

## When Two Perspectives Clash Over Practices: Examining Marriage and Widowhood in the Tanzanian Setting

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### Abstract

The dichotomy between the traditional and modern views about issues of life is not uncommon in the African context. Since the missionaries arrived in the African soil, their attitude towards African traditional beliefs and practices were vivid. This missionary attitude marked the dichotomy between the traditional and the new views about various beliefs and practices in Africa. The main issue tackled by this article concerns the way in which the two views are articulated in the context of marriage and widowhood. Issues of widow inheritance, widow cleansing, widows' ownership of wealth and widows relationship with the deceased husband's relatives have been the focus to discuss widowhood practices in relation to the old and new views. Using the empirical data obtained through qualitative conversational interviews conducted in three places of Tanzania: Mabadaga, Njombe and Ukerewe in Tanzania between March and April, 2021. This article argues that the dichotomy between the old and new perceptions about marriage and widowhood are the sources of contradictions in societies because they propose different practices because each wants to convince society of being on the right path. The culture from both old and new views should be used to enhance the dignity of humanity not humanity being used to promote the dignity of culture.

**Keywords:** Old and New Views, Widow Inheritance, Widow Cleansing, Widows and Wealth and Qualitative Conversational Interviews.

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### Introduction

Globally, marriage is the act of two people to unite as husband and wife in order to achieve the needs of each other; mostly marriage results into being a family. In other words, we can say that marriage is the agreement of two people to live together as husband and wife in order to consolidate a family (Atwood, 2012). In its nature, it is a covenant between two people who agree to live together as husband and wife. The

covenant is built on agreement no matter where it is done, it may be traditional or to the church or to any other place as long as an agreement is done (Witte, 2012). Therefore, in Christian understanding, marriage is a legitimate erotic relationship between a male and a female that leads them to procreation. If one spouse dies, especially the male, the remaining one enters into widowhood.

Widowhood is the situation where one member of marriage lives alone because of the death of her spouse. A widow is a woman who has lost her husband and not married again (Adeyemo, 2016). Once she marries again, she will not be a widow. Talking about widowhood and marriage in African societies is a hot discussion nowadays because people come with different views about it. There are old and new views about the notion of marriage as related to widowhood. The old view asserts that marriage is an agreement between two families, the family of the bride and that of the groom to engage their children into marital relationships sealed by the provision of bride price. The target point of the old view is to unite couples who will build a new family that will increase members of the clan.

Once the widow appears in that clan, the clan decides to select one member of the clan to inherit the widow for the purpose of having other children from that widow. Despite this assumption of the old view, not all women qualified to be inherited because older women were mostly cared for and recognized as members of the clan. Marriage in the old perception is not voluntary. There is no option to couples rather than accepting suggestions from their parents. Widows were also not allowed to marry other people out of the clan unless the clan made a decision to let them free. This perception was mostly practiced in Africa. It has a big contradiction with globalization where the new perception appears.

Under globalization, people are free to select couples they wish and the widow's right is highly fought by activists. In that case, the new perception raises where people are free. They have freedom of choice, freedom to marry anyone and widows are free to own wealth according to the laws of the lands and perceptions about widow cleansing have changed (Malungo, 2001). The old and new perceptions about marriage and widowhood are in contradiction because what is wrong to the new perception seems right to the old perception. There are some people who believe in the old view and others in the new one, the thing which raises some discussions about the two views.

Basing on the raising discussion about marriage and widowhood, regarding the old and new views on marriage and widowhood, it is the thesis of this article that the old and new perceptions about widowhood are the sources of contradictions about issues of marriage and widowhood in societies because they propose different practices. Each convinces society of being on the right path. In order to defend this thesis the article advances the discussion about the following themes obtained from empirical research: widowhood in African traditional setting, widowhood in Christian setting, widow inheritance and widow cleansing rituals, widows and ownership of wealth in African Christian setting, widows and their relationship with former husband's

relatives, a theological reflection on widowhood and conclusion with some suggestions. These aspects are important as far as widowhood and the contradiction between the old and new perceptions is concerned because they show all sources of the contradictions and their main bases.

