

Public Relations Strategies and Harmful Cultural Practices against Widows among the Igbos in Nigeria

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Abstract

This study was engaged in to assess the impact and potentials of public relations strategies on tackling the issues of harmful cultural and traditional widowhood practices among the Igbo in Nigeria. Particular emphasis was on mediation, negotiation and community practices as the PR strategies. Both descriptive and inferential statistics were used to achieve the objectives and answer the research questions. The study generated primary data from a sample of 400 selected respondents representing the five states of core Igboland. The sample was selected using multi-staged sampling techniques. Results from the use of descriptive statistics and inferential statistics of logistic regression shows that public relations strategies have made significant impact on fighting harmful widowhood practices yet the potentials have not been significantly harnessed. The odd ratios of the variables are large at 10.703 for mediation, 8.967 for negotiation, and 13.736 community practices, showing that, any unit increase will create about 11, 9, and 14 more likelihoods for reduction in harmful widowhood practices among the Igbos. The study therefore concluded that public relations strategies have the capacity to change the people's attitude especially the women who are in the fore front of enforcing the harmful widowhood practices. Hence, the study recommended that every effort should be made to encourage and sensitize women with the best of PR strategies by expert targeting mostly the women.

Keywords: Public Relations Strategies, Harmful Cultural Practices, Widowhood Rites, Gender Based Violence, Igboland, Nigeria.

Introduction

Widowhood as a cultural practice is one of the long-established traditions that have been transmitted from generation to generation from time immemorial (Nnodim, 2012; Nwaoga, Uroko, Okoli & Okwuosa, 2021). Ekpenyong, Gibson, Essien and Oboqua (2020), Widowhood as a condition of bereavement entails a one losing a spouse or life partner with whom life and existence has been horned for a good period. To Ajayi (2020), widowhood comes with agony, pains and deep sense of loss which often lead to misery in some people.

To Mba (1992), Agumagu (2007), Idialu (2012), Nwogu, (2015), Anichebe (2023), widowhood is a state or period of being widowed and the directly affected spouse becoming a widow or widower. Being a widow or widower to Ajayi (2020), is not a bad thing as it is natural for only God to permits life and death of one's spouse, but the practices and actions meted at the deceased's spouse especially to the women (widow) is what many have frowned at (Azikiwe 1994; Okororji, 2004; Isidienu & Ibeh, 2021). Scholars, Anugwom, (2011), Owete and Odili (2015), Adeyemo (2016), Chukwu (2022), Ugwukah and Ume-Ezeoke (2024), have raised issues that some widowhood practices are embellished with dehumanising and oppressive traditional practices normally forced on mostly the women (widows) by the deceased husband's clan, family and relatives. To Eze, Egwuagu and Namani (2024), widowhood tradition has in it some discriminatory and harmful cultural practices directed against women. Widowhood practices in Nigeria often result in mistreatment of widows as they are subjected to humiliating cultural practices and rites (Okoye, 1995; Idialu, 2012)

The issue of widowhood practices particularly in south-east Nigeria has received reasonable attention in the literature because of the gender biasness embedded in it. To Umezina (2007) Isidienu and Ibeh (2021), there are certain cultural imbalances in the practices of widowhood by the widowed. The traditions are particularly harder on women than men as widowhood to the women involves degrees of physical, emotional and psychological hardship, deprivation, ritual contaminations, and socio - economic trauma (Oreh, 2014).

The widows who are the chief mourner of her husbands in many cases are made to pass through, ritual seclusion (*ino na nso or nkpe*), programmed wailing, sitting on the floor without sleep, sleeping or sitting next to the husband's corpse, oath ritual, shaving of hair, tying up of hands in rags, forceful bath on her husband's grave, drinking water used in bathing the husband's corpse, stipulated period of mourning, visitors dropping her condolence gifts on the ground, widow inheritance (forceful remarriage), wearing of black or white mourning outfit, disinheritance (especially in the absence of a son). Generally, these heinous treatments are made worst for a younger widow who has no grown up sons or children (Genyi & George-Genyi, 2013). To Nwaogugu (1989), Umezina (2007), the harmful widowhood practices are more pronounced in women because women are more likely to be widowed than men. Okafor and Akokuwe (2015), supported this assertion by asserting that it is also a cultural thing for a woman to marry a man far older thereby risking being accused husband's death.

While many disputes and issues have been created around the communities of Igbo land by these widowhood practices, several efforts have been made to tackle the challenges arising yet it appears the efforts are not yielding the desired fruits. On this note, one begins to think whether the effective public relations strategies have actually been used by qualified public relations practitioners. This is because Public Relations (PR) as a complex and dynamic process of negotiation having assisted in the management of community in developing policy and communication (Uduji et al, 2021a, 2021b, 2021c). As an art and science, PR analyze trends, predicts their consequences, counsel leaders of organization/society and

implements planned programs for the benefit of the public (Black, 1989; Jafkins, 1998; Oliver, 1997; Mexican International Public Relations Association, 2020; Nwanmuoh et al, 2024a, 2024b). As a management function, PR evaluates public attitude, identifies the policies and procedures of an individual, community or organization with the public interest and executes a program of action to earn public understanding and acceptance (Nwanmuoh et al, 2022). To Nwaoga, et al (2021), Nwanmuoh et al (2021), PR is a simple communications processes between companies, organizations communities or individuals and the general public hence, management of disputes in society requires the use of Public relations strategies and conflict resolution procedures. Because according to Rahim (2002), Sharma (2020), public relations is a strategic communication process use to build mutually beneficial relationship with the public, proper application of PR strategies like mediation, negotiation, community relations, media relations on the issue of widowhood practices will definitely lessen, eliminate, or end conflict emanating thereon.

Statement of the Problem

In Igboland majorly the states of Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo, widowhood practices have continued to be antithetical to social justice and freedom. The Igbo woman who suddenly becomes a widow is often imperiled to unspeakable brutality to which she is expected to wholly obey. The suppression of widows to inhuman treatments including torture, seclusion, unethical rituals and all manners of dehumanizing action remains scarcely attend to as violation of fundamental human rights. widows are continuously made feel miserable, wretched and guilty over their loss as they are often seen and treated as ill-luck goat to be avoided in attempt to prevent spreading infection to other women. The widow's situation is so dire that she dares not secretly attempts to attend to her personal hygiene, else, she might be whipped, spat on or reprimanded for making attempts beautify herself in order to lure more men to her death trap. A horrible situation that is capable of denying the widow ability to maintain her self-esteem. Widows in Igboland are subjected to societal discrimination, victimization and stigmatization as if it is their choice to be a widows.

Irrespective of numerous campaigns and strategies adopted in the past to curtail this phenomenon, these discriminations regrettably persist, which has culminated in the enactment of national and international treaties and instructions on women emancipation and empowerment. Yet, such laws appear not to have yielded the desired results. What remains unclear is whether the right public relations strategies have been adopted and if the right experts have been consulted in the usage.

Noted is the fact that the Igbo society is prominent for its patriarchal practices where men are the heads of families and family inheritance are shared among the male children of the family, but this harmful widowhood practices against the women cannot be fully attributed to the patriarchy nature of Igbo society. Unfortunately, the perpetrators and enforcers of widowhood practices are women especially the co-wives (*ndi-iyomu*) and the *Umuada* or *Umuokpu* (daughters of the land married or unmarried). discriminates against women and

subjects them to a subordinate position. It is these category of women that enforce the depriving of their fellow women (widows) their legal rights and opportunities, restrict their mobility, and reject their freedom over themselves as well as their properties. It is on the basis of the fact that the cry is to save the womanhood from herself that this study was set to investigate the impact public relations strategies have played and will continue to play in reducing or eliminating totally harmful cultural and traditional practices masqueraded in the widowhood practices among the Igbos of Nigeria.

