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Challenges Faced by Widows in Khotang, Nepal: An Exploration through Bourdieu's Theory of Capital


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Abstract

This article explores the multifaceted challenges faced by widows through the lens of Pierre Bourdieu's theory of capital. The explorative and descriptive research design has been applied in this study. Primary data were collected using an interview schedule, and secondary data were collected from various websites and libraries. The study shows that widows have significantly reduced their economic capital, experienced food insecurity, faced systemic difficulties in employment, and had difficulty earning sustainable livelihoods due to a lack of access to credit. Social capital is precarious, and they do not participate in family support and community activities. Cultural capital is limited, as widows lack legal awareness, and low education levels restrict empowerment. Traditional gender norms persist. This article argues that structural inequalities perpetuate the marginalization of widows. So, intensive research will be needed on the widow's situation, applying cross-causation of three capitals like economic capital, social capital, and cultural capital.

Keywords: widow, Bourdieu's capital, economic marginalization, social exclusion, gender norms

Challenges Faced by Widows in Khotang, Nepal: An Exploration through Bourdieu's Theory of Capital

Widowhood is a tragic condition of living alone as a widow or a widower after the death of the husband or wife. The culture of widowhood has existed since the beginning of time and has been passed down from generation to generation (Adeyemo, 2016). While the challenges faced by widows vary across cultures and contexts, the intersection of gender, social status, and economic resources consistently shapes their post-widowhood trajectories. Oloko (2001) highlights the degrading and inhuman widowhood rites in Nigeria. These rites often include a seven-day confinement in a specific room, dressing in black or dark clothes, and, in most cases, shaving the widow's hair. Mourning may last up to three months, while dressing in dark colors can last from three months to one year. These culturally, religiously, and familially deep-rooted traditions reflect the social challenges faced by widows.

A married woman becomes a widow after the death of her husband. Death is a natural occurrence, but the social and cultural contexts that make her a widow also contribute to the process. Being a widow means experiencing deep grief, the painful and tragic loss of a spouse (Hardy-Bouger, 2008). It is one of the most painful and stressful life events. It is a highly distressing event (Shear, 2015; Stroebe et al., 2017). Mental health problems arise due to the death of a husband. Some widows suffer from depression and anxiety. According to Blanner et al. (2021), widows mainly depend on friends and family for both emotional and practical support; however, some experience loneliness as a result of their loved ones' decreased contact after the loss. Counseling and support groups are helpful, but results differ. The study emphasizes how important it is to have steady social and professional support while you're a widow. Bourdieu's concept of capital, encompassing economic, social, cultural, and symbolic forms, provides a valuable lens through which to analyze the multifaceted inequalities experienced by widows. Economic capital, encompassing material resources, is crucial for economic security and independence. Social capital, referring to networks of relationships, provides crucial support and access to resources. Cultural capital, embodied in education and skills, influences access to employment and social mobility. Finally, symbolic capital, representing social prestige and recognition, impacts social standing and self-perception. The loss of a husband often signifies a significant decline in a woman's access to these forms of capital, particularly economic and symbolic capital. The number of widows in Nepal is significant. 799,744 households have at least one widow. That is, 12 percent of households have at least one widow, while 2 percent of households have single women who are not

widows. Of these, 5 percent are living in rented accommodation (National Statistics Office, 2024).

Widows have different social and economic conditions. Still, not all widows have access to safe drinking water. 7.35% of widow households do not have a safe drinking water source. 56% of widows use firewood for cooking. About 40% of widow households have health risks. The literacy rate of widows is only 18.95%. The literacy rate is even lower in Madhesh Province. The number of widows with education up to the bachelor's level is low. Only 7.5% of households have a widowed woman as the head of the household. Only 23.45% own real estate in the name of the widow. More than half of widows are not economically active (National Statistic Office, 2024).