### **Literature Review**

Several studies have been conducted regarding the concept and positions of widows in society. Gunga (2009) examined the various conflicts arising due to practices and rites relating to widowhood in the Kenyan context and the effects such practices have on gender relations, families and power relations. Manala (2015) relates the teaching about *Ubuntu* African philosophy and the way widows are treated. Manala sees an inconsistency between what *Ubuntu* philosophy teaches and the way most Africans treat widows in their respective societies. Adeyemo (2016) examined the factors that influence the practice of harmful traditional practices in the Nigerian context despite current modernization. Adeyemo revealed that illiteracy, poverty, male-dominated society, poor socio-economic status of women, religion belief and traditional inheritance laws are factors responsible for the harmful practices. These directly and indirectly have negative effects on widows and their children.

Pemunta and Alubafi (2016) examined the social logic of superstitious beliefs and associated fears sustaining the dehumanizing practice of widowhood rites and practices with its negative consequences on women's well-being among the Balengou of Western Cameroon. They argued for gender-neutral marriages and human rights based legislation between the sexes. Ude & Njoku (2017) examined widowhood practices in Sub-Saharan Africa and their impacts on widows' well-being, including their mental health, through the lens of empowerment theoretical perspective. They concluded that empowerment theory is an appropriate perspective to lift the status of widows towards their required self-esteem in society.

Ibrahim (2017) investigated the effects of customary law on widows' inheritance rights in matrimonial properties in Ruanda Mbeya Tanzania. Various effects were discovered by the study including widows losing intimate friends and social support, lack of respect from their late husbands' relatives, facing stigmatization from men due to being widows and loss of assets and asset grabbing by relatives of their deceased husbands. Despite the significant contributions made by the above studies on widowhood practices and experiences, none of them examined the contradictions between the old and new views in regard to widowhood practices in Africa and the Tanzanian context in particular which this article mainly focuses on.

### **Methodological Perspective**

This article falls on an Interpretive paradigm whose main emphasis is the search for experiences of participants and the way they provide meanings to such experiences (Corbetta, 2003 & Gray, 2004). Interpretive philosophy was selected because of the data we sought to obtain. A qualitative approach was used to obtain data in the form of descriptions and both face to-face and telephone interviews were used in order to

collect the required information from Mabadaga (Mbarali), Njombe and Ukerewe in Tanzania. A sample of research participants was randomly selected from the mentioned places and the amount of data required was determined by the saturation point. A total of eight participants were interviewed between March and April, 2021 till saturation point. Qualitative data in the form of descriptions were transcribed from Swahili to English and analyzed qualitatively to obtain themes.

### **Widowhood in African Traditional Setting**

Widowhood in Africa tradition can be viewed in different ways depending on respective societies and sometimes on time. There are some societies which practice rituals that mostly victimize widows. In that case, the clan comes into conflict with widows who are aware of their rights (Donovan & O'Neill, 2018). The conflict comes when the modern view interfere with the old one. The modern view bases on providing education to widows to know their rights. Educated widows automatically reject the old view because it hardly provides them freedom, which finally brings conflict between widows and the clan of their late husbands. Research participant A (Personal communication: 16 April, 2021), a pastor of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania, Southern Diocese, in the conversation about widows, said that, globalization has brought conflicts between marriages and the issues of widows in Africa.

Africa is still on transitions from the old to new thoughts. There are some Africans who are not interested in the new thoughts. The pastor tried to illustrate many issues concerning the old way of thinking and the new ones by providing some examples of cases he experienced in his congregation that were so difficult do make decisions because every side came up with claims that were opposing one other. Therefore, pastor's assertion indicates that the perceptions about widowhood in Africa differ according to responses of widows themselves to clan's requirements. The misunderstandings of widows and clans sometimes affect their relationship. Participant B (Personal communication: 20<sup>th</sup> April, 2021), explained the situation of her mother, a widow from her clan in the Sukuma tribe. She said:

My father died in 1998 when I was in primary school; I did not know that my mother was a widow. I was just demanding my school requirements from her, who cared for me through selling local beer.

