith make in your coping with issues of sexuality?
16. What specific stories, Bible texts and sermons on women and widowhood do you find helpful to you? Why?

Appendix B: Church Leaders Interview Schedule for *Christian Influence on Widows' Sexuality among the Abanyole of Emuhaya, Western Kenya.*

Dear respondent, this study in which you are about to participate is being conducted by a student from Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology. The study seeks to examine Christian Perception of Widows' Sexuality among the *Abanyole* of Emuhaya, Western Kenya. I am grateful that you have made time to avail valuable information the subject. You are the expert in this matter and if you do not help write your story, someone will misrepresent it.

1. What is the church's general behavior on women?
2. What is the space the church assign to women?
3. What is the church's view about a widow?
4. What are the experiences and felt needs of a widow?
5. What specific programs, activities, teachings or groups does the church facilitate to empower widows?
6. How does the church integrate widows into the society as whole persons?
7. How are widows expected to behave sexually? Why? Is sex important for a widow? Why?
8. Where do widows in your church get information concerning their sexuality?
9. What are some of the cultural sexual practices that widows are expected to undergo among *Abanyole*?

10. What is your church's view of such practices? How is the church addressing that practices?

Appendix C: Social & Health and Ministry of Gender and Social Service Workers’ Interview Schedule for *Christian Influence on Widows’ Sexuality among the Abanyole of Emuhaya, Western Kenya.*

Dear respondent, this study in which you are about to participate is being conducted by a student from Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology. The study seeks to examine *Christian Perception to widows’ Sexuality among the Abanyole of Emuhaya, Western Kenya.* I am grateful that you have made time to avail valuable information the subject. You are the expert in this matter and if you do not help write your story, someone will misrepresent it.

1. What is the general space assigned to and behavior on women in this area?
2. What is the prevalence of widowhood in this region?
3. What is the general view about a widow in this region?
4. What is the general situation of widows in Emuhaya? What are the needs of a widow?
5. In your opinion, how will you characterize the church as a partner in championing for widows’ right?
6. What are some of cultural sexual practice prevalent in this area? How do they infringe on widows’ rights?
7. How are widows expected to behave sexually? Why? Is sex important for a widow? Why?
8. Where do widows in your church get information concerning their sexuality?
9. What are some of the changes taking place as far as widow sexuality is concern?

10. What is the prevalence of widows seeking reproductive health services?

11. Are widows on targeted for reproductive health?

Appendix D: Opinion Leaders Interview Schedule for *Christian Influence on Widows' Sexuality among the Abanyole of Emuhaya, Western Kenya.*

Dear respondent, this study in which you are about to participate is being conducted by a student from Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology. The study seeks to examine Christian Perception of widows' sexuality among *Abanyole* of Emuhaya, Western Kenya. I am grateful that you have made time to avail valuable information the subject. You are the expert in this matter and if you do not help write your story, someone will misrepresent it.

1. What is the *Abanyole*'s general behavior on women?
2. What is the space the *Abanyole* assign to women?
3. What is the prevalence of widows among *Abanyole*?
4. What is the *Abanyole*'s view about a widow?
5. What are the experiences of a widow among *Abanyole*?
6. What are the needs of a widow?
7. How does *Abanyole* culture address the needs of widows?
8. How does the *Abanyole* culture integrate widows into the society as whole persons?
9. How are widows expected to behave sexually? Why? Is sex important for a widow?
Why?
10. Can a widow allow herself to have sex with someone else?
11. Where did widows among *Abanyole* get information concerning their sexuality?
12. What are some of the cultural sexual practices that widows are expected to undergo among *Abanyole*?

