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Modernisation, Education, and Widowhood Practices among the Epie People of Bayelsa State, Nigeria

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Abstract

The study is on educational attainment and attitude of Epie indigenes towards widowhood rites in Yenagoa, Bayelsa state. The study adopted survey research design with 370 structured questionnaires administered for data collection. 365 questionnaires were successfully retrieved and used for the analysis. The findings of the analysis confirmed that formal education influence attitude towards widowhood rites. It was also revealed that there is significant differences in attitude between indigenes with tertiary education and those without secondary education. The findings also confirm that significant differences exist in attitudes toward widowhood rites based on respondents' level of education, gender and age. Lastly, the study concluded that gender moderates the relationship between educational attainment and attitudes toward widowhood rites. Based on these findings, it was recommended that there should be proper scrutiny of the widowhood rites practices with necessary modifications or amendment made by the relevant authorities so as to expunge harmful parts of the practices. Secondly, workshops and enlightenment campaigns should be conducted mostly in rural communities where the level of education is low so as to reduce the harmful practices associated with widowhood rites.

Keywords: Modernization, Education, Widowhood Practice, Epie, Bayelsa

Introduction

Widowhood practices in African societies especially Nigeria reflect community identity and social control while balancing tradition and modernity, these practices vary widely among different communities but often impose rites and obligation on bereaved women linked to custom and social order, (Akinbi, 2011; Adeyemi, 2016; & Idialu,2012). In Bayelsa state, among the Ijaw people, these rites are life-cycle rituals, that show the resilience of indigenous beliefs despite foreign influence, (Adebayo, & Okoro,2023; Uche,2015).

Epie people a subgroup of Ijaw in Bayelsa state, in Yenagoa Local Government Area and have a distinct culture shown in their language and custom, (Ubodiom & Ifidi,2025; UKR, Publisher, 2024,). They follow widowhood rituals based on strong beliefs about death and spirits, which are slowly changing due to social factors, especially education. (Uche,2015) the link between

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cultural change and education has been widely studied. Increased investment in education, driven by oil revenue, has led to more educated individuals.

This paper examines how changes in educational levels, among Epie indigenes affects widowhood practices amid modernisation, it highlights the community response balancing tradition with change. This research therefore aims to explore the educational impact of widowhood practices gap among the Epie using primary survey data, it examines community reaction to modernisation and widowhood treatment, contributing to knowledge on culture, gender, and development in the Niger Delta. The study seeks to provide valuable findings for policies and community-based intervention to advance the dignity and rights of bereaved women in Bayelsa State and other areas.

The specific objectives are as follows:

i. To assess the extent to which formal education has influenced the attitudes of Epie indigenes toward traditional widowhood rites.

ii. To examine if difference exist in attitude towards widowhood rites between Epie indigenes who have attained tertiary education and those who have not completed secondary education.

iii. To determine whether differences exist in attitude toward widowhood rites based on respondents' level of education, gender, age, and community of origin.

iv. To contribute empirical evidence to the literature on cultural change, and whether educated women exhibit stronger opposition to oppressive widowhood rites than their male counterpart of equivalent educational level.

The study is guided by the following research questions:

i. How has improvement in formal educational attainment among Epie indigenes influence their attitude toward widowhood rites?

ii. Has there been any difference in attitude toward widowhood rites among Epie indigenes who have attained tertiary education and those who have not completed secondary education?

iii. Has there been any differences in attitude toward widowhood rites based on respondents' level of education, gender, age, and community of origin?

iv. Has gender moderated the relationship between educational attainment and attitudes toward widowhood rites, with educated women exhibiting stronger opposition to oppressive practices than their male counterpart of equivalent educational level.

Hypotheses

H_1: There is no significant positive relationship between the level of formal education attained by Epie indigenes and the likelihood of their rejecting or modifying oppressive widowhood rites.

H_2: There is no significant difference in attitude toward widowhood practices between Epie indigenes who have attained tertiary education and those who have not completed secondary education.

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H_3: There is no significant difference in attitude toward widowhood rites based on respondents' level of education, gender, age and community of origin.

H_4: Gender has not significantly moderated the relationship between educational attainment and attitudes toward widowhood rites, with educated women exhibiting stronger opposition to oppressive practices than their male counterparts of equivalent educational levels.