The explanations of participant B shows that once her father died, the responsibility of caring for children was on her mother. By that time, no other relative from the father's side helped her. She further explained that the reason behind this irresponsibility of relatives from the side of her father was the rejection of her mother from being inherited. Their closeness to her was just because of her current successes. They are now close to us because they have seen the successes we have and require help from us. For example, I am living with my cousin; he is studying, and I always provide him

a fare for attending school, reiterated participant B (Personal communication: 20<sup>th</sup> April, 2021).

One author of this article narrated his experience saying, in my life experience, I witnessed a widow who married an impostor who cheated her, he was married by that widow in order to exploit the wealth she inherited from her x-husband. Then, after the impostor had completed the mission, he divorced the widow secretly. The conflict came when that widow demanded the requisites of children of the first husband to the clan of her late husband. Basing on this situation, if were told to suggest the best way to solve this conflict, we could certainly have suggested that widow inheritance was the best way to be applied in such situations as far as the old view is concerned. The modern view provided freedom to widows to choose the life they required. It is our contention that the tensions between the modern and the old views has greatly changed the life of widows leading societies not to caring about widow's families but their own modern interests.

### **Widowhood in Christian Setting**

Different from the traditional view, the Christian outlook is mostly based on the modern view. There are some situations where it agrees with the old one. Christianity supports widows in owning wealth, going against ritual practice and others. Christianity also recognizes the presence of widows as lower people in the church. We saw this situation since childhood. The only preaching we heard about since childhood was the encouragement of widows. Members of the congregation were told to help widows as a group that required help. In that case, we were only taught to help them on what they required. It was not a bad thing to help widow because God tells us about widows and our responsibility to towards them.

In our research, it was discovered that widows had great contributions to the church's development despite their wretchedness. The widows' contributions were clearly noted in 2013 when building the Congregational office at Mabadaga Lutheran church in Mbarali District Mbeya Region where most participants doing manual work (fetching water, collecting blocks, cooking food for masons) to facilitate the building were widows. The only reason for their presence was that they had enough time as compared to married women who lived with their husbands and mostly depended on the decisions of their husbands. In the conversation with participant C (Personal communication: 27 April, 2021), who was the leader of the New Life in Christ fellowship (NLC), he was asked about widows' role in the church. He said:

Widows are the forgotten group; but they play a great role in the church. For example, when we were building our hall, widows were coming with things that were sold for high prices to facilitate the building. I can frankly say that they contributed more than others.

Participant C explained a lot of things that led us discover that apart from being good servants of God in the church, widows were also an exploited group. Therefore, the

church should be aware of the situation of widows, helping them rather than exploiting them. The following section discusses the practice of widows' inheritance and widow cleansing rituals as other sources of contradictions between the old and new perspectives on issues of marriage and widowhood in contemporary Tanzanian societies.

### **Widows Inheritance Practice**

Widow inheritance, mostly referred to a levirate marriage, is the practice whereby the woman marries the brother of her deceased husband for the purpose of keeping and sustaining children of the deceased and raising more children for him (Olanisebe & Oladosu, 2014; Perry *et al.*, 2014 & Tati, 2018). Most African societies have been practicing widow inheritance since time immemorial. Maurice (2014: 287) attests that in Africa, Levirate unions are found amongst almost all communities from West to East Africa and from North to South Africa. The Igbos of Nigeria, the Nandi, Luo and Kambas of Kenya, many communities in Zambia, Uganda and Sudan, the Supyire of Mali, Akan of Ghana and the Yoruba of Nigeria all practised it. Hence, the practice is ubiquitous in Africa as is in other societies of the world.

In finding more details about the issue of widow inheritance, participant D (Personal communication: 28 March, 2021) who is one of the peasants at Mabadaga village, was asked: "Do you know anything about widow inheritance in your society or clan". He replied saying it was practiced a long time ago. Nowadays, only a few clans are practicing it, such as that of Mzee Malanji; Do you want to take mama Fred?" He thought that one of the researchers wanted to inherit his sister-in-law (Mama Fred). After telling him that we were asking it for research purpose, he started to be serious to questions asked. He was asked another question, what is your opinion about widow inheritance?" He replied:

Everything is done for reasons. Even widow inheritance was there for reasons. I think African societies made research before practicing it; to me, it was the best for upbringing children left by the deceased husband.