13. What changes are there on these practices? Why?

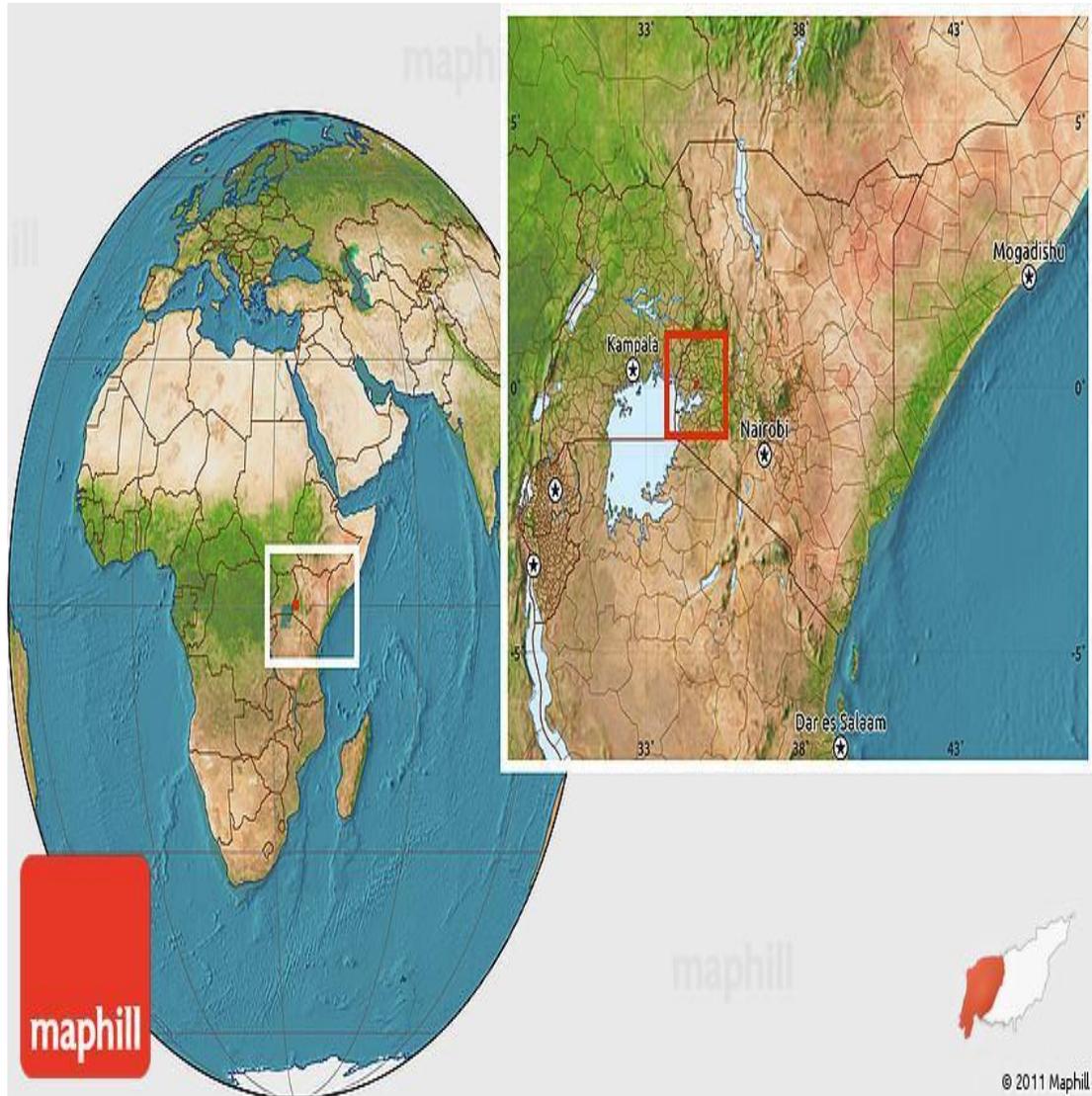
14. What is the future of widows' sexual behavior among *Abanyole*?

Appendix E: Focus Group Discussions Guide for *Christian Influence on Widows' Sexuality among the Abanyole of Emuhaya, Western Kenya.*

Dear respondent, this study in which you are about to participate is being conducted by a student from Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology. The study seeks to examine Christian Perception of widows' sexuality among the *Abanyole* of Emuhaya, Western Kenya. I am grateful that you have made time to avail valuable information the subject. You are the expert in this matter and if you do not help write your story, someone will misrepresent it.

