

## **SOCIAL RECOURSE FOR GRABBED PROPERTY: THE WIDOWS' EXPERIENCES IN BINGA DISTRICT, ZIMBABWE**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Grabbing property from the widows is a huge social problem in Zimbabwe. Despite recent changes and advances in policy frameworks in the country, once the husband dies, a widow still struggles to inherit the property accrued during the time of marriage irrespective of the kind of marriage entered into with the late husband. This paper discusses formal and informal social recourse experiences of the widows for grabbed property in Binga District in Zimbabwe. A qualitative research approach was adopted which purposely engaged ten widows in in-depth face-to-face interviews to gather their experiences on recourse. The results indicated that a few widows attempted locally available social recourse for grabbed property whilst many widows suffered in silence and never attempted to seek any recourse owing to various social and cultural reasons and expectations. Formal and informal locally available interventions have been found to have little significance as recourse for grabbed property. This state of affairs has proved to have dire psychosocial and socioeconomic consequences for widows and well-structured interventions proved vehemently needed. The conclusion was that locally available interventions for grabbed property were less viable social recourse measures for widows and did not serve to regain their lost property. This paper recommends the need for social work intervention at various levels to ameliorate the plight of widows in Binga District in Zimbabwe.

**Keywords:** property grabbing, widows, formal and informal, social interventions, Binga.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Year after year widows and their children in Binga are left socially and economically disadvantaged due to property grabbing when their husbands die. Stripping widows of property is a huge social problem in Zimbabwe especially with the escalating death toll due to Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) and Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS) (Dube, 2011). Even though the phenomenon of widowhood is not new, many communities do not seem ready to deal with this traumatising experience, especially the relatives of the deceased. Estimates have shown that widowed woman make up approximately 16% of the world's population of women, with a possibility that this figure could be even higher in some parts of the world due to wars and epidemics (Trivedi, Sareen & Dhyani, 2009). As defenceless targets of abuse, Zimbabwean women are normally at loggerheads with their in-laws who demand an explanation from them for the cause of the death of their sons in instances where the cause of death is unknown. Decisions to settle down disputes are not easy for the widows. Some widows attempt to seek recourse whilst others shun away from seeking help for their plight owing to various social expectations and experiences in their communities. Social work intervention is necessary to

preserve the widow's worth and dignity as a human being, which is the principal value of social work.

Dube (2011) cites Okunmadewa, Aina, Ayoola, Mamman, Nweze, Odebiyi, Shedu and Zacha (2002:106) who maintain that:

*Women's wellbeing often deteriorates quickly after the loss of their husbands, when they suffer threats of both their physical security and property. A widow often loses her husband's property to the in-laws in accordance with family traditional rules.*

The socioeconomic problems emanating from property grabbing from widows mean that interventions are eminently needed for the wellbeing of widows. This paper argues that there is a lamentable gap in accessing relevant formidable interventions by the widows hence socially available forms of interventions, formal and informal, do not serve to lessen the property mayhem and intolerable inheritance problems of widows.

For conceptual clarity, the terms formal and informal social recourses needs explanation. In this paper, social formal recourse denotes to the intervention offered in the communities by people in traditional authority such as Chiefs, who are the highest in traditional and political authority in the communities as designated by the government of Zimbabwe and community heads called *Sibbuku*, meaning someone who keeps the books and records in the community in the Tonga language, who are second in the traditional authority in community structures (Muwaniri, 2014). Religious leaders based in the churches within the communities also form part of the formal interventions as the communities in Binga are dominated by Christianity. Often the church leaders and other members take up the responsibility of comforting widows from a biblical stand point and perceive this as their social responsibility and duty (Maririmba, 2015). Christians globally have done insurmountable charity work and fighting for sustaining justice as core values that militate corrupt social policies and institutions, (Canda & Furman, 2010), and so are the church leaders in the communities of Binga District. The nongovernmental, (NGO), sector is in the paper regarded as a formal interventional network as the sector pursues activities that relieve human suffering and promote the interest of poverty stricken including basic social services and undertake community developmental activities(United Nations Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA) Zimbabwe, 2011).