Therefore, this paper contributes to the debate of the harms of widowhood practices on womanhood from the angle of effective use of public relations strategies in fighting harmful cultural practices against widows in South East Nigeria by attempting to find answers to the following research questions:

- What is the level of prevalence of harmful widowhood practices in Igboland of Nigeria?
- What is the position and efforts of women in handling widowhood practices in Igboland of Nigeria?
- What is the effect of public relations strategies (mediation, community relations, and negotiations strategy) on fighting harmful cultural practices against widows in Igboland of Nigeria?

Hypothesis Development

Widowhood practices in Nigeria involves torturing and dehumanizing the widows and making them to undergo series of rituals. Okoye (1995), Oloko (2001), summate that in different parts of the country, widowhood is associated with rituals and taboos, which are degrading and inhuman. Laolu (2000) confirms that a widow goes into confinement for seven days in which she is not allowed to go out, or take her bath or change her clothes, she is expected to sit on bare floor, or a mat at best. On further clarification, Fasonranti & Aruna (2007) reported that in some Yoruba communities, a widow is expected to eat from broken plates and cook with broken pots and on the seventh day, hair is shaved to serve the bond between her and the dead husband.

The south-east widows are kept in a room for days and are sometimes deprived of access to food, drink and water especially the ones used for the burial rituals of their husband. They are often made to shave the hair on their heads and their pubic with razor blades, to prove their innocence in relation to their husband's death. These rituals are enforced by the *Umuada* or *Umuokpu* (married daughter of the clan or community) or even the *ndi-iyomu di* (wives of the brothers of the deceased from the same clan or community) as the case may be in Igbo land.

These issues about the management of harmful culture practices against widows have not been solved as a result of the government, traditional institutions and town union governments in South-East not using the appropriate public relations strategies. While several studies have recognized the importance of traditional institutions to address the harmful practices, this study is not negating the significance of traditional institutions as

the primary stewards of culture, given the direct and indirect relevance of dispute resolution in Nigeria society, the work simply emphasizes that public relations strategies which encompasses a wide variety of public relations tactics that come within the conflict resolution categories such as mediation, negotiation, community engagement and media relations is the magic wand that may not have been applied. Therefore, this study is well-positioned to evaluate how well public relations strategies have been used to resolve harmful cultural practices against widows among the Igbo in Nigeria. To this we hypothesized that:

- Igbo women have not made any deliberate and significant efforts in handling widowhood practices in Igboland of Nigeria
- Public relations strategies (mediation, community relations, and negotiations strategy) have not made any significant impact on fighting harmful cultural practices against widows in Igboland of Nigeria.

Relevant Literature and Theoretical Underpinning

Concept Widowhood

Widowhood is simply a condition of a man or woman being widowed (Anichebe, 2023), to Andrew and Ashibi (2022), widowhood arises when one loses his/her spouse, hence it can be said to be the state of being a former wife or husband of a deceased spouse. On this note, when a man loses his wife, he becomes a widower and when a woman loses her husband, she becomes a widow (Opata et al, 2021). To Chukwu (2022), Okolo-Obasi et al (2021a, 2021b), widowhood is not strictly for women, yet most time when the word widowhood is mentioned people simply think about a woman whose husband is dead. Like Encyclopedia of Death and Dying (2008), Oreh (2014), Ekpenyong et al (2020) emphasized, a widow is a young or an old woman whose marriage was formally contracted under the customary marriage act or any religious act but along the line her husband died and she did not remarry. To Eze, Egwuagu and Namani (2024) such a woman is left alone to shoulder the responsibilities she shared with her deceased husband in the past. Iguh and Oti-Onyema (2020), added that if the above case is turned around, the man is called a widower. Hence, being a former wife, a widow must be an adult woman.

Widowhood Practices

Widowhood practices are cultural and traditional practices (including all actions or activities in favour or against) which a widow or widower is expected to strictly adhere to during the stipulated period of mourning of their spouse (Akpunne & Ajetunmobi 2024). To Anuforo et al (2024), most of these activities are enforced on the widow/widower by the relatives or non-relatives of the deceased in fulfilment of rites during the mourning period. In the eastern part of Nigeria, widowhood practices especially those targeted at the widows is a serious matter which many scholars (Genyi & George-Genyi, 2013; Owete & Odili, 2015; Opata et al, 2021) and policy makers have termed as are barbaric and inhumane. Yet, most

of the atrocious treatments meted out on widows are enforced by the *Umuadas*, *Umuokpu* or *Ndiyom* in fulfillment of cultural and traditional rites.

Some of the widowhood practices in Igbo Land, their meaning and rationale include:

Ritual Seclusion (*Ino na nso* or *nkpe*) where the widow is being isolated and restricted as is considered as tainted and unclean until purified (Eze et al 2024). Programmed wailing, a case where the widow is forced to wails to the hearing of neighborhood every early morning before and after the funeral of the husband in demonstration of grief over her husband (Nwogu, 2015). Sitting on the floor during the mourning period; in this case the *Umuada* compels the widow to sit on the floor as a sign of dethronement of her pride by the death of her husband (Nnodim, 2012). Sleeping or sitting next to the husband's corpse, this is a situation where the widow is mandated to sit or lie by her husband's corpse to accord the deceased respect and to enjoy his company for the last time (Opata et al, 202; Anuforo et al, 2024)). Others are; Oath ritual, which is performed mostly when the widow is being suspected of having a hand in the husband's death. She will be forced to drink the water used in bathing the corpse as a proof of innocence (Nzeakor & Osondu, 2013). This is seen as moral deterrent to other married women who are in anticipation of killing their own husband. Forceful shaving of the widow's hair; it is compulsorily in most Igboland that a widow's hairs are shaved to make her less attractive and womanly incomplete. This is because it is believed that beauty of a woman is only for her husband (Eze, Egwuagu & Namani, 2024). Tying up of both hands of the widow together with rag; in some communities of Igboland, the widow's hands are tied together as soon as the husband's death is announced until a day after he has been buried (Egbue, 2014). Within this period, the widow is forbidden from eating with her hands simply to show her that she lost her freedom. Widows being forced to take bath on their husband's grave; in some parts of Igboland, a widow will be forced to bath standing on her late husband's grave in the presence of other male in-laws, she will be made to walk into the house naked demonstrating severance of relationship with the deceased (Iguh & Oti-Onyema, 2020).

More of the practices include, Stipulated period of mourning; often a widow is expected to mourn her husband compulsorily in mourning outfit as an outward show of grief for a stipulated long period ranging from three months to one year depending on location (Opata et al, 2021). Dropping of condolence gifts on the ground; in many places of Igboland, a widow is forbidden from stretching her hand to receive condolence gift, visitors that come to see her must drop their gift on the ground for the widow (Izehiwa, Obasi & Ebenebe, 2020; Dube, 2023;) noted that, with such practice, exchanging greeting with handshake with anybody is curtailed.