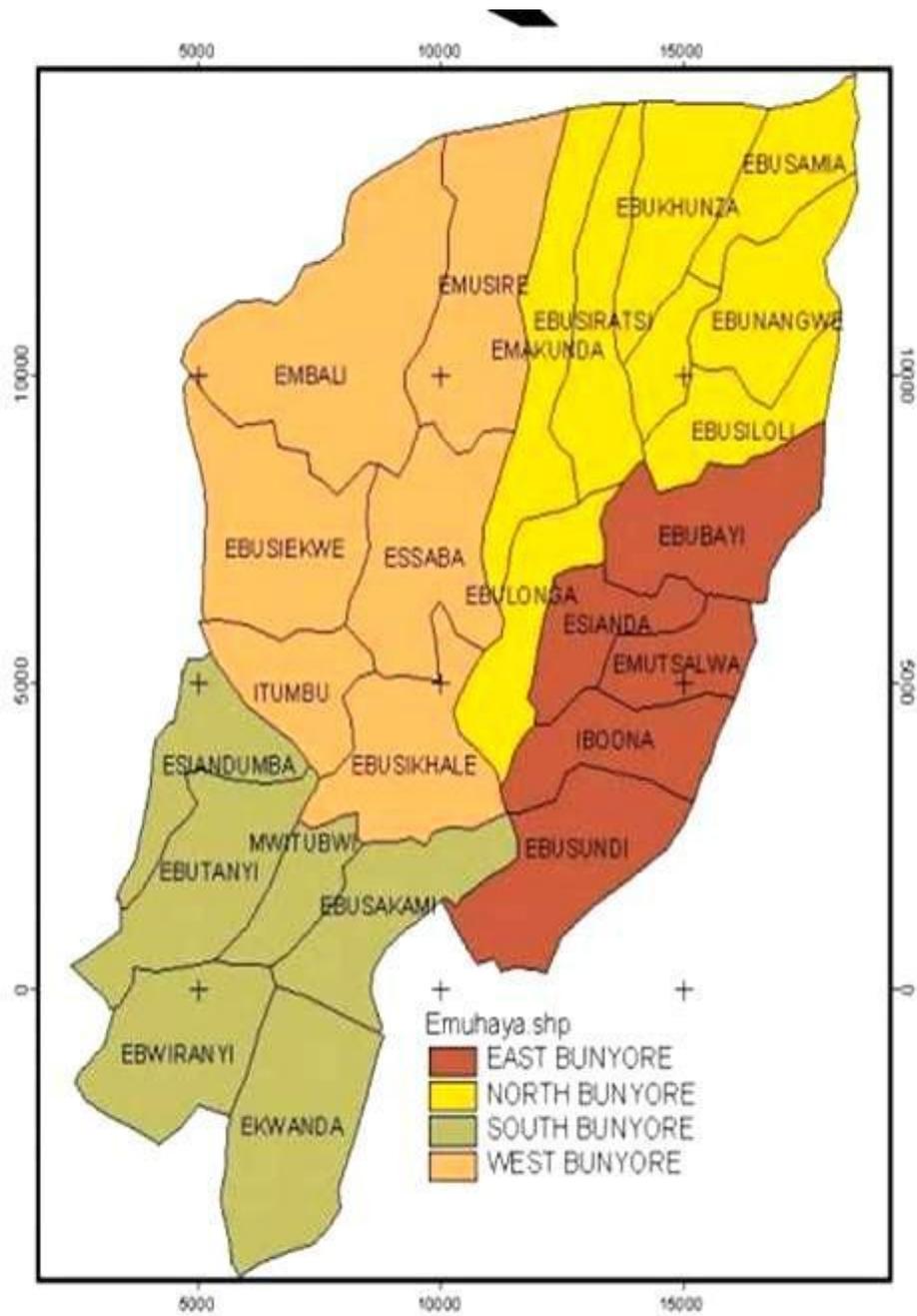
1. What is the prevailing cultural perception on widows' sexuality among the *Abanyole* of Emuhaya?
2. What are prevailing attitudes widows' have on their sexuality among the *Abanyole* of Emuhaya?
3. What are the prevailing Christian perceptions on widows' sexuality among the *Abanyole* of Emuhaya?
4. What are the factors responsible for the prevailing Christian perception on widows' sexuality among the *Abanyole* of Emuhaya?

Appendix F: Map showing the study area in relation to the map of Africa and Kenya.



