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Abstract

This research paper contributes to the existing literature, and debates on bride price. The study grounds its analysis of experiences, perspectives and lived realities of men and women who have been married and their bride price has been paid using interviews to voice the missing piece in literature. The research argues that bride price is widely supported because it is believed to formalise marriages, unify families involved, maintain Rwandan culture, and a way of appreciating the bride's family. On men's side, bride price helps them to fulfil their need for a sense of "real manhood" and hegemonic masculinities – granting them greater control over women through an act of payment. The findings revealed that a significant number of women have been socialised to believe that payment of bride price brings them respect among parents and their peers and see non-payment as depriving them of certain advantages in society. The paper recommends that future research should include the perspectives of men who have failed to meet the bride price requirements to find out the challenges associated to the failure to meet the societal expectations.

Keywords:

Bride price, Marriage, Masculinities, Patriarchy, Family, Rwanda

CHAPTER ONE

Bride price in Rwanda

Bride price tradition is a material condition for maintaining culturally assumed masculine identity and authority in marriage (Sedziafaa, et al., 2019;p3).

1.1 Introduction

In many African countries, bride price payment is a valued tradition as it serves a purpose of formalising marriages before the partners are officially recognised as husband and wife. “Bride price is a foundation for validating customary marriages across African countries” (Asia, 2021; P 144). The practice involves the exchange of tangible gifts such as livestock, cash, goats, or sheep, depending on the specific societal norms. However, modernisation and westernisation has introduced new and “modern’ gifts like land titles, electronics, furniture, home theatre systems, cars, and other items alongside the traditional offerings. The introduction of the modern approach to paying bride price has transformed the practice into a conspicuous display of affluence leading to the payment of unreasonable amounts – beyond the financial means of prospective grooms with lower income background (Moore 2013).

Feminists, activists of women’s rights, politicians and others are characterising this practice of paying bride price as being associated with the violation of women’s human rights, violence against women and as a mechanism through which women are commodified, asserting that the institution of bride price contravenes the principle of equality between men and women in marriage, is discriminatory, and undermines the dignity of women contrary to constitutional provisions. However, the tradition still retains cultural significance and continues to be widely practiced today in Rwanda. Law makers and politicians are still debating as I write this paper seeking the adjustment of bride price to women rights and contemporary society.¹ Despite these debates by feminists and law

¹ “Bride price as a requirement for marriage should be stopped in order to prevent problems facing Rwandan families. In some cultures, the groom pays bride price before seeking a woman’s hand in marriage. However, others believe the centuries-old tradition has evolved into a price tag on the bride. Ndagijimana said the trend of family conflicts and violence was a result of the fact that some couples are already burdened even before they tie the knot.” – Law maker, MP Leonard Ndagijimana.

makers about bride price refinement, the lived realities of men and women at the grass root level who are mostly affected by the subject has been missing. In Rwanda, there is a dearth of literature which capture the voice of women and men which feminists and others would base their arguments. My study, therefore, attempt to fill the gap by analysing the experiences of local community members in four provinces in Rwanda: Rulindo district in Northern province, Nyamagabe district in Southern province, Bugesera district in Eastern province, and Ngororero district in Western province. In addition, Rwanda has one language and one culture. however due to the historical events like the 1994 Genocide against The Tutsi which resulted in a significant number of people seeking exile in our neighbouring countries there is some particularities in practicing the bride price ceremony due to the adoption of some of those counties' traditions. however, for this reason i chose to pick a district in each province to ensure that i do not overlook any unique characteristics that may be of interest to future researchers.