The female population of the Dirpung Chuichumma Rural Municipality is 50.67%. The literacy rate of females is 69.50%. The population based on the caste/ethnicity, Chhetri, is in the first place, which is 32.70% of the total population. Rai is in the second place with 30.01%. Similarly, Tamang is 6.58%, Magar is 5.41%, etc. The total number of widows is 152 (Diprung Chuichumma Rural Municipality, B. S. 2079). This study examines widows in Diprung Chuichumma Rural Municipality, applying Pierre Bourdieu's theory of capital. The specific objectives of this paper are as follows:

- To find out the economic challenges faced by widows.
- To analyze the social capital of widows.
- To explore the cultural capital of widows.

Research Methods

The total number of widows in this study is 152. From this, 35 widows were selected as a sample using a simple random sampling method. Based on the objectives of this study, an exploratory and descriptive design has been used. This design is relevant for exploring the economic capital, social capital, and cultural capital of widows. The nature of the data is quantitative. Independent variables of economic capital include income, property, and employment. Independent variables of social capital include support networks, community relations, and cultural capital, including education and legal awareness. These data have been collected by visiting the study area. Interview schedules have been used as the main tool for collecting information. The main reason for this is that not all widows in this rural municipality were educated. The data obtained have been interpreted as an average of descriptive statistics. With the help of the Social Security Branch staff, it was easy to make a good relationship and build rapport. The respondents were provided with information about the study's purpose, procedures, and potential risks. If they had further questions, they were

allowed to ask questions. The interview schedule was filled only after obtaining informed consent from the respondents. Respondent's convenient time was taken. Respondent's name and contact details were removed during data analysis and presentation.

Results

All the data presented through tables in this section of the paper are based on the fieldwork conducted by the author in 2024.

Economic Capital

Table 1

Distribution of the Respondents by The Change in Income After Becoming A Widow

S.N.	Change in income	Respondents	Percentage
1	Greatly Decreased	9	25.71
2	Somewhat decreased	22	62.86
3	No change	3	8.57
4	Somewhat increased	1	2.86
Total		35	100.00

The table presents the change in income after becoming a widow. Out of the total respondents, 88.6% said their income had decreased after the death of their husband. A quarter of respondents (25.71%) experienced a 'greatly decreased' income. The majority (62.86%) experienced 'somewhat decreased' income. Only a small minority (8.57%) reported no change in income. Being a widow frequently results in unstable economic circumstances because many women rely on the marital tie for financial stability, especially in cultures where women have few property rights or are underrepresented in the formal workplace.

Table 2

Distribution of the Respondents by The Ownership of Inherited Assets

S.N.	Inherited assets	Response					
		Yes	Percent	No	Percent	Total	Percent
1	Land	19	54.29	16	45.71	35	100.00
2	House	21	60.00	14	40.00	35	100.00
3	Livestocks	30	85.71	5	14.29	35	100.00

The table presents the distribution of respondents based on the ownership of inherited assets, including land, houses, and livestock. Among the 35 respondents, a majority (54.29%) reported inheriting land, while 45.71% did not. Ownership of inherited houses was slightly higher, with 60% of respondents indicating they had inherited a house, and 40% reporting

they had not. The majority (85.71%) of respondents own inherited cattle, and only 14.29% not, livestock seems to be the most often inherited asset. This data indicates that livestock is the most prevalent form of inherited property among the respondents, likely reflecting the agricultural societies. The comparatively lower percentages for land and house inheritance may indicate either fewer available assets in these categories or differing patterns of property transfer within families.

Table 3

Distribution of The Respondents by Experience of Food Insecurity

S.N.	Experience of food insecurity	Respondents	Percentage
1	Never	12	34.29
2	Sometimes	18	51.43
3	Often	5	14.28
Total		35	100.00

The table illustrates the respondents' experience of food insecurity. Out of the total respondents, 12 (34.29%) had never experienced food insecurity, and therefore, less than a third of the respondents had sufficient access to food. However, the majority, 18 or 51.43%, of respondents faced food insecurity 'sometimes', suggesting more than half had to deal with periodic shortages. Additionally, 5 (14.28%) also reported 'often', indicating food insecurity, which is a significant proportion of the respondents having frequent shortages in food availability. These findings illustrate that while some individuals had constant food security, the overwhelming majority (65.7%) of individuals had food insecurity at varying frequencies, with the rest having it frequently. This indicates the prevalence of food access issues among the surveyed population.