Participant D continued expressing that it was better to practice it because it was the best way that could solve conflicts raised by relatives of the deceased husband such as those relating to duties of children's rearing. He suggested that once the widow appears in the clan and before proceeding with inheritance, it is better to check for HIV/AIDS before proceeding with the inheritance process. If both the widow and the one inheriting the widow have no infection, then the inheritance should take place for the better life of children of the deceased husband (Shoki, Nyenga & Kasongi, 2017 and Perry *et al.*, 2014). His main reason to agree with inheritance of widows was about the issue of wealth left by the deceased; that it should continue being under his clan through inheriting the left widow (Baloyi, 2015). He also mentioned the bride price paid to the clan of the widow; that it should have a replacement through inheritance.

Participant C (Personal communication: 27<sup>th</sup> April, 2021) was asked questions during conversation to know his opinion about the practice of widow inheritance. He had this response, “I disagree with inheritance of widows because it is a fashion of a long time ago and is against our faith.” He was probed, is it written in the Bible that we should not inherit widows? He replied, the *Bible* does not tell directly; I know you theologians just simplify things in the Bible. To me, I can say that it is a bad thing because it does not provide freedom to widows to choose the life they require living. He was further probed; do you know how the process is? What is known is that the widow is provided an opportunity to choose one of her brother-in-law, is that no freedom? This research participant replied to the probing question by giving several examples. It is somehow freedom; although it does not provide a wide choice; the cows cannot be circulated to the same cowshed if you want to produce more healthy cattle. I mean, having children from different clans sometime is better than from one clan. The conversation went on and several joking question were asked including this one: taking an example of a cowshed you provided, do you think is better to have a concubine to have children from a different clan like what king David and Solomon did stated in the Bible? He said, no because it was a time of an *Old Testament*.

Participant B (Personal communication: 20 April, 2021), in our conversation, explained the issue of inheritance through the story of her mother. She said that once her mother rejected to be inherited by her brother-in-law, the whole family of the deceased husband rejected her and her children despite knowing that children belonged to them. The story raised another question in the conversation: do you think why your mother rejected to be inherited? She replied saying; I think my mother rejected to be inherited because she wanted to live alone, although there was a story about my uncle who wanted to inherit her, he was a wizard and killed my father through supernatural powers. Further questions were asked to her: what if it happened to you? Would you be able to be inherited? The participant was not interested to hear such question.

Although she was not interested with such a question, she replied saying, I always pray that that situation should not happen to me and if it happens, I will not accept such dirtiness. I will wait until I find someone from another clan; or I will live alone as my mother did. A question was asked to her again: Why do you call it dirtiness while our ancestors practiced as you see most of us are the development of that situation? She replied that she called it dirtiness because she could not open her pant and provide the body to her brother-in-law. Our parents did these practices because women of that time hardly had education; they lived as slaves in marriages. Everything said by their husbands was not rejected; that is why they had no option. She further emotionally said: to me divorce is on my hand. If a man dares to slap or does anything against my right, I will divorce him, even my husband knows it.

The above responses of people who explained about widows' inheritance show how African societies are still under the contradictions between the old and modern views. They are still in dilemma between the old and new views about marriage and

widowhood because practices of both sides are carried out with strong convictions. The old view instills fear to its adherents that if not practiced some bad consequences are likely to happen while the new view is mostly based on faith and the unwillingness to contradict what faith directs to be practiced in order to be ethical.