Informal social recourse in this paper describes interventions locally available for the psychosocial problems provided by the natal families and friends. Natal families provide comfort when the widow faces changes from in-laws after the death of the husband. Circumstances of the death of the husband the ensuing property grabbing often forces widows to join their natal families for needed support (Dube, 2016). Friends are a natural support in times of hardship and assist families to provide emotional support and condemn injustices.

## **INTERNATIONAL INSTRUMENTS AND LOCAL POLICIES FOR INTERVENTIONS**

Zimbabwe has ratified essential international instruments for protecting widows such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the Beijing Platform of Action, and the Maputo Protocol (Asuagbor 2016). To ensure implementation

of the ratified instruments by the Zimbabwean government, the CEDAW Optional protocol was not ratified by the government indicating hesitance in seeking eminent solutions to the problems faced by the widows and enforcing the widows' property inheritance rights.

Thought the policies remain fragmented, the government of Zimbabwe however, have domesticated some aspect on international instruments shown in the amended Gender Policy of 2013 (Zimbabwe 2013b) and the new Constitution of Zimbabwe Amendment Act (Zimbabwe 2013a) that adopted a general approach to the protection of women without specificity on widows. While 200 other pieces of legislation changed in Zimbabwe in 2013 to improve the advancement of women's rights, the country scored lower in 2014 on the 2015 Southern African Development Community (SADC) Gender Protocol Barometer which reflects the country's progress on ensuring gender equality, women's rights and empowerment (Made, 2015).

## **THEORITICAL FRAMEWORK**

### *i) Cultural theory*

The Cultural theory in this study is very important and useful in explaining property grabbing as violence against women stemming from culture. Cultural theory highlights the supremacy of traditional norms of oppression within African culture, (Tembo, 2013), to explain the prevailing epidemic of violence against women in general, (Weiten, 2010), and property stripping of widows in particular.

From a cultural theorists' perspective, there is a connection between traditional norms and violence against women, (Tembo, 2013), arguing that wife battering is for example regarded as normal and property grabbing is seen as culturally accepted. An observation was that there exists an 'uneven distribution of power within African marriages, the impact of polygamy, the power of the extended family over the married couple, and the universal institution of bride price as underlying the widespread of abuse of women' (Dube, 2017:344).

### *ii) The Rights theory*

The Rights theory follows Western models based upon individual rights. Most African countries have ratified international covenants that interpret depriving women of property rights as a form of violation of human rights (Dube, 2017, Tshuma, 2014).

Rights theorists advance the argument of the abolition of patriarchy and its norms, traditions and practices and call for rapid legal reforms as a ways to realize the goal of affording women the right to property inheritance (Dube, 2017). This contention is also embraced by feminists theorist, (Teater, 2014), which this paper argues that they have the same line of thought with Rights theorists which are more appropriate in understanding and addressing the plight of the widows in Zimbabwe. Human rights are the centre for the Rights theory relying strongly on human rights guarantees in international charters. In this paper, it is argued that this approach however, is an interventional strategy mostly needed in Zimbabwe where the legal machinery and interventions are less systematised and accessible making it optimally difficult in solving the

unique and complex nature of the problem facing the widows in rural and excluded communities such as Binga District in Zimbabwe.

*iii) Social Constructivist theory*

According to Teater (2014) social constructivism is based on the basic premise that individual's realities are continually transforming and adapting to their experiences which they come across in their lives. The debate lies in how people create knowledge and meaning of a phenomenon within a specific context. Within this context, problems are defined differently and solutions to problems thereafter constructed differently. Social Constructionists assert that humans produce knowledge and meaning in relation to their experiences and their ideas (Mogashoa, 2014). Following that line of thought, widows experience property grabbing and their recourse towards their problems understood differently. As such some widows attempt formalised whilst others informal recourse measures. In the context of Binga District, the attempts and outcomes of such interventions are discussed in this paper.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This study adopted a qualitative research method (Hennink, Hunter & Baily, 2011) to capture the experiences of the widows in in-depth descriptions of the property grabbing problems they faced. This was the most appropriate method to allow widows to articulate in an introspective way to provide rich descriptions of their experiences (Padgett, 2017). As argued by Braun and Clarke (2013), the qualitative method provided the advantage of rich, exciting information and captured the complexity and contradictions that characterises the real world of the widows allowing the researcher to make sense of the patterns in the information provided. To its advantage, qualitative research enabled the researcher to get significant and elaborate descriptions and interpretations of what the widowed participants shared. The qualitative research approach was deemed suitable for this study because it enabled data to be collected in the form of lived experiences of the widows.