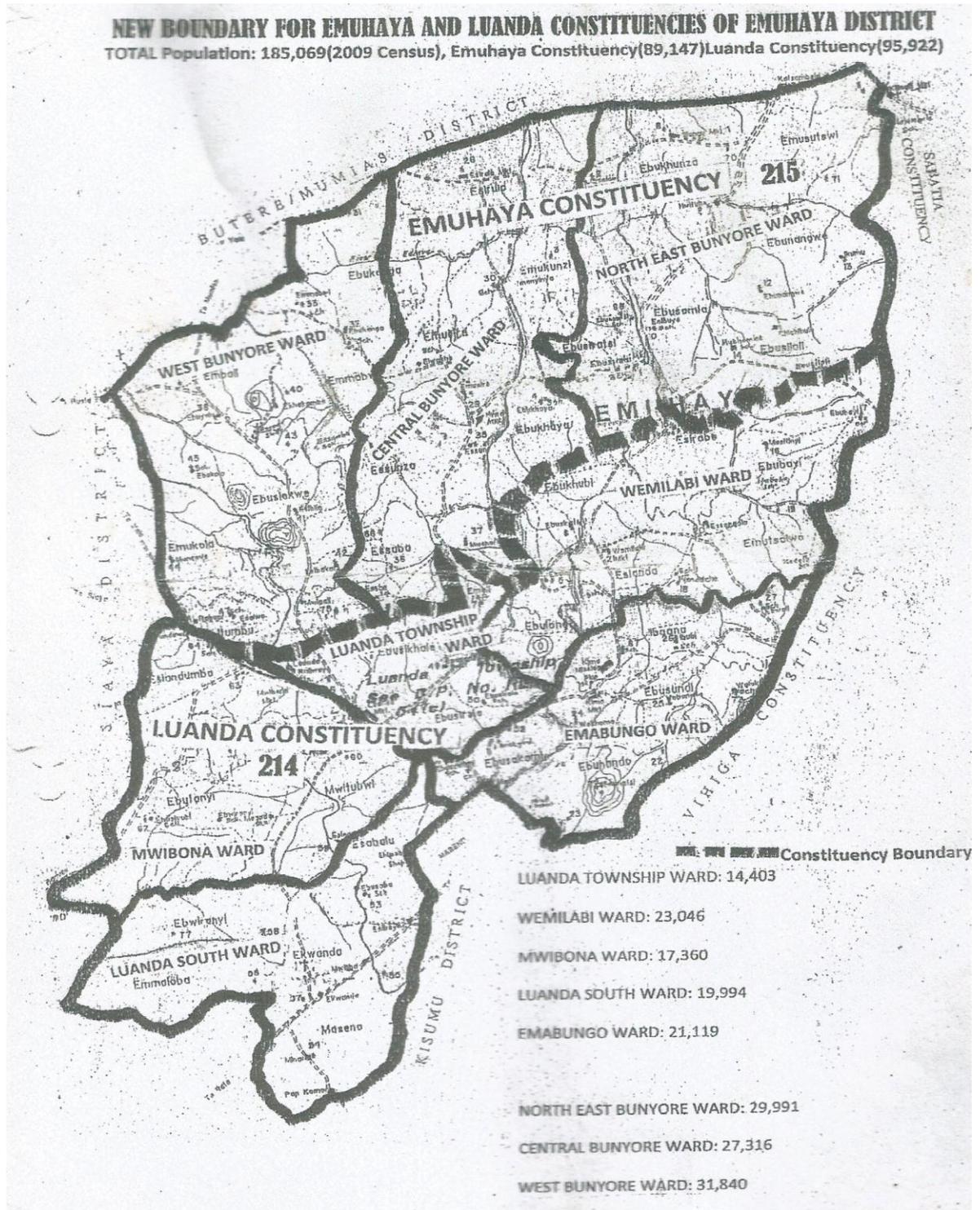
Source: Google Maps

Appendix G: Map Showing Former Administrative Units of the Study area

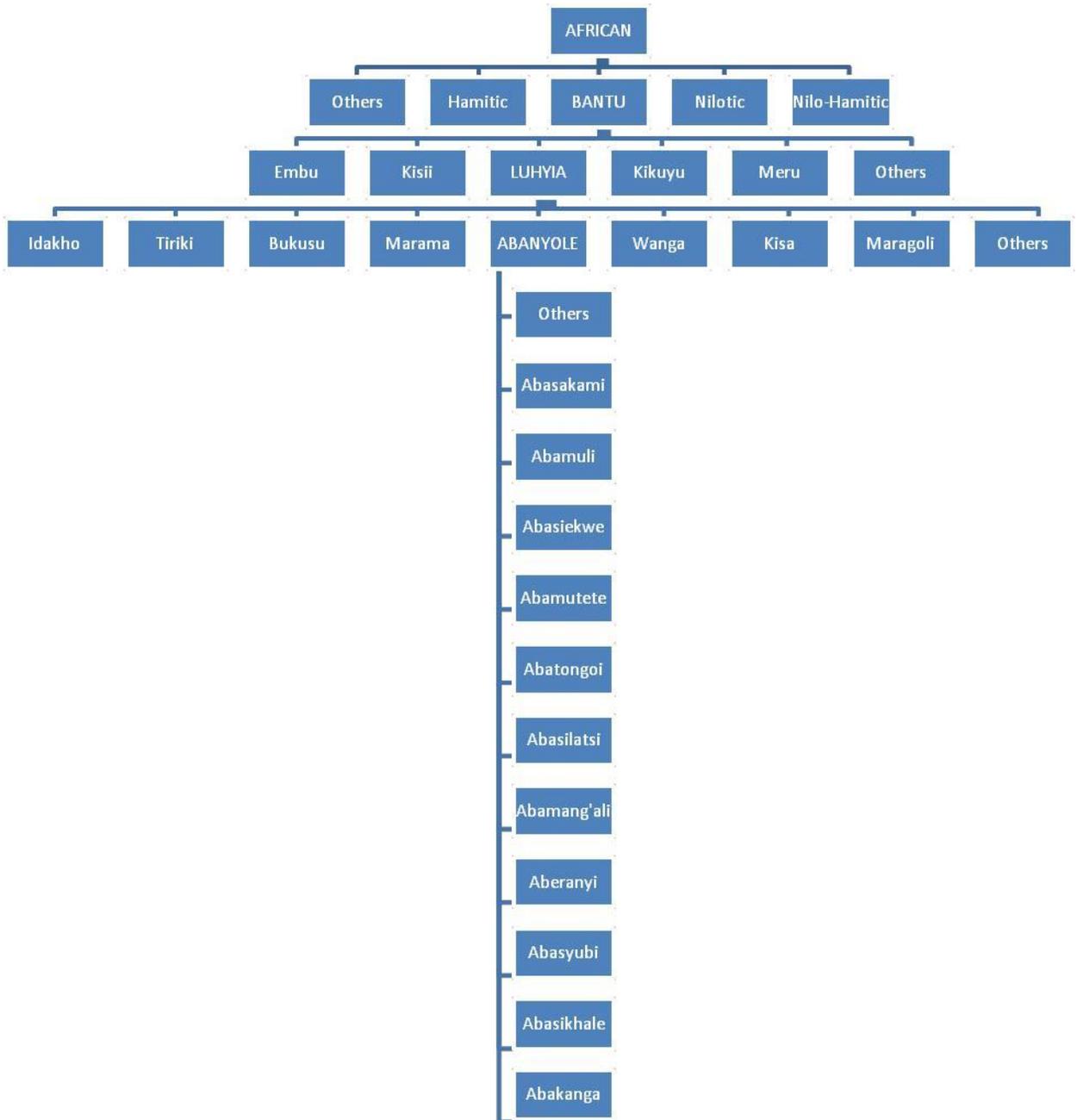


Source: Alati 2016, 75

Appendix H: Map Showing Current Political Boundaries of the Study area



Appendix I: The Clan Tree of the *Abanyole* of Emuhaya in relation to other people groups



Source: Alela 2007, 257

Appendix J: Clearance letter from Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology



MASINDE MULIRO UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY (MMUST)

Tel: 056-30870
Fax: 056-30153
E-mail: sgs@mmust.ac.ke
Website: www.mmust.ac.ke

P.O Box 190
Kakamega – 50100
Kenya

Office of the Dean (School of Graduate Studies)