Forceful inheritance of Widow (*Nkuchi Nwanyi*); many widows have been forced to remarry the husband's brother or a close relative if at all she wants to share in the family inheritance (Akpunne & Ajetunmobi (2024). Wearing of black or white mourning outfit: widows are often forced to wear mourning clothes which are simply associated with evil so as to be noticed as a widow and one with an evil omen (Umezinwa, 2007; Oniye, 2008; Oreh, 2014). On extreme cases, Disinheritance of a widow are practiced. This follows the fact of the

patriarchal nature of Igboland which allows inheritance to go to only male children (Owete & Odili, 2015). According to Nwanmuoh et al (2022), in an event where a widow has no male child, she is not allowed to inherit any property of her husband.

The Concept of Public Relations (PR)

PR has been defined in many ways by scholars and practitioners like Nwosu (2009) who pointed out that PR is the "deliberate use of organized actions and persuasive communications to influence opinions and actions and by so doing, secure public sentiments or sympathy in favor of a cause". To Nwanmuoh et al (2024, 2025), these concise formulations made the extent and implications of the idea of public relations clear. However, stated differently, Nnabuko (2022), opines that its understanding of public relations extends more than the confines of corporate structure, hence suggests that there are broader restrictions on public relations activities outside of the business environment. Okwelle (2018) stated that PR includes forming alliance and forming connections both within and outside of government at all levels, as well as with social institutions, faith-based organizations, social groups, non-governmental organizations and community-based organizations. To Olaoluwa (2021), the objective of public relations is to achieve harmony between an organization and its publics. To this, Ezenwoko and Osagie (2014), Hung-Baesecke et al (2021) concludes that peaceful co-existence is the product of successful public relations functions, a mirror of a long -term mutually beneficial relationship and a state harmony.

Public Relations Strategies:

Mediation

According to Ogbuishi (2011), mediation is a public relations approach for settling disputes among parties the involvement of a third party who stands as the mediator. Here, public relations experts work fervently to sway and convince either side to engage in talks. To Ude-Akpeh et al (2019), Uduji and Okolo-Obasi, (2023b, 2023c) disagreement are most times resolved by effective use of this PR strategy as long as the PR specialist involves powerful community, religious or opinion leaders from both sides.

Negotiation

Adams et al (2023) noted that negotiation is a strategic conversation aimed at finding a mutually agreeable solution to a problem. Adding to this, Chukwu, Akpor and Wilfred (2021) implies that giving and receiving are necessary during negotiations as one or both sides may have to make certain compromises. To Awosemusi and Awofadeju (2023), the simplest and most successful public relations tactics for settling disputes is negotiation. To resolve conflicting thoughts or perspectives or at least, comprehend the varying viewpoints of the stakeholders, it essentially entails talks between the disputing parties and their friends (Chukwu, Akpor & Wilfred, 2021).

Community Relations

According to public relations practitioners Dorley and Garcia (2011), Ozioko and Abubakar (2019), community relations is a technique for developing mutually beneficial connections with selected groups with the long-term good of establishing reputation and trust. To Nweke (2001), members of the community, corporations and other institutions within it must practice interdependence, cooperation, collaboration, solidarity and unification. Nnabuko and Onyiaji (2021) Uduji and Okolo-Obasi (2020, 2021, 2022a), also added that community members should also make an effort to shun all forms of selfishness by working tirelessly towards a shared objective.

Media Relations

Ogbuoshi (2002) pointed out that another public relations strategy for settling disputes within a community is media usage, Newspaper, magazines, radio, television firm and other media are examples of mass media. In the words of, Adams et al (2023), Ogbuoshi (2002), Nwanmuoh et al (2025) Film is the effective medium of passing important information to the target audience; the audience hears and sees facts being discussed". Conflict resolution stories in the media have a significant influence, either directly or indirectly, for better or worse (Olaoluwa, 2021, Uduji and Okolo-Obasi (2022b 2022c, 2023a). By taking a neutral stance and presenting conflict as it is, without enabling emotion to be evaluated, the media may settle conflict situations without provoking stories, sensational captions, or playing to the gallery (Okwelle, 2018). These studies made it possible to comprehend the nature, scope, immediate as well as secondary causes of the crisis, which in turn inspire some concerned individuals to become involved and help bring about long lasting peace in the south east region (2018) Onyilo, Elijah & Habu, 2022).

Concept of Culture

Several scholars like Iguh and Oti-Onyema (2020) Opata et al (2021), Anuforo et al (2024), Akpunne and Ajetunmobi (2024), have underscored that the concept of culture has no single definition, but in all, culture is a system of learned and shared beliefs, language, norms, values and symbols that groups use to identify themselves, and provide a framework within which to live and work. To Uduji and Okolo-Obasi (2017, 2018, 2019), Isidienu and Ibeh (2021), Dube (2023), culture is the collection of common beliefs, values, practices, material products, symbols of communication in a particular society. Nnodim (2012), Nzeakor and Osondu (2013), Ajayi (2020), Okolo-Obasi & Uduji (2021, 2022, 2023), in their studies, noted that cultural relativism is the idea that cultural norms and values as specific or relative to a culture and should not be judged according to other cultural standards. The concept of culture did not recommend any harmful cultural practices against women and widows but like the bible says, when men slept, the enemy came and sow tares among the wheat (King James Bible Mathew 13:25. These harmful practices appears to have been introduced by evil hearted men in Igbo land (Nwanmuoh, 2024).

Male Preference Syndrome

Studies Nwaogugu (1989), Mba (1992), Azikiwe (1994), Okoye (1995) Okororji (2004), Agumagu (2007), Oniye (2008), Anugwom, (2011) Idialu (2012) Genyi and George-Genyi, (2013) Oreh (2014) Okafor & Akokuwe (2015), Chukwu (2022), Uduji et al (2019a, 2019b, 2019c, 2019d, 2020a, 2021a, 2021b, 2023, 2024a, 2024b), Ugwukah and Ume-Ezeoke (2024), Daphne (2024), and others are agog with the undue preference given to male children compared to their female counterpart. To Okolo-obasi et al (2025a, 2025b, 2025c) male sons are preferred under Igbo culture and the birth or arrival of a son is normally accompanied with big celebration and jubilation and funfair. Umezinwa (2007), Nwaoga, et al (2021), Nwanmuoh et al (2025) all agreed that the great premium placed on the birth of a son is often reflected in the names habitually given to the first male sons at birth, such as "*Nwokeabia, Obiechonna, Onochie, Nnamabia, Kamsiyo*" etc. Literally interpreted, these names connote and extol the importance of male children in the family. According to Uduji et al (2022a, 2022b, 2022c, 2023a, 2023d), even in at some homes, the girl-child is practically forced to perform all the chores, for the simple reason that she is a girl and the place of a girl is in the kitchen. To Egbue (2014), Sharma and Verma (2020), Okolo-Obasi et al (2024a, 2024b, 2024c), and others, this stereotype role is of course traceable to our culture. To cap the importance placed over male child compared to the girl child, Andrew & Ashibi (2022), noted that still in this century, the female children are still being trafficked by their parents for economic gains. This is the mentality that has been built into even the females that the death of a man is more painful than that of the woman, hence, the wife of the deceased man must suffer all the punishment that will be meted at her especially by fellow women.