Concepts Clarifications

Widowhood and Widowhood Practices

Widowhood is the status a of a woman in patrilineal African societies, who has lost her husband by death and has thus been subject to various social, cultural, and legal redefinition of identity, rights, and responsibilities. The term widowhood practices in this context refer to the set of rites, restrictions, prescriptions and ceremonies that societies place on bereaved women during the mourning process, encompassing but not limited to seclusion, donning of prescribed clothing, dietary taboos, ritual bathing, hair shaving, disallowed to remarriage within a given time period. Nwosu (2018), more generally, refers to practices that are culturally approved by a community to address the social and spiritual implications of a married woman becoming a widow, in fact, these practices have social boundary-maintaining, spiritual protective, and communion-enhancing functions even when they cause a high burden on the women to which they are applied. Not every practice of widowhood is destructive; some societies have respectable grieving traditions which give grieving women social support.

The interest of this study is the particular practices which undermine the physical integrity, emotional wellbeing, economic security, dignity of widows, and the degree to which education and modernisation is altering such practices among the Epie people.

Modernisation

The multi-dimensional process by which societies experience structural, normative and institutional change that is linked to the dispersion of formal education and scientific rationality, market economies, democratic governance and openness to global cultural flows. Modernisation in the African context is not simply a process of replacing traditional forms with western forms, but rather a complex, contested, and incomplete process that generates hybrid social forms where modern and traditional aspects coexist and interact dynamically. Ogundele (2019) contends that the process of modernisation in sub-Saharan Africa has always generated what he calls modernity without rupture; a trend whereby communities internalise the institutional and technological aspects of modernity and experience a high degree of continuity in the cultural and normative structures, especially in the dimensions of gender relations, marriage and death rituals. The conceptualisation is very pertinent to the Epie case where the proliferation of the educational system has not led to the wholesale rejection of widowhood rituals but rather to the selective adaptation to suit the community itself in negotiating the conflicts between modernity and cultural identity.

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Social Change and Education

Social change is defined as a change of cultural norms, social structures, social institutions, and behaviour patterns over a period of time and education is generally known as one of the most effective agents of change in developing societies. Akinwale (2017) asserts in Nigerian that formal education is a process of cognitive liberation that gives individuals the resources to critically challenge accepted cultural practices, place local practices in larger normative contexts and express rights-based critiques of practices they view as oppressive or unjust. This emancipatory aspect of education is especially relevant to women, who are especially often the victims of the oppressing customary practices in the Nigerian societies and, when they have access to formal education, often start to develop a more conscious attitude toward their rights and entitlements. The education-social change relationship is however, not one-way in that educated people in Nigerian societies can also justify and legitimise traditional types of behaviour in more refined ways and the correlation between educational attainment and cultural attitudes is therefore mediated by a combination of factors such as the educational curriculum content, social contexts under which schooling is provided, the degree of community adherence to traditional practices.

Empirical Review

Widowhood Practices in Nigeria: An Overview

Empirical studies on widowhood in Nigeria are increasing, focusing on gender, cultures and human rights in Africa. Nzewi (2015) survey highlight the significant of widowhood amongst the southeastern Nigerian communities, such practices as forced seclusion, head shaving, wearing black or sackcloth clothing, ban on eating with other people, and even oaths of widowhood, where widows are made to swear before the elders of the community that they did not kill their husbands. Nzewi discovered that the younger and better educated women had a large proportion of expressing opposition to practices of enforcement such as the threat of social ostracism and spiritual condemnation, even educated women were often willing to perform rituals they disapproved privately. This result is significant to the current research as it indicates the difference between attitudinal change and behavioural change, where education might result in attitudinal change to widowhood rites before it leads to behaviour change in the actual practice of the rites.

A widowhood study among the Yoruba community of southwestern Nigeria, by Olatunji and Afolabi (2016) discovered a significant difference in attitudes between generations, which they attributed to the level of education. They found that women who had attained tertiary education were twice as likely to decline to comply with rites they found humiliating. This was more prevalent in urban settings where communal enforcement systems were less effective, like the Epie who are mainly found in urban, state capital.