After paying for bride price, some husbands think that they have essentially purchased their wives creating a sense of male dominance and a high feeling of total manhood thereby cementing hegemonic masculinities (Asiimwe 2013; p3). The act of providing financial or material resources to the family of the woman is not merely a transaction but a symbolic representation of the ability of the husband to fulfil the culturally defined role of a provider – creating his position as the dominant figure in the marital relationship. Men are expected to adhere to a set of behaviour that agree with the cultural values of honour, respect, and family reputation. Therefore, payment of bride price is a social practice that upholds the traditional gender norms and fitting in with what society thinks is right. However, bride price is evolving to a display of class or economic background making it become commercialised and women becoming commodified – creating affordability challenges especially those with limited finances. Families with more wealth and social status often anticipate a significant bride price, which signifies the perceived worth of their daughter and their family's societal position. In contrast, families with lesser socioeconomic status may get a smaller bride price payment, thereby reinforcing existing

inequalities and emphasizing the role of social class in this traditional practice. Furthermore, the tradition of bride price goes beyond a simple transaction of material goods; it's a symbolic ritual that represent the union of families and communities. The payment of bride price means to strengthen the bonds between the family of the bride and the groom, reinforcing their unity and social cohesion. However, this unity reinforces existing class structures as the exchange of wealth solidifies connections between families of similar economic backgrounds, potentially excluding those from lower economic classes. This economic gap created result in bride price that involves negotiations to accommodate the financial constraints of the groom's family (Bonye, 2020; 147-148). And the limited partner's choice on the bride side.

1.2 Research Objectives and Questions

The main objective of this study is to provide an understanding of people's experiences of bride price practiced in Rwandan marriage. The study is guided by the following research question; how is bride price practiced in Rwandan marriage? It is assumed that bride price is used by men to control women and make them loose their independency. It also looks at the political economy of bride pride in a Rwandan marriage explaining how women are taken as a commodity and generally understanding Rwandan as a patriarchal community. All these influences how people perceive bride price, this paper draws on field study of Rwandan married couples with my experience on women's rights, and informal discussions with different individuals.

To this end, the following main question has been developed:

- **How do patriarchy, masculinity, political economy, and family & marriage influence the perception of bride price practice in Rwandan marriage?**

To achieve this, the study sought to achieve the following sub-questions:

- 1. How is bride price seen as patriarchal practice in Rwanda?**

2. How are men using bride price as a way of controlling women and make them loose their independence?

3. What is the political economy of bride price in Rwandan marriage?

1.3 Contextual Background to the Study

Rwanda is situated in central Africa immediately south of the equator between 1°4' and 2°51' south latitude and 28°63' and 30°54' east longitude. Its total area of 26,338 square kilometres with a population density estimated to be 445 people per km² (TheGovernmentOfRwanda, 2022). Rwanda is bordered by Uganda to the north, Tanzania to the east, the Democratic Republic of the Congo to the west, and Burundi to the south. Landlocked, Rwanda lies 1,200 kilometres from the Indian Ocean and 2,000 kilometres from the Atlantic Ocean (TheDHSPprogram, 2005, p1).