Why Urgent Actions using PR Tools Are Needed

Many global strategies have been adopted in recent times for women empowerment (Asongu et al, 2019). Such strategies for advancement for women include the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action; the ICPD Programme of Action; the Beijins conference and other international declarations against violence against women and girls. Nwanmuoh (2022), noted that these global resurgent interests in feminist jurisprudence has culminated in the enactment of laws both at national, regional and international levels on women's rights. As a result of this, the role of public relations becomes imperative on this matter (Ozioko & Abubakar, 2019; Izehiuwa, Obasi & Ebenebe, 2020; Eze, Egwuagu & Namani, 2024). To Izehiuwa et al (2020), many cultural gender-based violence has become an accepted facts and normal way of life, yet, such harmful cultural practices against women causes much harm to women and children daily.

Public relations which consist of an incessant systematic process involving multiple public or group has the capacity to provide advice to organization's management, community and society concerning policies, relationship and communication aimed at maintaining mutual understanding, peaceful co-existence and accommodation (Hung-Baesecke et al, 2021, Nwanmuoh & Ngong, 2025). PR is also a designed and continuous effort to create, maintain

goodwill and reciprocate understanding between organizations and the public (Ajide et al, 2020). As an ideal family offers structure, predictability, safety within members with maturity and contribute in the community welfare, the negative outcome of harmful cultural practices against widows often times, impacts the entire family psychologically and socially (Donald et al, 2010; Fernando, 2013; Nwanmuoh et al, 2024a, 2024c). But with PR counseling management which involves seminar, conference, symposium, town hall meeting, education, crisis management and advisory in organization or community for the purpose of mutual understanding and peaceful co-existence among the people, so many issues of turbulent natures have been handled (Nwanmuoh & Udu, 2023).

These economic and social exclusion of widows especially in Igboland remains a reality that calls for collective awareness and urgent action on the part of governments, traditional institutions, town union governments and civil society organizations. It is therefore imperative for public relations practitioners to employ the public relations strategies, develop inclusive policies and legal reforms to protect the right of windows and ensure their equal access to economic opportunities, education and health services and to eliminate gender-based discrimination against widows. To Nnodim (2012), Egbue (2014), a holistic approach involving all relevant stakeholders, is essential to build sustainable and effective solutions. Furthermore, Adams et al (2023), Nwanmuoh et al (2024b, 2024d) positioned that raising public and community awareness is crucial to changing the attitudes and beliefs that underpin the exclusion of widows. Increased education on women's rights and gender equality is necessary to transform attitudes and beliefs and to promote a culture of inclusion and respect (Jekfins, 1988). The public relations transfer process model for converting negative attitude to positive ones.

Tolerance and understanding may be admirable public relations objectives, but it is difficult to tolerate something which is improperly understood Nwanmuoh & Ngong (2025). It is essential to consider each of four negative situations.

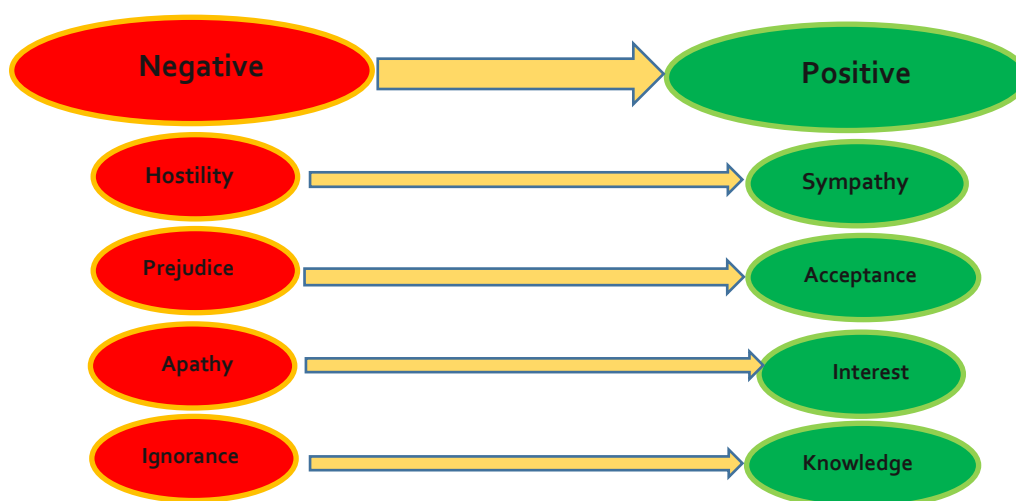


Figure 1: The Public Relations Transfer Process model

Source: Adapted with modification from Jekfin (1988)

Analysis Figure 1 shows that it is the role of public relations practitioners to arouse men cultural hostility against widows to sympathy. Also, it is the duty of the public relations experts to change such prejudices to acceptance in order to maintain mutual understanding in the community with the widows. Likewise, the PR experts has the obligation to convert the apathy of men and inspire their interest to maintain mutual understanding with the widows and avoid harmful cultural practices against them. This can be achieved using PR strategies in both social and traditional media to translate the ignorance of men into knowledge and awareness on how to handle the fight against harmful cultural practices against widows.

Theoretical Underpinnings

This study was anchored on two main theories – the cognitive dissonance theory (CDT) and the media dependency theory (MDT). While the CDT proposes that people have a motivational drive to reduce dissonance the MDT says that there is an integral relationship between audience, media and society. The CDT attempts to change the people's attitudes, beliefs, mindset and actions. According to Okwelle (2018), the cognitive dissonance theory to a large extent agrees with the public relations transfer model by (Jenkins, 1988) changing negative situation to positive ones. To Onyilo, Elijah and Habu (2022), dissonance is also reduced by justifying, blaming and denying. Nwanmuoh et al (2024c) noted that in a state of dissonance, people may feel surprise, dread, guilt, anger or embarrassment. To Chukwu, Akpor & Wilfred (2021), people are biased to think of their choices as correct, despite any contrary evidence. It is this biasness according to Hung-Baesecke et al (2021), Nwanmuoh and Udu (2023), that gives dissonance theory its predictive power, shedding light on otherwise puzzling and destructive behavior. It clarified the conditions that motivate individuals to change their negative opinions, attitude, beliefs or behavior for the good of society.

The MDT of Sandra and Melvin (1976) opines that the degree of dependency may vary from one to another, in the face of social changes, as people's dependency on media increases during conflicts. Hence, to Ude-Akpeh et al (2019), media has been one of the strategies public relations employed to solve conflicts in the society.

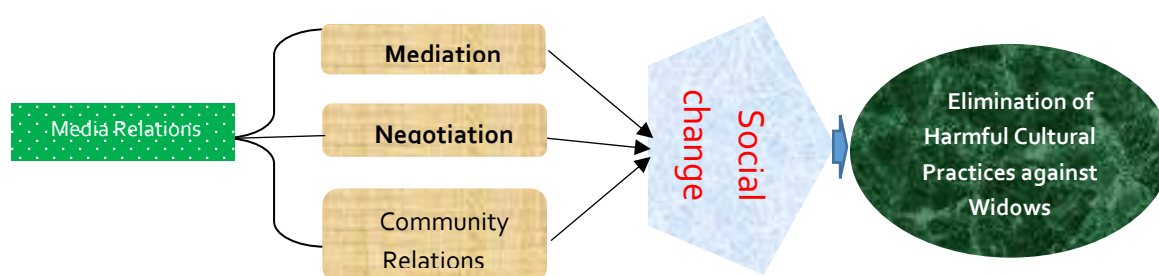


Figure 2: Conceptual flow of the study

Source: Authors' model (2025)

A model of public relations strategies for resolving harmful cultural practices conflict against widows. The objective of public relations is to achieve harmony between organizations or community and its publics. This goes to show that peaceful co-existence, respect for human rights are the essential products of successful public relations functions, a mirror of a long-term mutually beneficial relationship and a stable harmony among men and women in a community.