Table 4

Distribution of the Respondents by Access to Employment

S.N.	Access to employment	Respondents	Percentage
1	Easy	4	11.43
2	Difficult	25	71.43
3	None	6	17.14
Total		35	100.00

Table 4 presents the distribution of the respondents by access to employment. Out of the 35 respondents, 71.43% reported that access to employment was difficult, while 17.1% indicated they had difficulty accessing employment. In contrast, only 11.43% perceived employment

access as easy. This distribution underscores a critical challenge in the labor market, where a combined 88.67% of respondents faced either significant difficulties or complete exclusion from employment opportunities. The findings reveal significant variations in respondents' experiences in that a majority of them encounter huge barriers in accessing jobs.

Table 5

Distribution of the Respondents by Access to Credit

S.N.	Access to credit	Respondents	Percentage
1	Easy	4	11.43
2	Difficult	25	71.43
3	None	6	17.14
Total		35	100.00

The table shows the respondents' distribution according to their credit availability. Out of the total respondents, only 4 (11.43%) of the respondents said they had easy access to credit.

While 6 respondents (17.14%) had no access to credit at all, the majority of 25 respondents (71.43%) said that getting credit was difficult. This indicates that a considerable proportion of the respondents faced difficulties in acquiring credit, with a minority finding it easily available. The results show that most respondents may face obstacles while trying to obtain credit.

Social Capital

Table 6

Distribution of the Respondents by Living Arrangement

S.N.	Living arrangement	Respondents	Percentage
1	Living alone	4	11.43
2	Living with an unmarried offspring	13	37.14
3	Living with a married son	16	45.71
4	Living with a relative	2	5.71
Total		35	100.00

The table presents data on the household living arrangements. Out of 35 respondents, the majority, 45.71%, lived with a married son, which reveals a strong cultural preference for patrilocal residence, where elderly parents typically live with their married male offspring. A high percentage (37.14%) lived with unmarried children, which may represent transitional living arrangements or economic interdependence between generations. Few lived alone (11.43%) and very few live with relatives (5.71%), indicating that independent living is not

the norm for the widows. These findings are indicative of the predominance of traditional multigenerational household structures, perhaps fueled by cultural expectations and economic necessity. The low rate of lone living arrangements could be evidence of either extremely good family support systems or limited availability of independent living options.

Table 7

Distribution of the Respondents by Receiving Familial Support

S.N.	Receiving familial support	Respondents	Percentage
1	Never	6	17.14
2	Sometimes	23	65.71
3	Always	6	17.14
Total		35	100.00

The table shows the extent of familial support received by respondents. Out of the total respondents, the majority of respondents (65.71%) receive family support only 'sometimes', 17.14% either always give or never give support at all, signifying polarization in family support systems where some have regular support while others are excluded completely. These findings suggest very large differences in family support networks, with the majority of the respondents experiencing irregular assistance. Meanwhile, the high percentage without assistance (17.14%) is an issue about vulnerable respondents who lack family support networks.

Table 8

Distribution of the Respondents by Relationship with the Neighbour

S.N.	Relationship with neighbour	Respondents	Percentage
1	Strong	9	25.71
2	Moderate	22	62.86
3	Weak	4	11.43
Total		35	100.00

The table shows the respondents' relationship with their neighbour. Out of the total respondents, 62.86% reported having a 'moderate' relationship, 25.71 % reported a 'strong' relationship, and 11.43% said 'weak relationship with neighbours. The data indicate that respondents' relationships with neighbors are at a moderate level of social connectedness within the community. Deeper social ties and possibly stronger support systems within their community are less available.