Widowhood Practices in the Niger Delta and Ijaw Communities

The published literature on studies specifically targeting the Ijaw-speaking communities in the Niger Delta is rather sparse, but some valuable contributions can still be identified. Kpae and Igein (2017) explored widowhood customs in Ijaw communities in Rivers and Bayelsa States and reported a variety of rituals, including a three-month seclusion period during which the widow had to be kept in the inner part of the family compound, where she was forbidden to bathe,

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and had to be accompanied during visits. Kpae and Igein discovered that such practices had greatly diminished within the community where there was more educational attainment and exposure to Christian evangelical beliefs, which they consider two parallel yet different vectors of cultural change at work in the Ijaw communities. Notably, the authors observed that the weakening of traditional rites did not take place across all areas of widowhood practices; although physical ordeals had been eliminated in many societies, limitations on the right of widow regarding inheritance and remarriage still existed in many societies that had significantly altered other rites.

Okoro (2018) discussed the impact of the education of women in changing the norms of widowhood in the western Niger Delta and particularly in the Bayelsa State communities. In a survey conducted by Okoro on 240 people, it was observed that there was a statistically significant negative correlation between the level of education attainment and acceptance of dehumanising widowhood practices with women who had at least a secondary school certificate having a statistically significant lower likelihood of accepting the existence of dehumanising widowhood practices. Okoro also determined that educated widowed women were more prone to support provided by the church organisations and community women groups to resist or alter the rites implying that education interacts with organisational membership to create stronger resistance to harmful practices than either of the two. These results are directly used to make hypotheses of the current research that is expected to find the same tendencies in the Epie, as well as to test the mediation of gender and community sub-group difference.

The Role of Education in Transforming Harmful Traditional Practices in Nigeria

The concept of education and evil traditional practices in Nigeria has been described broadly in the literature, which introduces a valuable contextual background to the analysis of widowhood change among Epie. In a national survey of the linkage between female education and the acceptance of detrimental traditional rituals such as female genital cutting, child marriage and widowhood rituals, Madu and Afolabi (2019) utilized the national demographic and health survey data. Their discussion revealed that educational attainment was the best predictor of resistance to harmful traditional practices in Nigerian women compared to other variables such as urban residence, household income, and religious affiliation. According to the authors, this conclusion is a measure of the cognitive and normative change that comes with formal schooling, where women are enabled to construct the conceptual instruments to criticize the practices that contravene their rights as well as the social networks such as peer relationships with fellow educated women, which offer normative backing to resistance.

Egbe and Nwachukwu (2020) examined how cultural differences in minority ethnic groups in southern Nigeria were changing, particularly, the communities where the rate of educational growth had been higher than the national level because of the oil revenue-financed state investment. Their research established that the generation gap in attitude towards traditional practices in such communities was especially acute with the younger generations, who received more opportunities in terms of education, having a significantly more critical orientation towards practices that older generations could not challenge. The authors present this as a contemporary payoff of modernisation in the form of a cultural dividend of educational investment that emerges not in the homogenous abandonment of tradition but in the emergence of more reflexive, rights-conscious societies that can tell the difference between the practices they want to keep and those

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they are prepared to change or to drop. This framework is directly applicable to the Epie context and is used in the current study to explore the generational and educational difference in the attitudes to widowhood rites.

Community Responses to Modernity and Cultural Negotiation

Empirical literature recognizes the need to go beyond simple views of tradition and modernity in Nigerian communities. Eze (2021) studied how communities in Enugu State responded to legal pressures against traditional practices. He found that people adapt strategically, changing the visible part of their traditions while maintaining important symbolic and spiritual element intact. Eze findings align with the idea that modernisation is complex. Adeyemi and Olatunji (2022) study shows that educated women organisations in Edo and Delta state promote changes in widowhood practices by engaging with traditional rulers and community elders leading to formal changes.

Eteng and Akpan (2023) examined the topic of widowhood rites and human rights awareness among minority groups in the Akwa Ibom and Cross River States, particularly how the secondary and tertiary educational exposure can create rights awareness in bereaved women. In their survey, women who had received civic education programs, such as those on gender equality, customary law and constitutional rights, were much more aware of their rights than those who never received such programs and more inclined to seek institutional redress in cases where they were victims of harmful widowhood practices. The authors maintain that the content of education is equally important as its degree implying that the inclusion of rights-based and gender-sensitive content in school learning programs can significantly enhance the effects of educational growth on the transformation of culture. This observation leads to a significant policy implication on the context of Epie and introduces complexity to the conceptualisation of the education-widowhood relationship in the study.

Theoretical Framework

The paper is grounded on one complementary theory of modernisation.