### **Widow Cleansing Rituals**

Cleansing of widows and other rituals practiced after the death of a husband is another cause of conflict between the old and new perspectives in African societies. Cleansing here refers to the ritual actions done to a woman soon after the death of her husband. In order to cleanse the widow, she is required to have sex without a condom with someone from one of the relatives of her deceased husband (Sulumba-Kapuma, 2018; Sanguti, 2016) or someone outside the clan without a condom (Perry *et al.*, 2014). This act is practised according to the old view and is ubiquitous in the world from ancient societies to the current Africa (Lomba, 2014; Malungo, 2001 & Sanguti, 2016). Maurice (2014: 292) reports that the Israelites, the Hittites, the Persians, the Indians and Africans all practiced it. The overriding reason for it, in all these communities, was to get children for the deceased for reasons of inheritance. There are some people, those to cleanse and those to be cleansed, who reject that act of cleansing and others agree with them. People in societies are divided into two, one from the old view and another from the modern view. Every side defends its interest resulting into conflict.

In order to find out more about the escalation of widow cleansing rituals, participant B was asked some more question about it: do you know about the cleansing of widow or any other rituals practiced after the death of a husband? She replied saying: what I know is that which is done after the burial ceremony to all relatives of the deceased. She was further asked, What is that? After the burial ceremony, she reiterated, the relatives of the deceased are taken to take bath; then after bathing, they are provided with some food to it. I think it is not a traditional practice; they do it for the aim of removing the dead person's spirit. Some more question was asked about this situation: do you think nothing else is done to a widow? Do you think they just let her go? She replied again saying:

You know the cultural interference and globalization have changed things; maybe there is something done but conducted secretly and those who are not concerned with it will never know.

She continued to explain about the secrecy of the event in this time of globalization by providing the example of the Kurya tribe of Mara region in Tanzania and the way they conduct Female Genital Mutilation secretly. The Kurya are doing FGM secretly because the government, basing on the new view, banned out that practice. The Kurya think that the new generation has come with the intention of destroying their long cherished customs. Participant B, widows cleansing might be present, but is practiced secretly to avoid shame and obstacles from government authorities.



For further knowledge, participant A, a pastor of the church, was asked about this ritual. He explained his experience that the issue of widow cleansing is done in different ways but having similar connotations. There are some practices in the Bena tribe called *Kutoa nguzo* (removing a house post) whereby the relatives of the diseased come and eat some foods and drinks together with the widow. It is in this event where there are some words spoken to tell the widow that her *nguzo* has gone, so she better be inherited or be married to another man. There are also things famously practiced in Bena tribe whereby a widow is supposed to have sex with a dead body to say goodbye to her diseased husband before burial,” said pastor A on 16<sup>th</sup> April, 2021.

One author of this article, reflecting on participant A’s statement said: the pastor’s statement caused me to raise more questions because I once heard about it when my brother-in-law died at Igwachanya in Njombe and didn’t know what it meant. In the conversation process, participant A was further asked about the mechanism of widow cleansing through sexual intercourse with the dead corpse, how could a dead body have erotic stimulation and feelings for sex according to the Bena? He replied saying, I really do not know what they do to raise stimulation to the dead body, but one thing you should know is that these things are practiced very secretly. In that way, we recognized why most widows, especially those in the new view, refused to practice it because of considering it unfair according to their religious convictions.

Another experience researchers had about widow cleansing was from Ukerewe in Mwanza region. The Jita tribe from Ukerewe also practiced this cleansing of widows (Masini, Towett, Mtango & Bundala, 2014). One author of this article narrated his experience of living with the Jita at Ukerewe: I heard it in 2015 when was at Ukerewe. We had a story in a burial area while were preparing the grave. During the normal conversation, some people spoke about the widow who refused to have sex with the dead body in the clan meeting, but during night she herself called her brother-in-law and had cleaning. I was not interested to hear that story I could not imagine that it would be useful for my studies sometime. After commencing the research and writing of this article, I remembered that day when we were in the burial area and decided to call my friend to ask him about the issue of cleansing of widow at Ukerewe.