*i) Population of the study*

The population in this study were the widows who experienced property grabbing after the death of their husbands in Binga District. Target population refers to “only those cases that theoretically might be selected as research participants, those who are potentially accessible to the researcher...” (Yegidis, Weinbach & Myers, 2012 p195). The 2012 census results indicate a total female population of 75 356 (Zimbabwe National Statistics Agency, (Zimstats), 2012). Of the 75 356 of the total female population in Binga District, 8.3% were widows, translating into an approximate total of 6 255 widows. This constitutes a significant figure justifying of this nature.

*ii) Sampling method*

Homogeneous purposive sampling method was used in this study to engage ten widows in in-depth interviews whose property was grabbed. This was the most appropriate sampling strategy to enable

only widows who experienced property grabbing to be part of the study. Padgett (2017) views homogeneous purposive sampling as selecting respondents based on their common experience and ability to provide needed information. This sampling technique ensured the involvement of the widows whose property was grabbed after the death of their husbands. Even though the target number of the participants in the study was fifteen, data saturation point, (Padgett, 2017, Yedidis, 2012, Whittaker, 2012), at ten participants ensured that the researcher could not continue with the interviews as there was no new information that emerged.

**iii) *Data collection method***

In-depth semi-structured interviews (Hennink *et al.*, 2011) were utilised to collect data using an interview schedule as instrument with questions that were formulated on relevant thematic areas. Due to data saturation during data collection, only ten widows were participants in the study and were interviewed giving their lived experiences of property grabbing and their experiences of recourse at formal and informal levels.

**iv) *Data analysis***

Thematic data analysis, (Whittaker, 2012), was utilised where data was analysed by listening to audio recorded interviews on particular themes then transcribed verbatim such that meaning was not lost. At a more pragmatic level, similarities and differences in the data provided by the widows were identified and compared and meaning generated. Hardwick and Worsely (2011) describe data analysis as “the process of bringing order, structure and meaning” to huge masses of data that the researcher collected. Data were then presented textually according to predetermined themes and emergent themes compared and backed by existing literature.

**v) *Ethical considerations***

In the views of Brynard, Hanekom and Brynard (2014) ethics of research mean that the researcher has to be aware of what relates to conduct that is ‘right or wrong’ on the part of the researcher, which then serve as guidelines for the evaluation of research conduct. Consistent with the ethical requirements of research, the researcher got ethical clearance from the High Degrees Committee of the University, gained access from the gate keepers, and sought informed consent from the widows who were participants of the study. The researcher kept the information gained in the study confidential and private. This was done by using pseudo names instead of real names of the participants. Therefore the names of the participants in this paper are not the true names of the participants ensuring their anonymity. The researcher avoided deception of participants by providing all relevant information to the widows (Hardwick & Worsely, 2011).

**FINDINGS OF THE STUDY**

Data were collected thematically and the findings there discussed thematically to ensure focus and depth for each of the fundamental themes. The themes provide the experiences of the widows with

intervention networks. Two main themes namely informal and formal interventional networks were considered and are discussed.

*i) Informal interventional networks*

With regard to informal interventional networks, the study sought to discover interventions available to the widows in their local communities. The widows were asked to tell who they approached for recourse in their communities when their property was grabbed. A myriad of responses were given by the widows with regard to intervention in their communities as discussed below.