Ref: MMU/COR: 509079

Date: 3rd February 2016

Moses Siboi Okonda
REL/H/06/12
P.O. Box 190-50100
KAKAMEGA

Dear Mr. Okonda

RE: APPROVAL OF PROPOSAL

Following communication from the Departmental Graduate Studies Committee and the Faculty Graduate Studies Committee, I am pleased to inform you that the Board of the School of Graduate Studies meeting held on 22nd January 2016 considered and approved your Doctor of Philosophy proposal entitled: *'Christian Perception on Widows' Sexuality among Abanyole of Emuhaya, Western Kenya'* and appointed the following as supervisors:

1. Prof. Jack Nandi - Departmental of Social Sciences Education - MMUST
2. Dr. Loreen Maseno-Ouma - Departmental of Social Sciences Education - MMUST

You are required to submit through your supervisor(s) progress reports every three months to the Dean SGS. Such reports should be copied to the following: Chairman, Faculty of Education and Social Sciences Graduate Studies Committee and Chairman, Social Science Education. Kindly adhere to research ethics consideration in conducting research.

It is the policy and regulations of the University that you observe a deadline of three years from the date of registration to complete your PhD thesis. Do not hesitate to consult this office in case of any problem encountered in the course of your work.

We wish you the best in your research and hope the study will make original contribution to knowledge.

Yours Sincerely,

PROF. HENRY KEMONI
EXECUTIVE DEAN, SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES

Appendix K: Clearance letter from NACOSTI



NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION

Telephone: +254-20-2213421,
2241349,3310571,2219420
Fax: +254-20-318245,318249
Email: dg@nacosti.go.ke
Website: www.nacosti.go.ke
when replying please quote

9th Floor, Utalii House
Uhuru Highway
P.O. Box 30623-00100
NAIROBI-KENYA

Ref No.

Date:

NACOSTI/P/16/53099/10600

29th April, 2016

Moses Siboi Okonda
Masinde Muliro University of
Science and Technology
P.O. Box 190-50100
KAKAMEGA.

RE: RESEARCH AUTHORIZATION

Following your application for authority to carry out research on "*Christian perception on widows' sexuality among Abanyole of Emuhaya, Western Kenya,*" I am pleased to inform you that you have been authorized to undertake research in **Vihiga County** for the period ending **29th April, 2017.**

You are advised to report to **the County Commissioner and the County Director of Education, Vihiga County** before embarking on the research project.

On completion of the research, you are expected to submit **two hard copies and one soft copy in pdf** of the research report/thesis to our office.


BONIFACE WANYAMA
FOR: DIRECTOR-GENERAL/CEO

Copy to:

The County Commissioner
Vihiga County.

The County Director of Education
Vihiga County.

Appendix L: Clearance letter from Vihiga County Commissioner

REPUBLIC OF KENYA



**OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT
MINISTRY OF INTERIOR AND COORDINATION OF NATIONAL GOVERNMENT**

Email: vihigacc1992@gmail.com
Telephone: Vihiga 0771866800
When replying please quote

**COUNTY COMMISSIONER,
VIHIGA COUNTY,
P.O. BOX 75-50300,
MARAGOLI.**

REF: VC/ED 12/1 VOL.1/171

28th July, 2016

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

RE: RESEARCH AUTHORIZATION – MOSES SIBOI OKONDA.

This is to introduce to you Mr. Moses Siboi Okonda is a student at Masinde Muliro University of Science and technology Kakamega Campus to carry out research on “*Christian perception on widows sexuality among Abanyole of Emuhaya*” in Vihiga County Western Kenya for a period ending 29th April, 2017 to enable him write a project/thesis as required of him by the university.

Kindly accord him all the necessary support.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Erastus M. Keya', with a stylized flourish.

**ERASTUS M. KEYA
FOR: COUNTY COMMISSIONER
VIHIGA COUNTY**

cc.

The Director General
National Commission for Science Technology (Yours Ref.NACOSTI/P/16/53099/10600
P. O. Box 30623-00100 **dated 29th April 2016)**
NAIROBI.

Appendix M: Clearance letter from County Director of Education, Vihiga

**MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY
STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**

Telegrams:
Telephone: (056) 51450
When replying please quote



COUNTY EDUCATION OFFICE,
VIHIGA COUNTY,
P.O. BOX 640,
MARAGOLI.