Table 9*Distribution of the Respondents by Participation in Community Activities*

S.N.	<i>participation in community activities</i>	Respondents	Percentage
1	Never	15	42.86
2	Sometimes	18	51.43
3	Often	2	5.71a
Total		35	100.00

The frequency of respondents' participation in community activities is displayed in the table.

Among the 35 respondents, the majority (51.43%) sometimes participate in community activities, while a large portion of the respondents (42.86%) never do. Only two persons, or 5.71% of the respondents, participate often. This indicates that although over 50% of respondents are at least somewhat interested in their community, a large portion do not participate at all, and only a small percentage are consistently active. The information suggests that responders' community involvement is not satisfactory.

Table 10*Distribution of the Respondents by View on Widow Allowance*

S.N.	<i>View on widow allowance</i>	Respondents	Percentage
1	Sufficient	3	8.57
2	Insufficient	14	40.00
3	Neutral	18	51.43
Total		35	100.00

The table shows the views of respondents on widow allowances. Most of the respondents did not care about the current widow allowances (51.43% or 18 people). A significant percentage (40% or 14 people) thought the allowance is insufficient, as opposed to a small percentage (8.57%) who thought they are sufficient. This means that although there is no consensus, more of the respondents tend towards the allowances being too little as opposed to being just enough.

Cultural Capital

Table 11*Distribution of the Respondents by Educational Status*

S.N.	Educational status	Respondents	Percentage
1	Illiterate	3	8.57
2	Only read & write	11	31.43

3	Basic Education	14	40.00
4	Secondary	5	14.29
5	Higher education	2	5.71
Total		35	100.00

The table shows the educational status of respondents. Out of the total respondents, 31.43% of respondents can only read and write, whereas the majority (40%) have only a basic education. About 14.29% have completed secondary level school, and 5.71% have higher education. A small percentage (8.57%) is illiterate. This shows that while most people have some education, the majority have only basic or limited literacy skills, with very few attaining higher education.

Table 12

Distribution of the respondents by the Access the Means of Communication

S.N.	Means of communication	Response					
		Yes	Percent	No	Percent	Total	Percent
1	TV	10	28.57	25	71.43	35	100.00
2	Radio	12	34.29	23	65.71	35	100.00
3	Mobile Phone	30	85.71	5	14.29	35	100.00

The table shows the respondents' access the means of communication. Most of them (85.71%) utilize mobile phones and thus make it the most common medium of communication. Few respondents use TV (28.57% or 10 respondents) and radio (34.29% or 12 respondents). The data proves that despite how convenient mobile phones are, traditional media like radio and TV are not common among the respondents.

Table 13

Distribution of the Respondents by The Awareness of Legal Rights

S.N.	Do you agree with being aware of legal rights?	Respondents	Percentage
1	Agree	6	17.14
2	Netural	10	28.57
3	Disagree	19	54.29
Total		35	100.00

The table shows respondents' awareness of their legal rights. Out of 35 respondents, most (54.29%) disagree that they are aware of their legal rights, indicating low legal awareness. About 28.57% are neutral, while only 17.14% agree that they know their legal rights. Data indicate that a majority of respondents lack proper knowledge about their legal rights.

Gender Norms (Habitus)**Table 14***Distribution of the Respondents by the Opinion Towards Widow Remarriage*

S.N.	Do you agree with widow remarriage?	Respondents	Percentage
1	Agree	18	51.43
2	Netural	10	28.57
3	Disagree	7	20.00
Total		35	100.00

The table presents Respondents' opinions regarding widow remarriage. The majority (51.43%) of the respondents agree with widow remarriage. A lesser minority (20%) disagrees, whereas roughly 28.57% are neutral. This suggests that while a smaller percentage of respondents are opposed, over half of them are in favor of widow remarriage.