*Natal family*

It is general knowledge and natural wisdom that the natal family provides nurturance and comfort to the distressed widows. Some of the participants had empowering family support for the grabbed property. The widows felt empowered by their families' intervention and encouraged to go on with life even though they had been victims of property grabbing. Nancy managed to obtain the basic needs for her life and to overcome the psychological stress associated with property grabbing. This is what two participants had to say:

*"My family members comforted me and also encouraged me to be strong and fend for my children", (Otilia).*

*"In my family, my sisters were always with me and assisting me" (Nancy).*

Dube (2011) cites Izumi's (2006) [online] research findings of The Land and Property Rights of Widows and Orphans in Zimbabwe, the majority of the widows who were dispossessed of property and land joined their natal homes where they were comforted and taken care of by their family members. This underlines how important and helpful the caring family as an institution can be to its members in need of support in situations of distress and hopelessness. Whilst the capabilities of the families to provide psychosocial and economic support to the widows (Dube, & Phethlo-Thekisho, 2018), retaining property to the widows by their families is beyond the abilities of the natal families. Widows are therefore forced to depend mostly on the natal families for provisions for their needs before they can recuperate to fend for themselves and their children.

Some families have been found to be overprotective to the widows. Whilst the widows themselves could have the energy to defend themselves and regain their property, the families of the widows become overly sensitive to the cultural belief systems. One of the widows did not pursue her case against property grabbing because her mother feared that she might be bewitched in the process of reclaiming property.

*'My mother assisted me and comforted me. She also warned me not to follow up the issue anymore because I may be bewitched because she also believes in witchcraft', (Braitha).*

The families may also distance themselves from the widow if the belief is that the widow may bring additional problems from where she was married (Dube, 2011). For that reason, one of the participants in the study named Nomai, could not be accepted back into her own family and

then became destitute together with her young children. Instead of getting help from the family, Nomai received secondary victimisation and was criticised for being a victim of property grabbing. After being victimised she resented getting help from anybody again. The role of the family as an interventional network did not bear fruit for her. This is what she had to say:

*'My family did not get me anywhere. At times my relatives laid the blame on me and called me 'FOOL'. This PAINS ME A LOT'.*

### **Friends**

Widows also attempted to seek recourse beyond families with the involvement of friends in their neighbourhood with the hope of that their problems could be solved. Sadly for the widows, these interventions too could not bear fruit. These were the revelations during the interviews with the widows:

*'I just tried to get help from my friends who are our neighbours who were also unable to assist me because they had no knowledge on how to help. The church gave me food', (Sophia).*

In ameliorating depression of the widows, de Vries, Utz, Caserta and Lund (2013) have found that friends have been instrumental and aided them with coping skills and better life satisfaction. Whilst friends play a greater role in facilitating psychological and physical health of the widows, (Ha & Ingersoll-Dayton, 2011), their role in social recourse for grabbed property remains less helpful for the widows in the district.

### **ii) Formal interventional networks for the widows**

#### **Religious leaders**

The debate on the church interventions for recourse on the problems of the widows is precarious. The church plays a critical role in restoring and instilling hope that God will intervene and providing strength to the widows with prayers and humanitarian assistance (Dube, 2016). Whilst the church is equipped with humanitarian assistance and instilling hope, it seems less equipped with recovering grabbed property from the widows in Binga District. What seemed to be within the abilities of the church was to provide spiritual needs and immediate human needs such as food, clothes and shelter. The findings of this study were consistent with the findings of the International Justice Mission (IJM), (2012) in Uganda, where after grabbing property widows become welfare cases and relied on others and the church for means for sustenance. While this can be helpful in some way, in the practical sense this dehumanises widows, self-esteem lowered and their dignity stripped away. The widows are further disempowered to take care of themselves, meet their own needs and the needs of their children, (Dube, 2017).

#### **Chiefs**

In some instances, the participants revealed that they sought legal intervention from the Chiefs who are constitutionally given the power to preside over community matters and settle disputes (Constitution of Zimbabwe Amendment (No. 20), Act 2013). Whilst Chiefs in Binga District can

be a source of legal intervention for the widows, this paper argues that their strong adherence to traditional practices and culture has a pulling down effect on their ability to effect a paradigm shift towards ensuring women's rights especially that Binga is a patriarchal society. An unprecedented time lag and hesitation in attending to the widows challenges can be expected. Further, most chiefs in the district are old in terms of age and lack formal training and modern-day knowledge about the rights of women including those of the widows. This is what two of the ten participants revealed during the interviews:

*"I approached the Chief who told us to go back talk about it", (Julia)*

*'I approached the Chief who tried to solve the problem. Unfortunately, it did not help and they persisted until I gave up in everything', (Otilia)*

### ***Non-governmental organisations (NGOs)***

The influx of the NGOs in Binga for many social problems is an indication of myriad of social problems in the district. Due to perennial droughts in the district, many of the NGOs have divided the district into many operational wards for the purpose of distributing food aid throughout the year. This has blinkered the NGOs to attend to food aid at the expense of the psychosocial and economic woes germane in property loss due to grabbing by in-laws (Dube, 2011). Nancy who was one of the participants received some advice from an organization called Ntengwe for Community Development Trust as to what to do about the property stripping she suffered. In corroboration of the importance of NGOs, Dube (2011) cites Walker et al (2004) [online] reporting testimonies by Josephine Nkomo, Simbanai Munguwa and Sanelisiwe Ncube in Zimbabwe as to intervention received from Zimbabwe AIDS Network (ZAN) and Matabeleland Widows Association.

In-as-much as the NGOs are critically important in providing legal recourse to the widows whose property was grabbed, the political landscape in Zimbabwe has created massive withdrawal of funding for NGOs from the donor community leading to closure of essential services to the widows and other vulnerable populations. There has been accusations from the government that the NGOs are a medium for channelling funds to opposition political parties vying for regime change in Zimbabwe (Dube, & Phethlo-Thekiso, 2018).

### ***Restraint from Social Recourse***

It is possible for widows in Binga District not seek recourse for grabbed property. Varied sociocultural reasons were provided by those who could not seek intervention. This suggests that they quietly submitted to property stripping. A total of five of the ten widows did not seek recourse. The widows' individual cultural belief system seem to have contributed greatly to their avoidance of any form of intervention which left them victims of abuse. Whilst families can hold such beliefs, the case of Julia is typical of how strong beliefs in witchcraft can be so strong as to instil fear and prevent action against the perpetrators of property grabbing. Julia, for example revealed:



*'I did not approach anybody for professional help because I was afraid that if I persist, I will be BEWITCHED'.*

The strength of belief in witchcraft and restraint in fighting for grabbed property has remarkably diverse consequences, always leaving the widow without economic resources to fend for her children when the husband dies. Izumi (2006) as cited by Dube (2011), found one reason widows avoid claiming grabbed property in that in-laws begin to suspect that the widow could be responsible for the death of their son if she fights for accrued and grabbed property. Most often in-laws use this to justify dispossession of property from the widows leaving them economically destitute and powerless. Dube and Phethlo-Thekisho, (2018) argue that economic consequences associated with property grabbing from the widows include loss of finances, land for farming and accrued property. Whilst Julia feared witchcraft, four other widows (Nomia, Mary, Julia Chipo and Zamani) reported that they did not approach anybody to seek help in intervening in their situations. Some of the reasons for not seeking help were that they felt foreign to the community people from which they could seek help since they were daughters-in-law in the communities where the property was grabbed. Three of the four widows who did not seek help had this to say:

*'I did not ask for any help', (Mary).*

*'Nobody. I never went that far', (Chipo).*

*'I did not ask for help because I did not know that help could be provided in our community', (Nomai).*

While these were the findings of this study in Binga District, in a Tonga cultural setting, women in Gutu where the Shona culture is predominant have used support groups locally available to voice their concerns and gain recourse (Mushangwe, 2015). Similarly, Dube (2011) reported women in South Africa could not pursue their cases because they feared to be ostracized by their communities and families even though they had access to lawyers.

## **DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

The findings of the study were interesting as widows seemingly either sought recourse or avoided seeking help for the problems of property grabbing. Social recourse sought was informal formal and formal in nature. In the following section, the article discusses the findings of the study.

### ***i) Informal social recourse for property grabbing from the widows***

The objectives of the study were firstly to determine the formal and informal interventions for widows who experienced property grabbing. Secondly, it was to discuss the extent to which the formal and informal social recourses could help solve property grabbing challenges experienced by the widows in Binga District. The critical discussion illustrates the extent to which these objectives have been reached.