Method and Materials

Area of Study

This study was conducted in Nigeria's Igbo land. The core Igboland is found in the states of the South-East region comprising Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo states. According to Uduji et al (2019b), Nwanmuoh et al (2021, 2022a, 2022b, 2023, 2025), Okolo-obasi et al (2025), South-East region is made up of 95 Local Government Areas (LGAs) situated in a total land mass of about 29525Km². NBS (2023) estimated the total population of the region to about 21,955,414 with about 51% female and about 61% under 30 years. See Figure 1.

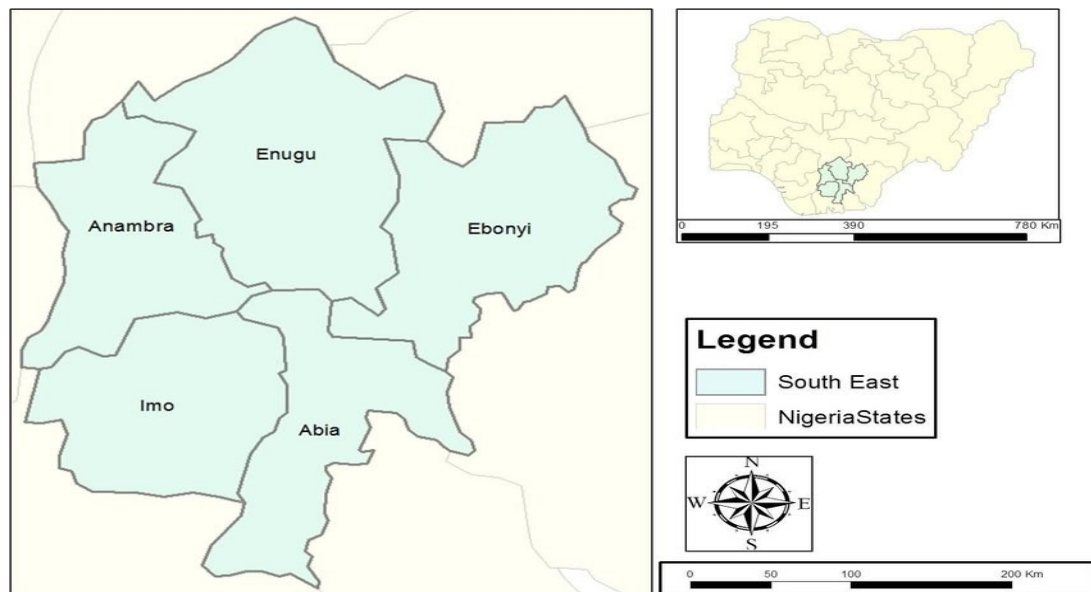


Figure 3: Map showing the constituent states of the South-East, Nigeria

Source: Adapted with modification from Nwanmuoh et al (2024a)

Research Design

The study adopted descriptive research designs to describe the influence of public relations strategies on the dependent variable (harmful cultural practices against widows). The descriptive research design explains the phenomenon with the aim of establishing the relationship between the variables. Hence, the descriptive design was deemed suitable in describing what PR strategies have done and will be able to do in the fight against harmful cultural practices against widows.

Sample size

We used the sample size determination formula developed by Yamane (1967) to compute the sample size we used in this study as follows:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e^2)} \quad (1)$$

Here, N stands for total or finite population of the study, while e stands for level of significance (Limit of tolerable error) and 1 is unity (constant)

$$n = \frac{10,907,606}{1 + 10,907,606(5^2)} = n = \frac{10,907,606}{27269.02} = n = 400$$

Sampling procedure

To select the respondents used for this study, we employed a multi-stage sampling method. In the stage one, two Local Government Areas (LGAs) each was selected from the five states one from the urban setting and the other from the rural setting to ensure that all the states are equitably represented in the sample size. In stage two, we listed all the communities in each of the selected LGA and purposefully selected four communities from each LGA. In the last stage we engaged the services of the community gate keepers in randomly selecting respondents from all the communities selected. Hence, 10 respondents were randomly selected from each community to give us a total of 40 respondents per LGA, at least 80 respondents per state, hence the total of 400 respondents as determined using Yamane (1967). The sample was distributed according to the population of the state as follows:

Table 1: Sample size determination table

States	Total Population of the State	% of Total S/E Population	Sample State	Sample per LGA
Abia	3,727,347	19	78	39
Anambra	5,527,809	24	97	48
Ebonyi	2,880,383	16	59	29
Enugu	4,411,119	19	77	39
Imo	5,408,756	22	89	45
Total	21,955,414	100%	400	200

Source: NPC, 2016/Authors' Calculation

Data collection

We collected both primary and secondary data, while the main data used was the primary data, secondary data came in hand to validate the outcomes from the primary data source. The primary data was collected with the aid of participatory research technique due to the fact that the perspective of the people under study stands very crucial. Structured questionnaire code named "Public Relations Strategies and Harmful Cultural Practices against widows (PRSHCPW) was the participatory research technique tools used for the survey. The PRSHPW questionnaire was administered directly to the respondents in a semi

structure interview manner as a suitable tool to assess qualitative issues by quantitative information.

Methods of Data Analysis

This study collected and analyzed both qualitative and quantitative data. While the qualitative data was analyzed using content analysis technique, quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive statistics and inferential statistic of multiple regressions. The descriptive statistics was done with SPSS version 26 to assess the different harmful cultural practices against widows in the region. The study identified three basic PR strategies which were measures against the identified harmful cultural practices. Findings from the descriptive statistics were presented in tables, charts and figures.

Model Specification

The effect of the three identified public relations strategies (mediation, negotiation and community relations) on harmful cultural practices against widows was tested using multiple regression equation. The predictors delineated from the literature review for these practices formed part of the elaborate model. These variables were tested following the works of Uduji et al (2024), adopted with modifications, the work stated the binominal response variables as a natural logarithm of the odds ratios as follows:

$$\text{Logit (SAM)} = \log\left(\frac{P_i}{1 - P_i}\right) = \alpha_0 + \alpha_1 X_{1...n} + \alpha_2 Y_{1...n} + \alpha_3 \delta_{1...n} + \alpha_4 \gamma_{1...n} + \mu$$

Where;

α_0 stands for the constant.

$\alpha_1 - \alpha_4$ stand for are unknown coefficients.

P_i stand for the probability of experiencing harmful widowhood practices.

$X_{1...n}$ stands for socio economic variables (Age, household size, occupation, income, etc.)

$Y_{1...n}$ Stands for of environmental variables

$\delta_{1...n}$ stands for variable associated with PR (mediation, negotiation, community relations.)

$\gamma_{1...n}$ stands for existing intervention programmes in the states.

μ stands for the stochastic error term.