REF: CDE/VC/ADM/24/167

28th July, 2016

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

**RE: AUTHORITY TO CONDUCT RESEARCH
MOSES SIBOI OKONDA**

Reference is made to letter No. NACOSTI/P/16/53099/10600 dated 29th April, 2016.

Permission is hereby granted to the above named student from Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology Kakamega Campus to carry out research on "***Christian perception on widows' sexuality among Abanyole of Emuhaya,***" in Vihiga County, Western Kenya for a period ending 29th April, 2017, to enable him write a project/thesis as required of him by the University.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Alice Sitienei'.

Alice Sitienei
For: County Director of Education
VIHIGA COUNTY

C.C
County Commissioner
VIHIGA

**Appendix N: Clearance letter from the Arch Bishop of Church of God in East Africa
Kenya**

CHURCH OF GOD IN EAST AFRICA (K)

HEAD OFFICE: KIMA

OFFICIALS

Archbishop

Deputy Archbishop I- Administration

Deputy Archbishop II: Guidance & Counselling

General Secretary Administrative Co-ordinator



P.O BOX 160 – 40105, MASENO

E-MAIL: churchofgodeag@yahoo.com

WEBSITE: www.churchofgodeafricak.org

OFFICIALS:

National Treasurer

Director, Human Resource and management

National Chairperson of Women Ministry

National Chairperson of Youth Ministry

Our Ref:.....

Your Ref:.....

Date: 09/08/2016

Rev. Moses Siboi,
Associate Director,
Christian Education,
Kima Mission Station.

Dear Moses,

Greetings,

This is to notify you that the Executive Committee of the General Assembly's Executive Council meeting at Kima Mission Station **on August 3, 2016** approved your request to interview some of our church faithful of your choice as part of your University – based doctoral research.

It is our prayer that God blesses you with a successful research, the results of which we hope to be made aware of.

Yours in Him,


Most Rt. Rev. Dr. Byrum A. Makokha,
Archbishop Church of God East Africa (Kenya).

CC. Executive Committee Members

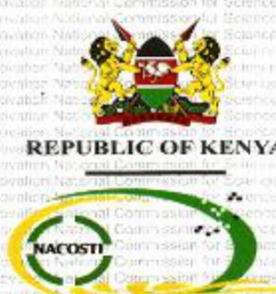
SUBORDINATE AGENCIES / MINISTRIES

Education, Youth Ministries, Women Ministries, Urban Ministries, Communications, Health Care Services, Stewardship & Financial Planning, Christian Centre, Legal Services, Theological Education, Church of God Properties Company, Cell Life Church Concept, Evangelism & Outreach, Chaplaincy & Counselling, Convention Retreat & Replis, Inventory Plots & Archives, Small Income Generation, Literature – Music & Media communications Programs, Compassionate Ministries, Child Development & Vocational Training.

Appendix O: Research Permit

CONDITIONS

- 1. You must report to the County Commissioner and the County Education Officer of the area before embarking on your research. Failure to do that may lead to the cancellation of your permit**
- 2. Government Officers will not be interviewed without prior appointment.**
- 3. No questionnaire will be used unless it has been approved.**
- 4. Excavation, filming and collection of biological specimens are subject to further permission from the relevant Government Ministries.**
- 5. You are required to submit at least two(2) hard copies and one(1) soft copy of your final report.**
- 6. The Government of Kenya reserves the right to modify the conditions of this permit including its cancellation without notice**


REPUBLIC OF KENYA
NACOSTI
National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation

RESEARCH CLEARANCE PERMIT

Serial No. A 8883

CONDITIONS: see back page

THIS IS TO CERTIFY THAT:

MR. MOSES SIBOI OKONDA
of MASINDE MULIRO UNIVERSITY OF
SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY, 0-50307
Luanda, has been permitted to conduct
research in Vihiga County

on the topic: CHRISTIAN PERCEPTION
ON WIDOWS' SEXUALITY AMONG
ABANYOLE OF EMUHAYA, WESTERN
KENYA

for the period ending:
29th April, 2017

Permit No. : NACOSTI/P/16/53099/10600
Date of Issue : 29th April, 2016
Fee Received :Ksh. 2000


Applicant's Signature


Director General
National Commission for Science, Technology & Innovation