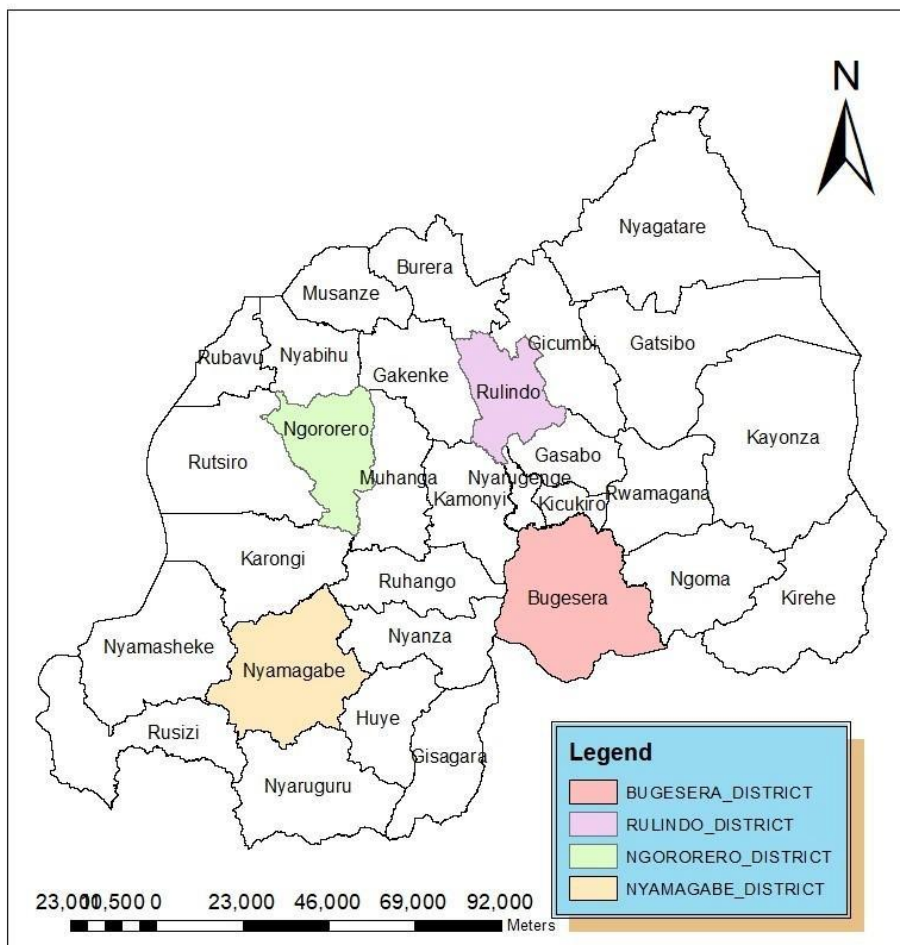


Figure 1: Map of Rwanda highlighting the study areas.

According to the results from the fifth Population and Housing Census (PHC) conducted in 2022, Rwanda's population has reached 13,246,394 with an intercensal annual growth rate of 2.3% between 2012 and 2022. In addition, it indicates that the Life Expectancy at birth is 69.6 years from 51.2 years in 2002 and 64.5 years in 2012. There were 6,817,068 females representing 51.5% of the population, which is slightly higher than 6,429,326 males, representing 48.5% of the population (NISR, 2023).

Bride price is widely accepted by many African nations including Rwanda. However, it has become excessively commercialised in the recent last years, diverting from its initial meaning of being a symbol of appreciation between the two families involved. It often implies the payment of huge sums of money and material resources, and this has created issues related to getting the resources and the high prices limiting the negotiating power of wives especially those facing economic hardships in marital relationships. Therefore, bride price payment is deep-rooted in nature and approved by many Rwandans, the commercialisation of this practice over time has eroded its original meaning turning it into a constraining transaction (Kaye et al., 2005). Men facing difficulties in raising the funds for bride price may, due to the perceived belittlement of women in this practice, demand utmost respect and subordination from women leading to partner abuse (Kaye et al., 2005). This abuse leads to physical injury, death, mental disorders, stress, depression, suicide, low self-esteem and limited economic and political performance (Brown, 2003).

On the positive side, bride price facilitates the exchange of wealth between families, compensates parents for the costs of raising a daughter, gives respect to women and recognition of the husband by the in-laws (Thiara and Hague, 2011). However, despite these benefits, bride price result in gender inequality, disempowering women and potentially treating them as commodities to be passed between families. The love for bride price impact girls' education as some parents force them to marry early to gain bride price money. Moreover, the possibility of reclaiming bride price in case of marriage failure trap women in abusive relationships.

In Rwanda, young men face challenges in meeting the demands of this practice, consequently, they resort to alternative methods of raising the required

amounts like selling family property or obtaining bank loans. Certain groups perceive bride price as a protective measure for women in marriages providing them with status, respect, and societal recognition, the process contribute to the subordination of women to their husbands leading to violence against women. On the other hand, men who fail to fulfil the bride price expectations experience a loss of status and respect from both their wives and society (Thira & Hague, 2011; Baluku et al., 2012).