Applying this to the variables in the current study, the model will have 18 independent variables as follows:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Logit (HWP)} &= \log\left(\frac{P_i}{1 - P_i}\right) \\ &= \alpha_0 + \alpha_1 \text{Age} + \alpha_2 \text{Gen} + \alpha_3 \text{Edu} + \alpha_4 \text{Rel} + \alpha_5 \text{Ms} + \alpha_6 \text{MoYin} \\ &\quad + \alpha_7 \text{Pri_Ocp} + \alpha_8 \text{HHze} + \alpha_9 \text{Loctn} + \alpha_{10} \text{PRM} + \alpha_{11} \text{PRN} + \alpha_{12} \text{PRC_R} \\ &\quad + \mu \end{aligned}$$

Where HWP is the dependent variable estimated by the listed harmful widowhood practices.

The dependent variable is:

Age = Age of the respondent (measured in number of years)

Gen = Sex of the respondent (which has a dummy of male or female)

Edu =Level of education of respondent (measured by number of years spent in acquiring formal education)

Pri_Ocp = Occupation of respondent (determined by employment status)

MoYin = Level of income of the respondent (determine in range normally extracted from the estimated expenditure as people are freer to disclose their expense than disclosing their income)

Ms = Marital Status of the respondent (measured by current stand in marriage as at the time of survey, whether single, married, widowed or divorced etc.)

Rel = Region of the respondent (measured by the determined religious practice whether ATR, Muslim or Christian etc.

HHze = Household size of the respondent (measure by number of people eating from same pot)

Loctn = Location of the respondent (measured by where one resides - rural, urban etc.)

Result of Findings

Socio- economic Characteristics

We commenced analysis of the data with description of some of the social (education etc), demographic (age, marital status etc), and economic (occupation, income) characteristic of the respondents to ensure that the differences in the socio-economic and demographic status of the respondents across the states are understood to make adequate assertions.

Table 2: Socio- economic Characteristics of the Respondents

Variables	Freq	%	Cum	Marital Status	Freq	%	Cum
Sex				Single	56	14	14
Female	255	64	64	Married	228	57	71
Male	145	36	100	Widowed	79	20	91
	400	100		Divorced/Separated	37	9	100
					400	100	
Age of Respondents				Household Size			
< 20 Years	10	3	3	1-4 Person	206	52	52
20-30Years	60	15	18	5-9 Person	110	28	79
31-40Years	81	20	38	10-14 Person	62	16	95
41-50 Years	101	25	63	> 15 Person	22	6	100
51-60 Years	56	14	77		400	100	
61-70 Years	49	12	89	Occupation			
> 70 Years	43	11	100	Farming	105	26	26
	400	100		Trading	134	34	60
Location				Fishing	15	4	64
Urban	174	44	44	Paid Employment	38	10	73
Rural	226	57	100	Handicraft	81	20	93
	400	100		Others	27	7	100
					400	100	

Level of Education				Monthly Income			
None	35	9	9	1000 - 100,000	149	37	37
Primary	163	41	50	101,000 - 200,000	118	30	67
Secondary	108	27	77	201,000 - 300,000	75	19	86
Tertiary	77	19	96	301,000 - 400,000	33	8	94
Others	17	4	100	401,000 - 500,000	14	4	97
	400	100		501,000 - 600,000	8	2	99
Religion				Above 600,000	3	1	100
Christians	230	58	58		400	100	
Muslim	22	6	63				
ATR	107	27	90				
None	41	10	100				
	400	100					

Source: Authors' computation

In analyzing (Table 2), we noted that while about 64% of the respondents are females, about 36% are females and only about 3% of the respondents are below 20years. Also, about 23% of the respondents are more than 60 years while about 37% are more than 50 years. With about 62% of the respondent more above 40 years, it shows that our respondents are well represented with people that are highly experienced to discuss harmful widowhood practices. The analysis also shows that while about 44% of the 400 respondents are urban based, about 56% are based in the rural centres with about 58% Christian, 6% Muslims and 37% practicing African Traditional Religion (ATR) and others. With about 91% of the respondent literate, this study believes that, public relations strategies with mass media should make significant effect on sensitizing the populace against harmful widowhood practices.

Awareness of harmful widowhood practices in Igboland by Location

The level of awareness of respondents varies from the urban cities to the rural centres, according to Ajayi (2020), Awosemusi and Awofadeju (2023), many may not know the depth and pains associated harmful cultural widowhood practices until it gets to them. To Sharma & Verma (2020), Anichebe (2023) the harmful widowhood practices is the confirmation of the Igbo axiom "*eberu ozu onyeozo o di ka ukwu nku*" literally translated to mean - when another person's corpse is being conveyed those unconcerned often see such as log of firewood. In this study we evaluated how aware the people are concerning the harmful cultural or traditional widowhood practices in Igboland.

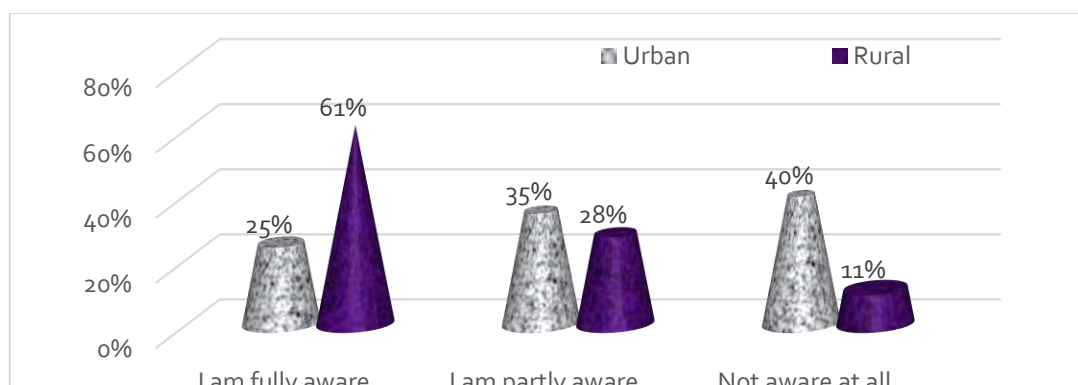


Figure 4: Distribution of Respondents by Awareness and residential Location

Source: Authors' computation

Analysis (Figure 4) shows that while only 25% of urban city dwellers are fully aware of the HWP and what it entails, the implication and involvement, about 61% of the rural dweller are fully aware. Likewise, while about 35% of the city dwellers are partially aware because they hear the stories, on watch on televisions, about 28% of the rural dwellers are aware but not fully in tune with the details because they have not shared personal experiences. Finally, about 40% of the respondents in the city are not aware at all not that they never heard stories but they can't imagine such exist, and only 11% of the respondents in the rural centre are not aware mainly due to their young age or the fact that they recently relocated. They are aware funeral rites exist but cannot explain the practices of HWP.

This finding confirms the assertions of Ozioko & Abubakar (2019), Nnabuko (2022) Ozioko & Abubakar (2019), Nnabuko (2022), in that while the society clamour for emancipation of the people from HWP, many have been convinced to believe it is a cultural practice which the gods of the land administer and manage by themselves.

Levels and Prevalence of Harmful widowhood practices in Igboland

The result of descriptive analysis of harmful widowhood prevalence among the Igbos of Nigeria is presented in Table 3 below.

Table 3: Levels of Prevalence of Harmful Traditional Widowhood Practices in Igboland.