Modernisation Theory

Parsons (1951), and later developed and perfected by development sociologists and Africanist scholars, modernisation theory is based on the belief that modernisation is a process of social development, a shift between traditional and modern versions of social organisation, values and behaviour. Contemporary applications of the modernisation theory have been criticised on the basis of its unilinear propensity to exalt Western forms of social organisation as the end-point of development; its fundamental claim that education, urbanisation, and economic change bring systematic demands to cultural change. The growth of formal education within the Epie setting is a major modernising agent that brings in fresh epistemological frameworks, legal consciousness and normative orientations that are in conflict with the traditional cultural practices such as those of widowhood. In the analysis of African development, Ocheni and Nwankw (2015) maintain that there has always been what they term as cultural dissonance within modernisation processes in Nigeria; the state of the community living simultaneous to both modern institutional structures and pre-modern cultural forms, resulting in hybrid forms of social behaviour. This paper builds on this observation to conceptualise the Epie experience of

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widowhood transformation as a cultural dissonance in the face of modernisation whereby education moderates, but does not entirely dictate the nature or speed of change.

Methodology

This research design is a quantitative survey research design, data analysis involved frequency, percentages, mean, and standard deviation, whereas hypotheses were analysed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation, ANOVA and Chi-Square test. The target population of the study was adult Epie indigenous people in Yenagoa Local Government Area in Bayelsa State, aged 18 years and above. The sample of 320 respondents was calculated by Taro Yamane sample size formular, from Epie adult population 12,000 with a confidence level of 95% and a margin error of 5%, drawn from 2006/2022 National Population Commission through stratified random sampling method. The study area was stratified into four Epie community clusters, respondent was randomly picked out of each cluster through systematic random sampling method where every household on community enumeration area were eligible to participate. Data were gathered through a structured questionnaire, consisted of four parts.

Section A (demographic details) such as age, gender, education level, community where they live, marital status and occupation category. Section B include questions that will assess respondent knowledge and personal experience of traditional Epie widowhood rites. Section C includes attitudinal items with five-point Likert scale (Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree) that measures the perceptions of respondents about the suitability, and desirability of certain practices associated with widowhood, and respondent's perception of the relation between widowhood rites and the rights and dignity of women. Section D to understand the perception of respondents with reference to change over time, how they perceived widowhood practices in their community have changed in the past decades and what they attribute to this change. Face and content validity of the questionnaire was evaluated by three experts in sociology, gender studies, and cultural anthropology. The reliability of the items, was determined by Cronbachs alpha coefficient with the minimum acceptable coefficient of 0.70. The interpretation of the results was based on a significant level of p 0.05.

Analysis

Demography

Table1: Age Range as at Last Birthday

Age Range	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
18-27	18	4.9	4.9	4.9
28-37	73	20.0	20.0	24.9
38-47	134	36.7	36.7	61.6
48-57	99	27.1	27.1	88.8
58andabove	41	11.2	11.2	100.0
Total	365	100.0	100.0	

Fieldwork, 2026

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Table1 shows that 18(4.9%) of the sampled respondents are within the age range of 18-27, 73(20.0%) are within the age range of 28-37, 134(36.7%) are within the age range of 38-47, 99(27.1%) are within the age range of 48-57 and 41(11.2%) are within the age range of 58 and above.

Table 2: Gender of Respondents

Gender	Frequency	Percent	ValidPercent	CumulativePercent
Female	180	49.3	49.3	49.3
Male	185	50.7	50.7	100.0
Total	365	100.0	100.0	

FieldWork,2026.

Table 2 shows that 180(49.3%) of the sampled respondents are female while 185(50.7%) are male.

Table 3: Marital Status

Marital Status	Frequency	Percent	ValidPercent	CumulativePercent
Single	90	24.7	24.7	24.7
Married	226	61.9	61.9	86.6
Widow/Widower	36	9.9	9.9	96.4
Separated/Divorced	13	3.6	3.6	100.0
Total	365	100.0	100.0	

Fieldwork, 2026

Table 3 shows that 90(24.7%) of the sampled respondents are single, 226(61.9%) are married, 36(9.9%) are widow/widower and13(3.6%) are divorced/separated.