Bride price is being seen turning women into commodities for purchase, in turn creating negative consequences for women as men see them as property that they own (Matembe, 2002). Moreover, some people see bride price as being associated with violence against women in homes, the degradation of women's dignity, and the violation of human (Thiara & Hague, 2011). Some feminist organisations argue that bride price today has transformed from a simple procedure to formalise marriages into a highly commercialised and costly transaction. There are many debates by feminists, activists, and politicians on whether bride price yields genuine positive outcomes or if it serves as a dehumanising tool reducing women to commodities and diminishing their status, decision-making authority and resulting in other adverse effects on marital relationships. The ongoing debate lacks a clear consensus and is compounded by limited documented facts. Despite the different perspectives and discussions, a large part of the population in Rwanda still supports the practice. Therefore, this study seeks to understand the lived realities of people regarding bride price grounding it on notions of patriarchal, masculinity, family and marriage and political economy.

1.4 Justification and Relevance

1.4.1 Background and history of the bride price in Rwanda

Marriage is a universal cultural phenomenon and involves the transfers in form of payments between the families of the bride and the groom. "Although the idea of marriage rituals or fulfilling certain social and legal obligations to validate a marriage is universal to all societies, what such rites or obligations should entail,

however, varies from society to society according to their cultural inclinations and rationality” (Asia, 2021; P 144). In African society, “marriage is considered as a complex institution that generally proceeds by stages, most of which are characterised by the performance of prescribed rites. In addition, the transfer of some form of bride wealth from the lineage of the husband to the lineage of the wife is typical” (Meekers, 1992; P 61). Marriage payments is categorised in two forms bride price and dowry (Anderson, 2007). The Dowry custom is practiced in South Asia, middle east and north American countries and involves payments made to the groom by the bride’s family (Mangena & Ndlovu, 2013). On the other hand, bride price is the payment which a prospective groom and his family make to the prospective bride and her family (Anderson, 2007).

The institution of bride price is ancient and dates back as 3000BCE when ancient Incas, Egyptians, Aztecs, Mesopotamians and Hebrews were believed to practice this tradition. The common thread across ancient civilisations was the recognition of bride price as a tangible expression of commitment, establishment of family ties and acknowledgement of economic and social responsibilities associated with marriage. The exchange of goods, livestock or currency during the marriage process served as a good gesture showing union not just between the individuals getting married but their respective families and communities (Mbaye & Natascha, 2016).

During the colonial period, traditional practices including marriage customs underwent changes under external influences where the colonial administration with its own set of values and legal systems sought to reshape indigenous customs. The nature of the items exchanged, and the negotiation processes began to shift under colonial influence and modernisation. In the old days among the Rwandese, marriage was a cultural institution that every man and woman was expected to respect. The payment of bride price “Inkwano” was in form of cattle paid to the family of the girl.

While the origins of bride price are challenging to determine as evidence suggests its long existence with changes in trends, practices, and meanings, the nature and number of resources exchanged have evolved over time with some communities increasing the exchanged resources to excessive levels. There is ongoing debate on whether bride price is driven by economic or social motives and whether it

is relevant to the social lives of women and men. Cultural anthropologists, particularly from the Western world, have criticised bride price, equating it to wife purchase which oversimplifies its cultural significance and economic functions. Pritchard (1931) suggests using the term 'bride wealth' instead of 'bride price' to signify the broader social functions and non-financial items inherent in the practice. Grey (2009) challenges Pritchard's suggestion of the term "bride wealth," taking it to be that even the term "wealth" implies property and carries financial connotations portraying marriage as a commercial transaction. Grey argues that any exchange of money, property (such as cattle, hoes or other items) or prerequisites for marriage could be perceived as wife purchase, meaning the "purchase" of a wife's rights after the exchange. Some Western anthropologists have incorrectly likened African and Asian marriages, along with bride price payments, to the European practice of buying cows or even to slavery (Grey, 2009). These scholars assert that bride price symbolises women's inferiority and serves as payment for the woman's future labour in the husband's household or compensation for the labour lost by the father, suggesting that the "profits" from bride price are used by sons to marry (Kressel et al., 1977). While labelling the proceeds as "profits" is questionable, it is not unreasonable to believe that in places like Rwanda where substantial amounts are paid, resources levied before or after marrying off a daughter are indeed used by sons for their own marriages.