Pursuant to the objectives of the study, findings are that the informal social recourses available for the widows in Binga District are the natal family and the friends. The natal family played a significant role in emotional and psychosocial support for the widows. Militating against the potentially good gesture provided to the widows, are the fervent cultural beliefs of the natal families. The families in Binga District have strong adherence to the belief in witchcraft where disputes needed solutions (Dube, 2011, Save The Children, 2009). Due to intense fear of witchcraft of the families, the families tended to be overprotective to the widows and advised them not to pursue recourse for grabbed property. The results being that the widows gave up and avoided the fight to recover the grabbed property leaving them socioeconomically destitute and circumstantially legitimate welfare cases. This meant that the land and finances needed for supporting themselves and their children drastically dwindled.

Analysis of the findings showed that even though the natal families could not manage to provide needed social recourse for the widows' grabbed property, their emotional support to the widows proved significant (de Vries et al, 2013). In spite of the significance of such family intervention, some widows sadly could not be accepted back into their natal families owing to fear of bringing the spirit of the dead into the family (Dube, 2011). The families believed that accepting the widows back into the family could bring the spirits of the dead into the family which further oppresses the widows, (Niswade, 2015), reducing them to objects of torture by their own families.

There is no policy that stipulates that friends should provide support to the widows, but it is by social arrangement and engagements. However, the friends have provided significant social and emotional support to the widows. Whilst the social support from friends, (de Vries et al, 2013), have been provided, the paper notes the inevitability of the lack of resources needed to fully support the widows. Further the same cultural beliefs, (Save the Children, 2009), that haunt families are equally intensive for the friends of the widow as these are common among community members in Binga. The friends of the widows have no power to influence recourse for grabbing property besides being a shoulder to cry upon.

**ii) *Formal social recourse for property grabbing from the widows***

The findings of the study in relation to formal social recourse for widows whose property was grabbed in the communities of Binga District was influenced by its spatial segregation and remoteness from the mainstream intervention process that could possibly be available for widows. This necessitated that widows seek intervention from locally available concerned stakeholders. The study gathered that formal social recourse for grabbed property for the widows was in the form of interventions by the religious leaders, chiefs and non-governmental organisations (Dube & Phethlo-Thekisho, 2018). These kind of formal interventions were those that the widows attempted and known to them in their local communities.

Religious leaders were instrumental in interventions for the plights of the widows (Save the Children, 2009). The religious leaders are trusted by the community of Binga District due to their compassion for those who befall victims of a social injustices of property grabbing. It is noteworthy that the religious leaders' abilities orbits around the provision of humanitarian needs, spiritual healing and social needs (Sande, 2019). Their functional roles in their churches based in the rural Binga District is by virtue of long service in their churches and become religious leaders

based on service as opposed to education. Eventually, this reduces their ability to handle widows' property inheritance matters. Undoubtedly, the intensity and critical issues resulting in property grabbing from the widows falls beyond the scope and skills base, (Magezi & Banda, 2017), of these religious leaders. Even though their psychosocial interventions are noteworthy, these however fall short of the needed impetuous focus for the widows to regain lost property.

The chiefs are locally based interventionists with most of the matters of property grabbing ending with their ruling in the matters. From the community leadership, they are the highest in authority (Muwaniri, 2014). The expectations of the widows who sought help from the chiefs was to succeed and be able to bring back the property and settle down any disputes. Unfortunately, those that sought recourse from the chiefs got disappointment as their property could not be regained. This gives the extent to which the property inheritance question is deeply seated in Binga District to an extent of disregarding the authority of top authority figures. Some of the plausible reasons for lack of success of the chiefs is their old age linked to strong cultural ethos (DuBois & Miley, 2014). The likelihood that there will be younger chiefs in the district is minimal since chiefdom is inherited with mainly older people occupying these top local leadership positions. This paves way for a skewed understanding of inheritance laws towards the traditional order where property can be shared within the family rather than the contemporary legal position of property being inherited by the surviving spouse. There is also a natural hesitation towards paradigm shift by the chiefs towards embracing contemporary measures towards property inheritance due to the patriarchal nature of the communities. This social position of the chiefs' treatment of the widows is widely condemned by rights theorists who view their acts as violation of the widows' human rights (Dube, 2017, Tshuma, 2014).