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Table 4: Educational Level (Attain Tertiary education and not completed secondary education)

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Masters/Higher Degree	57	15.6	15.6	15.6
	B.Sc./HND	94	25.8	25.8	41.4
	Primary/Secondary	214	58.6	58.6	100.0
	Total	365	100.0	100.0	

Fieldwork, 2026

Table 4 shows that 57(15.6%) of the sampled respondents has Masters/Higher Degree, 94(25.8%) has B.Sc./HND degree and 214(58.6%) has Primary/Secondary.

Analysis on Descriptive Statistical Outcome

To assess the extent to which formal education has influenced the attitudes of Epie indigenes toward traditional widowhood rites.

Table 5: Mean and Standard Deviation of Formal Education and Traditional Widowhood Rites

S/n	STATEMENT	SA (4)	A (3)	D (2)	SD (1)	Mean	SD	
1	People with formal education has increased awareness of the harmful hazard of practices of traditional widowhood rites	175	171	5	14	3.39	.705	Accept
2	People with formal education are more likely to recognise the harmful part of traditional widowhood rites	202	140	13	10	3.46	.697	Accept
3	People with formal education are more likely to recognize widowhood rites that violates human rights	145	115	69	36	3.01	.992	Accept
4	People with formal education are more likely to identify widowhood rites that cause psychological trauma	177	170	5	13	3.40	.695	Accept
5	Without formal education, most people will not question the harmful part of widowhood rites	201	143	11	10	3.47	.689	Accept
	Grand Mean					3.35		

Survey and Computation, 2026.

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The criterion value for taking decision is the summation of all the Likert scale ratings divided by the number of ratings: 4+3+2+1=10/4=2.5

The analysis of the data using mean and standard deviation from table 5 show that the grand mean score of responses from the statements on formal education and traditional widowhood rites related factors is 3.35 which is above the criterion mean of 2.5. This means that majority of respondents affirm that formal education has influenced the attitudes of Epie indigenes toward traditional widowhood rites in Bayelsa State Nigeria. Also, all the individual statements presented on formal education and traditional widowhood rites related factors were all confirmed to influence attitude of Epie indigenes on widowhood rites with mean values that are all above the criterion value of 2.5.

To examine if there is significant difference in attitudes toward widowhood practices between Epie indigenes who have attained tertiary education and those who have not completed secondary education.

Table 6: Mean and Standard Deviation of widowhood practices between Epie indigenes who have attained tertiary education and those who have not completed secondary education.

S/n	STATEMENT	SA(4)	A(3)	D(2)	SD(1)	Mean	SD	
6	Higher education influences how to Interpret traditional widowhood rites.	204	122	29	10	3.04	.941	Accept
7	My educational background helps me to critically evaluate widowhood rites.	219	118	7	21	3.01	.974	Accept
8	My level of education has exposed me to different cultural beliefs and practices.	145	107	84	29	3.47	.796	Accept
9	My educational background helps me critically evaluate widowhood rites.	94	73	160	38	2.61	.982	Accept
10	The more educated a person is, the less likely they are to fully support traditional widowhood rites.	145	111	8	23	3.42	.754	Accept
11	Education has changed my perception of harmful cultural practices.	92	74	169	30	2.62	.952	Accept
	Grand Mean					3.03		

Survey and Computation, 2026.

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The analysis of the data using mean and standard deviation from table 6 revealed that the grand mean score of responses from the statements on widowhood practices between Epie indigenes who have attained tertiary education and those who have not completed secondary education is 3.03 is above the criterion value of 2.5.

This affirms that majority of respondents are of the opinion that there is significant difference towards widowhood practices between Epie indigenes who have attained tertiary education and those who have not completed secondary education. Also, all the individual statements presented on the variables are all above the criterion value of 2.5 indicating significant differences.

To determine whether significant differences exist in attitudes toward widowhood rites based on respondents' level of education, gender and age

Table 7: Mean and Standard Deviation of attitudes toward widowhood rites based on respondents' level of education, gender and age

S/n	STATEMENT	SA (4)	A (3)	D (2)	SD (1)	Mean	SD	
12	Older people have better knowledge of the reasons behind widowhood rites than younger people	97	78	137	53	2.60	1.032	Accept
13	Education has changed my perception of harmful cultural practices.	184	136	21	24	3.32	.853	Accept
14	Being male or female shapes how education influences my view of widowhood rites.	219	118	7	21	3.47	.796	Accept
15	Educated people are less likely to support harmful widowhood rites	87	51	180	47	2.49	.993	Reject
16	Younger people should lead the movement to change harmful widowhood rites	198	126	19	22	3.37	.837	Accept
17	It is easier for younger people to reject widowhood rites than it is for older people	214	117	8	26	3.42	.847	Accept
	Grand Mean					3.11		

Computation, 2026.