Bride price is a practice which evolves with societal and economic changes and modernisation trends. Kressel (1977) notes that in areas where young and educated populations increase, the practice weakens due to social change while in other regions bride price payments rise with the increasing cost of living. Class differences with the middle class often viewing it as a status symbol associated with expensive payments, while some within the same class abandon the practice altogether. Families vary in their demands with some seeking huge payments to assert superiority and status, others ask for modest sums as a sign of status. Failing to meet the requested amount led to feelings of inferiority negatively impacting the bride's respect within her home and among her peers.

In Rwandan culture, the custom of paying bride price is preceded by a series of rituals. One of these rituals, known as ³"**KURAMBAGIZA**" (Courting),

²involves assessing the girl's character, behaviour, upbringing, and family background. When parents felt their son was ready for marriage, they sought the help of "umuranga" (matchmaker) to find a suitable match. The matchmaker facilitated interactions between the families, ensuring they got to know each other before the union. The prospective couple didn't have much contact at this stage, apart from occasional glimpses. The man (groom to be) would visit the girl's home with a friend, to observe her behaviour and household. Similarly, the girl's family would investigate the boy's behaviour. If both families were content, the next ritual, **GUSABA NO GUFATA IREMBO** (request and taking the gate) took place, signifying the next stage in the marriage process. (IntekoNyarwanday'Ururimin'Umuco, 2016; pp15-58)

Gufata irembo is "a primary stage where the boy's family officially books the girl for their son's marriage" (TheNewTimes, 2009). During this ritual, I small group of like 10 people from the groom family (some of them carrying pots of sorghum beer) would go to the girl's family, after being received, the elder (usually the girl's father or his representative) asks the elder of the groom team the purpose of their visit. The groom family representative explained that they came to ask for their hands, that their family has a young man who is ready to get married and that they know that there is a suitable girl in that house. He continued by telling them that they had come to ask for a gate so that they could pass through it the cow as a symbol of bride price. If the girl's family allowed them, there was a ceremony to take the gate. In this ceremony, the young man's family would bring a hoe and a pine tree stick with two branches. The girls' family will put the stick to their gate to show that the daughter of the family was given away and that the cow would come next. The groom and the bride to be are not present at that ceremony. The young man did not go with those who went to ask for the gate, the girl also did not show up even though the ritual was happening at her home she had to remain behind the curtain. The next ritual is "**GUSANBA NO GUKWA**" (the engagement and bride price payment).

² The contents of the book "Ukukwe bwa Kinyarwanda" authored by Inteko Nyarwanda y'Ururimi n'Umuco have been translated from the local language (Kinyarwanda) into English.

The proposal and the payment of the bride price is the ceremony that followed the ceremony of taking the gate and it happened at the girl's home. In Rwandan culture, the boy's family is the one who goes to ask for a bride from the girl's family because in Rwanda, family, race, and generation depend on the man (IntekoNyarwanda'Ururimin'Umuco 2016, p22). "The family would pay a bride price according to their social or financial capacity. Some gave cows, others sheep, goats or hoes. If the family was poor but they were considered honest people, they would give a free bride, or the young man would go to his father-in-law's house to work for them. This was called 'Gutenda', it was done by a poor or orphaned boy who had no bride price payment and was asked by his father-in-law. In exchange he went to work there for a certain period and those works were counted as his bride price (ibid p25). A free bride was given in case the groom was unable to afford the bride price payment and did not want to work for his father-in-law. There was a possibility to give him his bride in exchange of his commitment that he will work for it and bring it as soon as his wife give birth as in Rwandan culture producing children are one of the reasons the bride price is paid (p26). In general bride price consisted of one cow for those who could afford it, for those who did not have one they gave five to eight goats where they used sheep as bride price, they also gave one while for those who used hoes the number was between two and eight. (p26) Besides, those who gave cow or hoes as a bride price payment were the one allowed to mention the name and the number of their payment while the rest was supposed to say that they paid a domestic animal (p26). Nowadays, the boy and girl are the ones who talk to each other and then inform their parents and families about their marriage project. However, when it comes to the negotiation of the bride price, some parents tend to make the groom or his family to pay back all expenses spent to their daughter by demanding for a heavy bride price amounts to have some money left after the marriage (p99).