One significant finding was that the NGOs helped in interventions to provide recourse for the widows whose property was grabbed. The district has many NGOs operating in providing essential services to the people (Dube, 2016). The district is situated in the drought prone segment of the country of Zimbabwe and remote for provision of quality government relief programmes hence the NGO sector has found fertile ground for its operations. Whilst there is recognition of the NGO sector in the district, preference programmes of the NGOs have centred on drought relief with women's programmes receiving minimal programming despite the need. The district is a stronghold of the opposition party Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) which predisposes it to government scrutiny for suspicion that the NGOs are a channel for funding regime change in the country (Chakawarika, 2011). Many of the NGOs have abandoned the rights agenda whilst others have closed down due to lack of funding leaving women's property inheritance rights and recourse agenda abandoned.

### *iii) Restraint from social recourse*

Some of the participants in the study indicated that they did not seek help. This means they suffered the loss of inheriting property without attempting social recourses. An analysis of the findings from the participants showed that widows either gave up due to lack of energy to pursue their property or families advised them to avoid confrontation with their in-laws owing to fear of witchcraft (Save the Children, 2009). Some widows felt that they were foreign to the families of their late husbands and hence they were not properly positioned to question property inheritance matters when the property was grabbed. This analysis attests to the argument advanced by social

constructivist theorists that people have different explanations and experiences of their social world (Teater, 2010) and so is the case of the widows in Binga District.

It is clear from this discussion that social recourses for grabbed property are the easily accessible options for the widows whether formal or informal. However, these forms of recourses fall short of the needed outcomes. Widows need to regain lost property but the available avenues for social recourses have proven to have various shortcomings leaving the widows socioeconomically disempowered.

## **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION**

In lieu of the findings of the study, it can be concluded that locally available social recourses for property grabbing in Binga District are a less viable option for widows if they needed to regain property lost through grabbing by their in-laws. The current social recourses seems only suitable for meeting the psychosocial, spiritual, humanitarian needs and lessen the impact of property grabbing from the widows but not necessarily as recourses to recover grabbed property.

This paper further concludes that the context in which property grabbing from the widows happens in embedded with charges of cultural practices and beliefs passed on from one generation to another which makes property inheritance issues deeply emotional and people in the communities of Binga District are fervent to and less likely to abandon easily.

Additionally, some of the interventionist such as the chiefs and village heads that hold traditional powers to mediate in inheritance rights issues have strong adherence to traditional belief systems pursuant to cultural conservation. A paradigm shift and unlearning such believes towards the contemporary human rights approaches creates spaces of vulnerability to their powers and hence this becomes a precarious and sensitive matter leading to hesitation in assisting the widows. As recommendations, social work interventions based on well-planned and well-modelled practices are needed and the social marketing strategy necessary for creating awareness of the services provided to the widows by the entire community of Binga District be aggressively implemented.

Further, it is recommended that social work intervention embrace a holistic approach to the needs of the widows in tandem with other stakeholders and service providers in the communities of Binga District. This intervention can also be implementable at individual micro levels (Farley, Smith & Boyle, 2011; Shulman, 2012). This will ensure that all facets of the needs of the widows ranging from socioeconomic, spiritual, psychosocial and legal needs are met with emphasis on a viable referral system that connects the widows to well-trained interventionists equipped with contemporary human rights paradigms and practices to match with the current and global intervention trends.

Tapping into social capital is critical and sustainable. As such social workers should work with the current interventionists locally available in the district which are accessible and known to the community. This should happen at messo level where group capacitation of the current interventionists be a priority to allow parity with the demands and extent of the property inheritance problems of the widows in their local communities. The group approaches need a psycho-educational approach to meet their needs for better capacity (Pollak, 2015). The expectation should be that this approach be used to intervene in the plights of the widows.

At community or macro-level intervention, (Kirst-Ashman & Hull, 2010; Mbandazayo, 2012, Segal, Gerdes & Steiner, 2016), education of the members of the community is needed on contemporary property inheritance laws throughout the district to create awareness and critical consciousness among the community members.

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