Table 15*Distribution of the Respondents by Their Attitude Towards Widow Remarriage*

S.N.	Do you agree that a widow should not participate in public spheres?	Respondents	Percentage
1	Agree	8	22.86
2	Neutral	11	31.43
3	Disagree	16	45.71
Total		35	100.00

The table presents survey findings on respondents' attitudes towards public participation by widows. Of the 35 respondents, nearly half (45.71% or 16 individuals) reported disagreement with restrictions on public participation by widows, depicting liberal social orientations. Quite a sizable group (31.43% or 11 respondents) was undecided in either direction, possibly reflecting ambiguity or middle standpoints. Then, 22.86% (8 individuals) supported controls over public participation by widows, perhaps reflecting lingering traditional orientations. These findings show a generally favorable attitude towards the public participation of widows in the sample surveyed, though counterarguments do still exist. The high rate of neutrality may well lead to further investigation into underlying societal or cultural influences on these attitudes.

Table 16*Distribution of the Respondents by Their Opinion on Social Restriction*

S.N.	Do you agree that social restrictions for widows regarding wearing colour?	Respondents	Percentage
1	Agree	7	20.00
2	Neutral	11	31.43
3	Disagree	17	48.57
Total		35	100.00

The table reveals respondents' opinions on social restrictions for widows regarding clothing and color choices. Among the total respondents, nearly half (48.57%) disagree with such restrictions, reflecting progressive attitudes. About one-third (31.43%) remains neutral, possibly indicating uncertainty or moderate views. Meanwhile, 20% of the respondents agree these social restrictions, suggesting some adherence to traditional norms. Overall, the majority oppose restrictive practices for widows, though a notable minority still supports restricting policies for widows. These findings highlight changing social attitudes while acknowledging persistent traditional beliefs.

Discussion

Weir et al. (2002) highlight that poverty rates correlate more strongly with duration of widowhood than age itself, emphasizing the persistent economic vulnerability of younger widows. These insights underscore the life-stage-specific financial risks tied to spousal loss. Burkhauser et al. (1991) conclude that widowhood is associated with significant declines in economic well-being, primarily due to the loss of both a spouse and their economic contributions. Zick and Smith (1991) argue that the widow household faces higher poverty risk than the general population, and financial difficulties can last for up to five years after a loss. Their long-term research shows how widowhood has a detrimental, long-lasting effect on financial security.

Bourdieu's theory of capital provides a valuable lens to the main findings of this study related to economic capital. The data show that the loss of income sources after the death of the husband leads to a dramatic decline in economic capital due to widowhood. According to Bourdieu, economic capital determines the social status of the widow. The loss of income must force the widow to face economic hardship. This directly affects the process of building social and cultural capital. At the same time, it brings about a fundamental change in the socio-economic status. The inheritance patterns of the husband's property (livestock 85.71%, house 60%, land 54.29%) present the widow with the status of heir to the property. The property rights have not been fully transferred to the widows. According to Bourdieu, it is an

incomplete transformation of capital forms. Widows face the problems of food insecurity. The widows lack economic capital to meet their daily subsistence needs. 88.57% of widows face barriers to employment and access to credit. This depletion of economic capital further disadvantages widows. Widows are unable to convert other forms of capital (social networks, education) into economic opportunities. This contributes to the reproduction of inequality.

The inability of widows to translate their inherited wealth into stable incomes reveals limitations in capital transformation, especially in patriarchal economic systems that continue to challenge women. The specificities of economic capital embedded in social structures continue to disadvantage widows and continue to do so. It is not the widows' failures but the obstacles to socially reproducing them. This analysis reveals how Bourdieu's framework helps us to go beyond surface-level poverty statistics to understand the structural mechanisms that maintain widows' economic marginalization. Consistent patterns across different economic sectors suggest deep-seated sectoral dynamics that require targeted interventions at both the individual and systemic levels.

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helps us to go beyond surface-level poverty statistics to understand the structural mechanisms that maintain widows' economic marginalization. Consistent patterns across different economic sectors suggest deep-seated sectoral dynamics that require targeted interventions at both the individual and systemic levels. The findings of this research are also supported by the argument of Hurd and Wise (1987) that the previously accumulated wealth also decreases after the death of the husband. This causes the widow to face financial problems.