As society undergoes changes, the nature of property exchanged as bride price and other marriage gifts continues to evolve among different groups. In Rwanda, where bride price is prevalent, the system's intention and nature of property exchanged have transformed. While it once involved cattle, the process now includes haggling for expensive payments, involving items such as

electronics, numerous cows, cars, furniture, land titles, and cash (Mujungu, 2013; Thiara and Hague, 2011). Partly causing challenges from feminists and human rights activists, the huge payments associated with bride price have been criticised for negatively impacting women's negotiating and decision-making power in marital relations contributing to gender inequality. Beyond commercialisation, feminists argue against bride price itself saying that marriage is based on romantic love rather than economic, material, or symbolic transactions. Wendo (2004) argues that bride price turns the wife into the husband's property, diminishing her ability to defend and control her body, potentially leading to sexual abuse and increased instances of Sexual Transmitted Diseases and unwanted pregnancies among women in sub-Saharan Africa. However, Esen (2004) counters these claims arguing that bride price reflects the groom's love capability, maturity, and capacity to sustain the family. He suggests that the perceived inability of some African women to negotiate in marriages is linked to a lack of power resulting from low education levels. Esen then recommends addressing this through education rather than blaming bride price. Yet, there is limited documented studies giving reasons for these shifts in the practice. This study aims to explore these reasons to address the knowledge gap, investigating the factors that may have increase this practice along with examining perceptions by people. The debates regarding the relevance of bride price payments among religious leaders, women's rights activists, legal professionals and other members each present different argument. However, these debates predominantly occur at the higher levels ignoring the inclusion of the voices of the primary actors – women and men at the grassroots level. Existing literature on this practice in Rwanda tend to focus on areas where a prominent women's rights activists operate with little coverage of other provinces where bride price practices are on the rise. The existing literature reveals gaps with some scholars condemning the practice as commercially oriented and oppressive while others defend it as necessary. Moreover, much of the literature dates back to the early twentieth century primarily focusing on Asian countries with limited coverage of Rwanda. Therefore, this study seeks to test theories to generate evidence-based knowledge about the bride price payment and individual's lived realities about it. The resulting knowledge aims

to inform human rights activists, family scholars, academicians, legislators, and other policymakers on how to best engage in debates or legislate on reforms in domestic relations studies, laws, and policies based on theoretically tested conclusions.

1.5 Chapter Outline

This research paper has five chapters. The first chapter introduces bride price in Rwanda marriage and gives an overview of the population, rationale, and research objectives. Chapter two highlights the conceptual/theoretical framework of the study which work to support the analysis in the later chapters. Chapter three explains the methodology and methods that the study has adopted. The next chapter four answers the research questions and are used to form the study conclusion in the last chapter five.

CHAPTRE TWO

CONCEPTUAL/THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Introduction of the chapter

Based on the existing literature, this chapter will provide an understanding of the bride price and the various ways in which it functions as a system of subordination for women in Rwandan Society. Additionally, a number of concepts that contribute to answering the research questions are introduced. Patriarchy, gender as masculinity, and the political economy surrounding the bride price are some of these approaches.

2.2 Patriarchy and bride price in Rwanda

The word 'patriarchy' literally means the rule of the father or the 'patriarch' and originally it was used to describe a specific type of male dominated family – the large household of the patriarch which included women, junior men, children, slaves, and domestic servants all under the dominant rule of the male. Today, patriarchy is used more generally to refer to male domination, to the power relationships by which men dominate women and to characterise a system whereby women are kept subordinate in a number of ways. Linked to this social system is the ideology that man is superior to women, that women are and should be controlled by men and are part of a man's property (Bhasin, 2021, p2).