Harmful Widowhood Practices (HWP)	Overall Status (%)	Abia (N=78)	Aambra (N=97)	Ebonyi (N=59)	Enugu (N=77)	Imo (N=89)
Ritual seclusion (<i>ino nso or nkpe</i>)	80.2	56(65.7%)	78(82.5%)	55(91.4%)	61(85.4%)	72(75.8%)
Programmed wailing	21.2	35(15.6%)	41(13.3%)	23(35.4%)	42(22.3%)	65(19.5%)
Sitting on the floor during mourning	29.2	46(21.5%)	41(32.4%)	42(41.3%)	34(28.4%)	59(22.3%)
Sleeping or sitting next to corpse	19.9	51(12.5%)	61(18.5%)	38(32.4%)	44(14.6%)	47(21.3%)
Oath ritual drinking corps water	9.1	48(10.4%)	58(8.7%)	41(14.5%)	32(5.6%)	56(6.1%)
Forceful shaving of hair	57.3	37(57.4%)	71(56.8%)	52(72.4%)	46(51.3%)	61(48.4%)
Tying both hands together in rags	17.5	54(10.5%)	58(9.5%)	31(15.4%)	58(45.6%)	52(6.3%)
Bathing on spouse's grave	12.1	41(11.4%)	45(5.6%)	39(10.2%)	31(9.5%)	58(23.6%)
Longer mourning period	84.4	71(83.4%)	79(89.6%)	54(92.4%)	72(87.5%)	81(68.9%)
Drooping condolence gifts on the ground	53.4	32(45.3%)	31(43.8%)	48(63.5%)	43(54.5%)	42(59.7%)
Forceful remarriage (<i>nkuchi nwanyi</i>)	12.8	46(6.5%)	34(4.3%)	42(29.8%)	56(8.4%)	63(15.2%)
Wearing special mourning outfit	75.1	68(71.3%)	77(68.9%)	56(88.5%)	67(65.4%)	82(81.4%)
Widow disinheritance	28.6	43(21.3%)	38(19.5%)	49(45.6%)	39(25.3%)	69(31.2%)

Source: Authors' computation

Analysis (Table 3) indicate that, ritual seclusion, longer mourning period, and wearing special mourning outfit (black or white) with about 80.2%, 84.4%, and 75.1% prevalence respectively, are the most widely practiced widowhood culture in all the five states surveyed. Ebonyi state leads in the prevalence of these practices even as forceful shaving of hair about 57.3% and drooping condolence gifts on the ground for the widow about 53.4% also registered high level of prevalence. Other prevalence rate noted in the study are, programmed wailing about 21.2%, sitting on the floor during mourning, about 29.2%, sleeping or sitting next to corpse about 19.9%, tying both hands together in rags about 17.5%, bathing on spouse's grave about 12.1% forceful remarriage (*nkuchi nwanyi*) about 12.8%, and widow disinheritance about 28.6%. Except in part of Ebonyi state where prevalence of forceful remarriage is up to 29.8% and in Imo where it is about 15.2%, every other states recorded less than 10% showing that the practices exists but is gradually becoming unpopular. Tying both hands together in rags of both hands with rag is only high in Enugu state with about 45.6% prevalence. This study on a good note, ascertained that some of these practices like sleeping or sitting next to corpse, oath ritual of drinking corps water is only forced on the widows when there is a suspicion that she is involved in the death of her husband. These findings are not far from the positions of scholars like Anugwom, (2011), Isidienu and Ibeh (2021), Anichebe (2023) Eze, Egwuagu and Namani (2024), in that the existence of HWP is no longer the issues but what has been achieved and what can be achieved with adequate PR strategies for the Igboland of South-East Nigeria.

The position and efforts of women in handling harmful widowhood practices in Igboland

To ascertain the position and effort of the women in the fight against harmful widowhood practices in Igboland, we weighted the opinion of the respondents with a five points Likert scale that was finally summarized into agreed, disagreed or undecided.

Table 4: Likert scale Measurement of the effort and position of women against HWP in Igboland

	Items	A	U	D	Mean	SD	Remark
1	All the harmful widowhood practices were instituted by men against women	51	11	38	2.89	1.24	Agreed
2	Harmful widowhood practice is a crime women are committing against women	76	5	19	3.18	1.05	Agreed
3	High percentage of the women have been brainwashed not to go against the culture and tradition	65	12	23	3.01	1.16	Agreed
4	Men are more against the harmful widowhood practices than women	48	20	32	2.63	0.96	Agreed
5	Many of the women are afraid of the consequences from the gods if they refuse to obey	52	14	34	2.76	1.002	Agreed
6	Women cannot maintain a strong position against harmful widowhood practices because those who have passed through it want others to same	73	8	19	3.26	1.19	Agreed
7	Most women believe widowhood practices is a mark of respecting their deceased husband and will willingly obey even when individuals or organisations are fighting their cause	49	17	34	2.69	0.81	Agreed
8	Women have embarked on several protest and advocacy against harmful widowhood practices in the past	32	9	59	1.83	1.27	Disagreed
9	Men seldom force women to observe the harmful widowhood practices	61	10	29	3.09	1.13	Agreed
10	Harmful widowhood practices continues because women have not unanimously opposed themselves	59	7	34	2.84	0.92	Agreed

Source: Authors' computation

Analysis (Table 4) shows that out of a ten point issues raised concerning the efforts and position of women on widowhood practices, the respondents agreed with nine points and only disagreed with one. While the respondents (males and females) agreed that, all the harmful widowhood practices were instituted by men against women, they also agreed that

the harmful widowhood practice is a crime women are committing against women because, most times, men are more against the harmful widowhood practices than women and men seldom force women to observe the harmful widowhood practices. This agrees with the findings of Okoye (1995), Egbue (2014), Ugwukah and Ume-Ezeoke (2024), while refuting the avowals of Nwaogugu (1989), in that this confirm the dictum of the Igboland that what is eating the vegetable is inside the vegetable (*ihe n'esi mkpi isi di ya na aru*). Also the respondents agreed that while high percentage of the women have been brainwashed not to go against the culture and tradition of the gods, most women believe widowhood practices is a mark of respecting their deceased husband and will willingly obey even when individuals or organisations are fighting their cause. This finding is in line with Oniye (2008), Genyi and George-Genyi, (2013), Uduji et al (2018) Sharma & Verma (2020), in that it can only be the homebased rat that will inform the bush rat about the fish in the store house. The respondents agreed that while many of the women are afraid of the consequences from the gods if they refuse to obey the HWP, women cannot maintain a strong position against harmful widowhood practices because those who have passed through it want others to do same. This understanding is in tune with Egbue (2014), Uduji et al, 2021a Ugwukah and Ume-Ezeoke (2024), in that the fight may have gone out of men's hand and become a fight of revenge of women against the widows. Unfortunately, the respondents disagreed that women have embarked on several concerted protest and advocacy against harmful widowhood practices in the past, rather, from the opinion of the respondents, harmful widowhood practices continue because women have not unanimously opposed themselves.

The effect of public relations strategies on fighting harmful widowhood practices in Igboland

We conducted a logistic regression analysis in this study to predict the impact of public relations strategies along both the socio-economic and demographic characteristic of the respondents on the fight against harmful widowhood practices regarded as culture and tradition in Igboland using the variables listed below as predictors.