Blanner et al. (2021) widows tend to experience severe social isolation in couple-based settings, with holidays worsening the situation due to lost shared routines. Chronic loneliness is known to initiate crises of identity and, in extreme cases, suicidal tendencies, which makes developing targeted support systems during this vulnerable stage of life an absolute necessity.

Priyadarshini and Pande (2021) concluded that the Indian society, the socio-economic and cultural environment has marginalized the widow. The widow has to accept the religious and cultural environment to adapt and survive in the society. The only solution for the widow is to follow the norms of Hindu widowhood. Hindu widowhood rules control dress code, diet, social relations and sexual behavior. The environment of the widow is surrounded by the codes of Hindu widowhood. This controls the freedom of the widow.

In Nepal, the dress code discriminates between men and women. The dress code and color code for married women are determined by the socio-religious environment. Similarly, religious and cultural norms prohibit widows from wearing red clothes, red bangles, and red *Tikas* (Upreti & Adhikary, 2009).

Social capital is an important capital in Pierre Bourgeois's capital theory. In this article, social capital is measured based on the concept of widows' living arrangement, receiving familial support, neighborhood relations, community participation, and widow allowance. The data on the widow's living arrangements shows the situation of family relations. It presents the state of widows' housing and security. The family capital of widows living alone (11.43%) and living with relatives (5.71%) is weak. This shows the weak condition of family security for these widows. The practice of living with a married son represents symbolic capital (patriarchal value). It helps to reproduce social values. Social capital is measured based on the receipt of family support. In this way, 17.14% of widows said that they never receive support from their family, which indicates that their social capital is weak. Since the majority of respondents said that they only received family support sometimes, it indicates that social capital is unstable based on family support. When measuring the social capital of widows based on neighborhood relations, it was found that

they have a moderate relationship with their neighbors. This shows that the social capital of widows is moderate. 11.43% of the respondents have weak relationships with their neighbors, which indicates that they have low social capital. 42.86% of the respondents never participate in community activities, which can be understood as their lack of social capital and symbolic capital. The respondents' expressed opinions on the provision of widow allowance by the government help to analyze the interrelationship of economic and social capital. Since 40% of the respondents expressed the opinion that the old-age allowance is inadequate, it can be argued that they are in a weak state of social capital. Thus, according to the bourgeois theory, widows who have strong ties with their families are safe, while those who live alone or do not receive support are deprived of social capital, which makes their lives difficult.

Upreti and Adhikary (2009) consider patriarchy to be the main enemy of widows in Nepali society. Deeply rooted patriarchal norms stigmatize widows. Widows are subjected to offensive language such as *abhagini* (unfortunate woman), *alachhini* (evil-signed women) and social marginalization. Widowhood is considered inauspicious. Therefore, their participation in religious and social ceremonies is restricted. Interactions within the household and with relatives are controlled and interactions with men outside are discouraged. They stay away from social activities due to social condemnation and surveillance. As a result, loneliness is reinforced.

Bourdieu (1998) considers knowledge, skills, and education to be forms of cultural capital. In this study, cultural capital is measured based on the educational status of widows, access to communication, legal awareness, and adherence to traditional gender norms. The low level of respondents with high educational status and illiteracy indicates that the institutional cultural capital of widows is limited. It leads to reduced access to the legal sphere for widows. Employment opportunities are limited. It reduces the ability to oppose oppressive values. Comparatively, highly educated widows have cultural capital, which enables them to understand legal rights and oppose restrictive norms and values. Illiterate and basic educated widows are unable to challenge traditional expectations and norms. The cultural capital of widows can be analyzed based on access to communication. According to the data, 85.71% of respondents use mobile phones. It facilitates the interaction of widows, so they do not feel lonely. It helps to break the sphere of widows within the house. But still, some widows lack cultural capital that can go beyond the home due to a lack of access to communication. 54.29% of respondents are unaware of their legal rights, which means they have low cultural capital. Respondents who understand legal rights can seek their rights and reject social dress codes, color codes, and participation codes. Habitus (internalized social

structure) shapes widows' attitudes towards remarriage, public participation, and dress codes. When asked whether widows should remarry, 51.43% supported this. This shows changing habitus. Cultural capital, such as communication, education, legal knowledge, participation in the public sphere, etc., gradually changes habitus. Thus, widows with high cultural capital gradually change patriarchal norms and values. Similarly, widows with limited capital are controlled by traditional habitus and continue to perpetuate traditional norms and values.