He once refused saying that rituals of that kind were not practiced in contemporary days and that I should forget about it. However, when I begged him to explain just a little about it, he agreed and said: I am at the place where I can’t be free to speak about this issue; so, I will call you at 06:30 pm when will be at home. I myself called him on May 22, 2021. We had lengthy talking out of the intended topic. After that I told him, my friend I called to ask you about that issue of widow inheritance at Ukerewe. He replied to me with a surprising laughter: Aaah! You man you do not want to forget? Okay, what was practiced was that soon after burial ceremony a widow had to select one of the brothers of her deceased husband to have sex with during the night just for one hour.

The words of the author of this article above and the responses obtained from his friend Revocatus Manego indicate that the Jita of Ukerewe were doing that practice mainly for two purposes. First, it served to say sorry and encouraged the woman for the lost husband. Second, was to open the sexual service that was closed soon after the death of their beloved relative because during the miserable time nobody in the clan was allowed to do sex before the cleansing of the widow. If someone did sex, bad things would happen to him/her. The brother-in-law to be selected for the cleansing practice was most likely the one with a responsibility to inherit that widow (Bigambo, 2019). There were some stories that widows sometimes selected the richest among brother-in-laws despite the fact that there were some who just agreed to have sex in the first day; but after that, they refused to inherit them. The widow had to select another brother-in-law to marry him in the other clan meeting.

The whole scenario of widow cleansing discussed in the above paragraphs indicate that in the modern time, when the new view is strongly held, those things are done very secretly. People practice secretly because most youths refuse to do sex with their sister in-laws and the clan tells widows to find anyone out of the clan. The discussion indicates that there are also sometimes widows refuse in the meeting, but after the meeting they implement the cleansing act. Therefore, as just noted in the above discussion, issues of widow inheritance and widow cleansing rituals raise conflict in societies; and conflicts come when one refuses to inherit the widow or be inherited by the brother of the diseased. He or she may be seen as a betrayer of the clan; or when one agrees to inherit, but is in another marriage, the two wives come into conflict because the modern view does not agree with such situations.

### **Widows and Ownership of Wealth in African Traditional Setting**

After the questions of widow inheritance and widow cleansing discussed in the previous section, this section grapples with widows' ownership of wealth in relation to the old and new views. One of the problems in societies is about widows' ownership of wealth. Many African families believe that after the death of a man, both the left wealth and the left woman belong to the clan. The African perspective is that the woman is to be owned and not to own. Once her husband dies the ownership is transformed to the brother of the deceased husband; the widow is not allowed to own wealth left by her husband rather than being owned by another husband together with the wealth from her deceased husband. Research participant E was asked about the issue of owning wealth as a widow. She first provided the experience from her mother and later told the situation of herself. She said:

Once my uncle [a brother of her Father] died, my mother was told to select the one to inherit her; and she selected. There were no other things to decide; wealth was owned by the man and the man with many wives, so she just joined.

She was further probed: do you think it was the best way to take the wealth you earned with your diseased husband and use it with other wives of your new

husband? She responded saying: in that time it was applicable because women were living under the control of men; and men were doing responsibilities in their families. Further questions were asked about wealth issues and among them was this: you are one among the widows, what about the owning of wealth to you, do you own anything? She responded: to me, wealth has a different meaning from that of others; my wealth is my children. I feel happy to see them always; so when you say about widows owning wealth, I can say yes we own it. To our opinion, the response of this widow is that of a desperate person who sees not refuge to solve her predicament. Therefore, her response indicated that widows in most African societies, including that of informant E, were not allowed to own wealth (Gunga, 2009).

### **Widows and Ownership of Wealth in Christian Setting**

As pointed out in the previous part, the current Christian setting is in the modern view supporting the perspective of widows owning wealth. We agree with it because once widows own wealth their children will also not suffer. In the conversation, participant A, the pastor was asked about what the church does regarding widows' ownership of wealth. The pastor said that the church supports widows to own wealth, whether by inheriting it from their deceased husbands or preparing a good environment for widows to own wealth. He gave an example of his experience, that when was in Idunda congregation at Njombe, the congregation established a business of growing avocado trees; the business was owned by widows.