Table 5: Analysis of the Impact of Socio-economic Factors on Harmful Widowhood Practices in Igboland

		B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)	95.0% C.I. for EXP(B)	
		Lower	Upper	Lower	Upper	Lower	Upper	Lower	Upper
Step 1(a)	Age	0.130	0.010	2.464	1	0.043	0.970	0.951	0.990
	Gen	0.600	0.237	0.178	1	0.673	0.105	0.695	1.759
	Edu	0.415	0.023	0.417	1	0.019	2.986	0.943	1.030
	Rel	0.520	0.023	0.799	1	0.007	3.020	0.976	1.066
	Ms	0.031	0.024	1.675	1	0.026	1.031	0.984	1.080
	MoYin	1.871	0.125	3.327	1	0.038	4.931	0.730	1.189
	Pri_Ocp	1.108	0.131	1.674	1	0.025	3.898	0.694	1.161
	HHze	0.077	0.946	2.771	1	0.016	1.080	0.986	1.182
	Loctn	0.021	0.012	3.066	1	0.080	0.980	0.957	1.002
	PRM	1.352	0.275	7.631	1	0.026	10.703	0.410	1.207
	PRN	1.033	0.024	5.892	1	0.019	8.967	0.922	1.014
	PRC_R	1.236	0.028	6.676	1	0.005	13.736	0.982	1.094
	Constant	3.974	0.823	5.751	1	0.013	7.200		
a Variable(s) entered on step 1: Age Gen, Edu, Rel Ms, MoYin, Pri_Ocp, HHze, Loctn, PRM, PRN, PRC_R									
**significant at 5%; - a = This only refers to standard error (SE) b = Associated P Value of the Z value									

Source: Authors' computation

$$\text{Logit (HWP)} = 3.9740 + 130\text{Age} + 0.600\text{Gen} + 0.415\text{Edu} + 0.520\text{Rel} + 0.031\text{Ms} + 1.871\text{MoYin} + 1.108\text{Pri_Ocp} + 0.077\text{HHze} + 0.021\text{Loctn} + 1.352\text{PRM} + 1.033\text{PRN} + 1.236\text{PRC_R}$$

A test of the full model against a constant only model was statistically significant, indicating that the predictors as a set reliably distinguished between the "Yes" and "No" impact of public relations strategies (chi square = 32.821, $p < .002$ with $df = 8$). Nagelkerke's R^2 of .821 indicated a strong relationship between prediction and grouping. Whereas the prediction success overall was 82%, the Z - value for the PR strategies are **PRM** = 7.631, **PRN** = 4.892, and **PRC_R** = 6.676. The variables have associated p - values of 0.026, 0.019, 0.005 respectively. Because our alpha level was set at 0.05, (5% Significant Level) and the p-values of all the variables are less than 0.05 with the rule which stated that the null hypothesis should be rejected if the p-value is less than 0.05, we rejected the null hypothesis which states that *Public relations strategies (mediation, community relations, and negotiations strategy) have not made any significant impact on fighting harmful cultural practices against widows in Igboland of Nigeria* and concluded that Public relations strategies (mediation, community relations, and negotiations strategy) have made significant impacts on fighting harmful cultural practices against widows in Igboland of Nigeria.

Worthy to note also is that the EXP (B) value of the public relations Predictors are PRM = 10.703, PRN = 8.967, and PRC_R = 13.736, respectively. This implies that, a unit increase in the application of PR strategy – Mediation has an odds ratio of about 11, Negotiation is about 9, and Community relations is about 14 times as large. Hence, with this, if mediation is actively and properly used, HWP will likely 11 more times be likely to reduced. Also if Negotiation is properly used, HWP will about 9 times be likely to reduce while a right usage of community practices will lead HWP to be about 14 time more likely to reduce.

Summarily, the finding of this study agree with Okororji, 2004; Nwaoga, et al, 2021; Ekpenyong et al (2020)) in that even though the level of awareness of HWP could be said to be high in the rural centres, most people in those centres are incapacitated due to their system of believe (Uduji et al 2014) level of education and western exposure and access to media facilities (Okolo-Obasi et al, 2025a, 2025b, 2025c), as well as religious and traditional inclinations. This is why to a reasonable extent; community engagement seems to have the magic wand. Like observed, Asongu et al (2019a, 2019b 2019c) also concurred that community relations have the capacity of turning the believe system of anyone as long the application is done by people of good experience.

Confirming that the prevalence of some HWP, the study agrees with Agumagu (2007), Okafor & Akokuwe (2015) Ajayi (2020), Chukwu (2022), but differ in its asserting that usage of PR strategies and handlers should be reviewed to achieve better outcome. Whereas these findings agree with the likes of Azikiwe (1994), that all the harmful widowhood practices were instituted by men against women and are obnoxious, the study also differs from many other studies like Emewu (2003) Anugwom, (2011), Oreh (2014) Daphne (2024) and others, in that it shows that harmful widowhood practices are a crime women are committing against women, in that men seldom force the women to comply. It can also be seen that the odd ratio of the PR strategies is high, hence confirming that even though some PR works are being done around the issue according to scholars like Eneh (2007), Ude-Akpeh et al (2019), Asongu et al (2020a, 2020b), Nnabuko and Onyiaji (2021), yet something appears to be fundamentally wrong in the application of PR strategies to resolve the crisis emanating from the implementation of HWP.

Concluding Remarks and Recommendation

Because death is inevitable part of human existence, it is important that appropriate measures are put in place to protect widows from both the seen and unseen hands. This is because assisting widows and their children who face serious challenges in the area of Harmful widowhood practices regarded as tradition is ensuring the continuity of our existence and healing old wound that has remained sour for a very long time. Harmful widowhood many scholars like Mba (1992), Azikiwe (1994), Owete & Odili (2015) and Izehiwa, Obasi & Ebenebe (2020), including the present has condemned as an Igbo culture practice that requires serious mediation by all especially PR experts. people of good will. Widowhood Practices are major obstacles to women advancement and development. The people of Igboland must revisit this culture of impunity and modify such for the current

generation and generation unborn. HWP violates and breaches the fundamental rights of women and mostly girls in Igboland of Nigeria.

The findings of this study vehemently confirmed that elimination of the harmful cultural or traditional widowhood practices is as simply as one deciding to lose him/herself from bondage. While the PR campaign must be strengthened, it is important to note that the missing variable may be the woman who refused to fight for herself and the women who are taking the action of the domestic bird who keeps watching as her hunter owners kills and roast the bush fowls yet refused to ask the all-important question what if the bush fowls are no more. Women of the study area have not been shown to be grossly uneducated, yet we believed that while educated the uneducated, western education may not be the only thing needed this time, but also using the adequate PR strategies to sensitize the women on their right.

The study concludes by emphasizing that the PR media as public relations strategy plays a crucial role and will make more critical in road in encouraging the women and girls to arise in unison against the atrocious practices of traditional widowhood rituals which negate their fundamental human rights. With oneness of voice and purpose, the wall of resistance from the visible hands of the women upholding the culture and the invisible hands of the men perpetuating such will fall.

Recommendations for Further Studies

On the basis of findings made in this study, diverse further directions are worth trailing. In the first place, future research could test actual roles of the gods of the land in HWP implementation by evaluating the resolve of those who refused in the past and the consequences if (any). Assessment of the socio-economic waste as a result of this HWP can also be empirically compiled for advocacy purposes. Also, future research studies could also be engaged in to further assess the effects of other types of PR activities that could be done to achieve a safe environment for women and widows. Finally, based on the points explored in this paper, the impact of the legislation made so far, why they have not been strictly adhered to and why it appears not to be working can be assessed to make recommendation.

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