Conclusion

While grieving and suffering from the death of a husband, widows seem to be forced to suffer more social and cultural pain. Based on the data obtained, widows are facing multifaceted challenges. Lack of economic capital, social capital and cultural capital has made it difficult for widows to live their lives. It further contributes to the economic, social, and cultural marginalization of widows. The social structure continues to be perpetuated. With the death of a husband, financial stability is rapidly declining due to loss of income, incomplete inheritance rights, and obstacles to access to employment and credit. It also reduces the economic chances of the widow. It renders the life of the widow difficult. According to Bourdieu's theory of capital, widows who can build economic capital can easily build other capital. The state of other capital also helps in converting hereditary wealth into sustainable livelihoods. Widows with social capital and cultural capital can easily transfer ancestral property. Low capital widows easily adopt gender equality in the patriarchal regime. Gender inequality continues to exist.

Based on the data obtained, widows with loneliness and weak family support have low social capital. Widows with low participation in community activities have low social capital. Thus, low social capital plays a supporting role in further reducing cultural capital. For example, widows have to face dress codes, prohibitions on rituals, stigma, etc. Education and legal awareness help some widows challenge such beliefs. However, traditional structures limit the autonomy of widows. It continues to reduce the cultural capital of widows and helps to strengthen patriarchy.

The difficulties faced by widows are not due to personal reasons but to socio-cultural reasons. It is necessary to break down the systemic barriers that hinder widows from building economic, social, and cultural capital. Although widows' social capital and cultural capital provide some strength to break down these patriarchal barriers, legal reforms, financial support programs, and social efforts to eradicate patriarchal norms are needed in this area. Based on the data obtained, widows are facing multifaceted challenges. Lack of economic capital, social capital, and cultural capital has made it difficult for widows to live their lives.

This further contributes to the economic, social, and cultural marginalization of widows. The social structure continues to be perpetuated. With the death of a husband, financial stability is rapidly declining due to loss of income, incomplete inheritance rights, and obstacles to access to employment and credit. It further weakens the widow's economic opportunities. This makes the widow's life difficult. According to Bourdieu's theory of capital, widows who can build economic capital can easily build other capital. The state of other capital also helps in converting hereditary wealth into sustainable livelihoods. Widows with social capital and cultural capital can easily transfer ancestral property. Widows with low capital easily accept gender equality within the patriarchal system. Gender inequality persists.

As per the data obtained, widows with loneliness and weak family support have low social capital. Widows with low participation in community activities have low social capital. Thus, low social capital plays a supporting role in further reducing cultural capital. For example, widows have to face dress codes, prohibitions on rituals, stigma, etc. Education and legal awareness help some widows challenge such beliefs. However, traditional structures limit the autonomy of widows. This continues to reduce the cultural capital of widows and helps to strengthen patriarchy.

The difficulties faced by widows are not due to personal reasons but to socio-cultural reasons. It is necessary to break down the systemic barriers that hinder widows from building economic, social, and cultural capital. Although widows' social capital and cultural capital provide some strength to break down these patriarchal barriers, legal reforms, financial support programs, and social efforts to eradicate patriarchal norms are needed in this area. The finding shows that the precarious situation of widows is based on Pierre Bourdieu's concepts of economic capital, social capital, and cultural capital. Further research seems relevant to study the cross-causation among these capitals in more depth. The findings of such cross-causation research will help make the policy related to social security widow allowance more effective.

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