The analysis of the data using mean and standard deviation from tables 7 revealed that the mean score of responses from the statements on attitudes toward widowhood rites based on respondents' level of education, gender and age 3.11 is above the criterion mean of 2.5. This is a confirmation that majority of respondents are of the opinion that the statements presented that respondents' level of education, gender and age influences attitudes toward widowhood rites. Also, all the statements presented on widowhood rites and respondents' level of education, gender and age were all confirmed to have mean values that are all above the criterion value of 2.5

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To assess whether gender moderates the relationship between educational attainment and attitudes toward widowhood rites.

Table 8: Mean and Standard Deviation of gender moderating the relationship between educational attainment and attitudes toward widowhood rites

S/n	STATEMENT	SA (4)	A (3)	D (2)	SD (1)	Mean	SD	
18	Men are more likely to support traditional widowhood rites than women.	149	112	80	24	3.06	.943	Accept
19	Gender influences how individuals perceive widowhood rites.	165	133	48	19	3.22	.864	Accept
20	Women are more likely than men to oppose harmful widowhood rites	198	126	19	22	3.37	.837	Accept
21	Cultural expectations based on gender affect attitudes toward widowhood practices.	211	120	7	27	3.41	.852	Accept
22	Men and women interpret widowhood rites differently in my community.	125	79	135	26	2.83	.985	Accept
	Grand Mean					3.178		

The result of the analysis of the data using mean and standard deviation from table 8 revealed that the mean score of responses from the statements on gender moderating the relationship between educational attainment and attitudes toward widowhood rites is 3.178 which is above the criterion mean of 2.5. This affirms that majority of respondents are of the opinion that gender moderates the relationship between educational attainment and attitudes toward widowhood rites. Also, all the individual statements presented on gender moderating the relationship between educational attainment and attitudes toward widowhood rites were all confirmed with mean values that are all above the criterion value of 2.5.

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Table 9. Test of Hypotheses

In order to structure the empirical investigation and render the study's findings testable, the following hypotheses are postulated:

Decision rule: In all statistical tools, reject null hypotheses if p-value is less than 0.05 significance level.

Hypothesis1

Ho1: There is no significant positive relationship between the level of formal education attained by Epie indigenes and the likelihood of their rejecting or modifying oppressive widowhood rites.

Table 9: Correlation between level of formal education attained and the likelihood of their rejecting or modifying oppressive widowhood rites.

		Formal education attained	Likelihood of their rejecting or modifying oppressive widowhood rites.
Formal education	Pearson Correlation	1	.790**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.007
	N	365	365
Likelihood of their rejecting or modifying oppressive widowhood rites.	Pearson Correlation	.790**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.007	
	N	365	365

**.Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Source: Field Survey, 2026

The result of the Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Coefficient of .790 indicates that there is a significant positive relationship between the level of formal education attained by Epie indigenes and the likelihood of their rejecting or modifying oppressive widowhood rites. This implies that an improvement in the level of formal education result to the likelihood of their rejecting or modifying oppressive widowhood rites.

Ho2: There is no significant difference in attitude toward widowhood practices between Epie indigenes who have attained tertiary education and those who have not completed secondary education.

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Table10a: Educational Level and attitudes toward widowhood practices

Educational Level		Support the attitudes of Epie indigenes toward widowhood practices: Yes	No	Total
Attained tertiary education	Observed	27	158	185
	Expected	60.3	124.7	185.0
Have not completed secondary education.	Observed	92	88	180
	Expected	58.7	121.3	180.0
Total	Observed	119	246	365
	Expected	119.0	246.0	365.0

Table 10a shows the observed and expected frequencies of the responses of the relationship between those who had attained tertiary institution and those who have not completed secondary school with a yes or no response status. Out of a total of 185 respondents that have attained tertiary education, majority of 158 affirmed that there is significant difference in attitude toward widowhood practices between Epie indigenes who have attained tertiary education and those who have not completed secondary school while 27 said no to that hypothesis. Also, for respondent who have not completed secondary school, out of 180 total respondents, slight majority of 92 said yes to the hypothesis while 88 said no. Table 10b shows the Chi-square test of the table 10a above presenting the Chi-square calculated value and p-value that enables the researcher to draw conclusion based on the decision rule.