According to this pastor, growing avocado trees was what Christians did to widows in order to sustain them. To hear more, Informant C was further asked about the issue of widows and wealth in Christian setting. He said, what I see is that the church is silent about it; it does not speak anything rather than giving advice to widows on how to emancipate themselves from hard financial situations. He continued saying that what is seen in the *Bible* is that widows were exploited; that is why Jesus warned the Pharisees who were eating in the houses of widows. He reiterated that the Bible also emphasizes about helping widows. Most Christians have no power of decision or any other authority to decide in any family meeting about that issue yet. This powerlessness is still visible in African Christian families because most of them have many members with different faiths and opinions; so Christians have no power over non-Christians who also constitute most African families.

### **Theological Reflections on Widowhood Practices**

This section is an evaluative one. It discusses a theological implication of issues discussed in the previous sections. In making a theological reflection about widows we focus on the following aspects: marriage itself, widow inheritance and the issue of owning wealth. Since most issues discussed in this article are cultural, the main question in this section is whether culture is at the service of humanity or humanity is at the service of culture. We agree with Baloyi (2017) that culture cannot use humans to shape itself and to transform the community. It is humans themselves who use culture to identify themselves and ultimately change their communities (Maseno, 2015).

### **Widow Inheritance**

Christianity seems to be silent about widow inheritance, a prominent cultural practice in African settings; one may discover its position by seeing the things it endorses. In case there is someone, who is not in marriage, wants to marry the widow by inheriting from his deceased brother, the pastor just asks only if there is no force used to let them be married but love between them. The church blesses the marriage. There are several verses that show the inheritance of widows in the Bible (*Deuteronomy*, 25:5–10). For example, *Luke* (20:27) indicates that inheritance was practiced even at the time of Jesus though Sadducee were asked about what would happen after resurrection. They asked through the examples which existed in their societies and according to the Law of Moses they embraced. Jesus' answer justified about heavenly life that hardly portrayed anything evil to inherit a widow. Theologically, it is not something bad to inherit a widow whose practice is grounded on love between couples and the prescribed biblical principles of marriage. The duty of the church is to make a better way of it before marrying a widow. It is better for them to go for tests to ascertain their freedom from diseases before engaging into marriage and the one to inherit the widow should be an unmarried person.

### **Widows to Own Wealth**

As said in the above discussion, most African societies believe that the wealth of the family belongs to the clan. Many widows find themselves in trouble after the death of their husbands; the clan of her former husband is forced by traditional beliefs to act according to existing cultural practices which, when looked through the Christian faith, do not support human rights but are exploitative in nature (Nyangweso, 2017). The modern views represented by Christianity seems better than the old one. Christianity has several examples of caring widows by looking at Jesus himself. Jesus helped widows in different situations; acts of Jesus mean that Christianity recognizes the presence of widows in societies. Widows are a special group expressed in large areas of the *Bible*. For example, *2 Timothy*, chapter 5, shows how to treat the widow and the features of the widow who requires special care. *2 Timothy* 5 also emphasizes about respecting the integrity of widows which means that Christians are supposed to provide support to widows to own wealth when their husbands die. Supporting widows to own wealth enables non-Christians to understand Christianity. Through supporting widows regain dignity against the various harmful practices discussed in this article, Christians will make culture provide integrity to widows not widows provide integrity to culture.

### **Conclusion**

In this paper we defended the theses that the old and new perceptions about widowhood are the sources of contradictions regarding widows' issues in African societies. The discussion mostly centre on marriage and widowhood in African setting, especially on widows matters practiced in African societies and Tanzania in particular. Issues discussed include marriage and widowhood in African traditional setting, widowhood in Christian setting, widow inheritance and widow cleansing rituals, widows and ownership of wealth in African traditional setting, widows and the

ownership of wealth in African Christian setting and widows and their relationship with former husbands' relatives. Basing on the discussion held in this article, it has been vivid that the traditional or old and modern views are in conflict where every side strives to instill knowledge of practices regarding widows to the same societies, forms of knowledge opposing each other. In our view, every side has good and bad aspects regarding issues discussed in this article. The best way of bridging the gap between the two sides is accepting good practices and abandoning bad ones from each side.

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