Table10b: Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	55.365[a]	1	.000
Likelihood Ratio	55.715	1	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	.473	1	.000
Nof Valid Cases	365		

cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 58.68. Computed only for a 2x2 table. The result of the Chi-Square test from table 10b above shows that the p-value = 0.000 is less than the level of significance (0.05), the null hypothesis was rejected and conclude that there is a relationship between educational level and attitude towards widowhood rites in Yenagoa, Bayelsa State.

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Ho_3: There is no significant differences in attitudes toward widowhood rites based on respondents' level of education, gender and age.

Table 11: ANOVAa

Model		Sum of Squares	df	MeanSquare	F	Sig.
1	Regression	19.981	3	6.660	39.926	.000[b]
	Residual	60.221	361	.167		
	Total	80.203	364			

a. Dependent Variable: No significant differences in attitudes toward widowhood rites

Predictors: (Constant), Age, Gender, Educational Level

The result of the ANOVA from Table 11 reveals that p-value 000 < 0.05 significance level. Therefore, based on the decision rule, the null hypothesis was rejected and the alternative hypothesis was accepted and conclude that there is significant differences in attitudes toward widowhood rites based on respondents' level of education, gender and age.

H_4: Gender has not significantly moderated the relationship between educational attainment and attitudes toward widowhood rites, with educated women exhibiting stronger opposition to oppressive practices than their male counterparts of equivalent educational level.

Table 12: Partial Correlation on the moderating effect of gender on the relationship between educational attainment and attitudes toward widowhood rites, with educated women exhibiting stronger opposition to oppressive practices than their male counterparts of equivalent educational level.

Control Variables			**Educational Attainment (EA)**	**Attitude (A)**	**Gender (G)**
-none-[a]	EA	Pearson's Correlation	1.000	.782**	.659**
		Significance (2-tailed)	.	.006	.006
		N	0	365	365
	A	Pearson's Correlation	.801**	1.000	.128**
		Significance (2-tailed)	.005	.	.005
		N	365	0	365
	G	Pearson's Correlation	.584**	.216**	1.000
		Significance (2-tailed)	.001	.001	.
		N	365	365	0
	EA	Pearson's Correlation	1.000	.584	
		Significance (2-tailed)	.	.005	
		N	0	365	365

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Gender (G)					
	A	Pearson's Correlation	.584***	1.000	
		Significance (2-tailed)	.005	.	
		N	365	**0**	365

a. Cells contain zero-order (Pearson) correlations
Source: Survey Data, 2026

Table 12 revealed from the result, the moderating influence of gender on the relationship between educational attainment and attitude toward widowhood rites, with educated women exhibiting stronger opposition to oppressive practices than their male counterparts of equivalent educational level.

The correlation between educational attainment, the predictor and attitude, criterion variables show a coefficient value of 0.782 where gender is not moderating which is a strong relationship. However, where gender is introduced, the correlation r value = 0.659 dropped slightly which is indication of the moderating effect of gender on the relationship between the variables which are also significant at P = 0.006 < 0.05. From the result the null hypothesis earlier stated is rejected. This means that gender has significant moderating effect on the relationship between educational attainment and attitude.

Cconclusion

The study shows that formal education has significant influence on traditional widowhood rites which is confirmed in the attitude differences toward widowhood practices. The study further confirmed that significant differences exist in attitudes toward widowhood rites based on respondents' level of education, gender and age with gender having a moderating effect on the relationship between educational attainment and attitudes toward widowhood rites. Tertiary education strongly influences attitude change towards widowhood practice. Educated women it was revealed among Epie indigene expressed strong disapproval towards harmful widowhood rites which necessitated rejection or modification of certain widowhood rites. The study affirm attitude change toward widowhood is outcome of the acquisition of formal education and modernization in Yenagoa.

Rrecommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following are recommended

1. There should be proper scrutiny of the widowhood rites practices with necessary modifications or amendment made by the relevant authorities so as to expunge harmful parts of the practices.
2. Workshops and enlightenment campaigns should be conducted mostly in rural communities where the level of education is low so as to reduce the harmful practices associated with widowhood rites.
3. Traditional institution should accept the reality of formal education and modernity in Yenagoa to let go of harmful widowhood rites.

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4. Good accept of the widowhood rite should be retained, refined to be at per with modern realities

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