Facio described "patriarchy as a form of mental, social, spiritual, economic and political organisation/structuring of society produced by the gradual institutionalisation of sex based political relations created, maintained and reinforced by different institutions linked closely together to achieve consensus on the lesser value of women and their roles". He also added that "these institutions interconnect not only with each other to strengthen the structures of domination of men over women, but also with other systems of exclusion, oppression and/or domination based on real or perceived differences between humans, creating States that respond only to the needs and interests of a few powerful men." (Facio, 2013, p 2). Cockburn (2004) characterises Patriarchy as

a societal framework in which men and masculinity are predominantly associated with leadership, authority, assertiveness, and accountability, while women and femininity are often associated with nurturing, compliance, passiveness, and reliance. Accordingly, a patriarchal society is characterised by the reinforcement of the “masculine feminine dichotomy” through the promotion and continuation of male dominance. Consequently, various societal structures are manipulated to uphold and encourage the subjugation of women by men across all domains. In this particular system, men are perceived as the authoritative figures within various societal domains, such as the traditional family, clan, or tribe. Inheritance of powers and possessions occurs through paternal lineage, with descent being traced exclusively in the male line (Dogo, 2014).

Patriarchal system is still the norm in most parts of the world. One such instance is when a woman adopts her husband’s family name after getting married. Other examples include but not limited to the gender pay gap where a woman is paid less than a man that they are working at the same position with the same responsibilities, the majority of unpaid caregiving and childrearing responsibilities that are shouldered by women, also, there are a far larger number of women and girls throughout the globe who do not have access to school. However, at what point in history did men begin considering women as possessions, dictating their attire, dietary choices, speech, social interactions, and resorting to physical violence when their behaviour did not align with the man’s expectations? In summary, when did men begin to exert complete control over women’s lives?

The traditionalists asserted this “system in which men have a privileged position in society” (Medica Mondiale, 2023) to be “universal and God-given or natural hence immutable”. Arguing that “woman is subordinate to man because she was created by God. They accept the phenomenon of “sexual asymmetry” the assignment of different tasks and roles to men and women which has been observed in all known societies as a proof of their position and evidence of its naturalness. Since woman was by divine design assigned a different biological function than man was, they argue, she should also be assigned different social tasks. If God or nature created sex differences, which in turn determined the sexual division of labor, no one is to blame for sexual inequalities and male

dominance. (Lerner, 1986). “Even while rejecting the notion of divine creation of male superiority, “androcentric’ sociologists and anthropologists have continued to insist that the male-dominated family is coextensive with human society, that even at its very beginnings “man the hunter’ held sway in the “social’ world and instituted cooperative and productive relations while his wife tended the home fires; and that this basic situation has quite naturally continued ever since” (Omvedt, 1987, p70).

New wave of feminist social science has made a valuable critique of “androcentric biases’ in these disciplines and exposed the fallacies of socio-biology and the “man the hunter’ thesis (p 70). Gerda Lerner challenged the above statements contending that “the predominance of males over women is not a “natural” or “biological” phenomenon, but rather the end result of a historical process that had its start in the second millennium B.C. in the Ancient Near East. She argues that the historical process may be used to bring an end to patriarchy as a social organising system just as it was used to build it in the first place” (Lerner, 1986).

The concept of patriarchy has been used within the women’s movement to analyse the principles underlying women’s oppression. The concept has history within feminist thought, having been used by earlier feminist like Virginia Woolf, the Fabian Women’s Group and Vera Brittain for example. It has also been used by the anti-Marxist sociologist, Max Weber (Weber, 1968) in trying to provide a critical assessment of some of the uses of the concept of patriarchy within contemporary feminist discourses. (Beechey, 1979). At the most general level, patriarchy has been used to refer to male domination and to the power relationship by which men dominate women (Millett, 1970). Marxist feminist adopted this concept in an attempt to transform Marxist theory so that it can more adequately account for the subordination of women as well as for the forms of class exploitation. The concept of patriarchy has also been used in various ways within the Marxist feminist literature (Beechey, 1979). For instance: Juliet Mitchell (1974) uses patriarchy to refer to “kinship systems in which men exchange women and to the symbolic power which fathers have within these systems, and the consequences of this power for the inferiorised. . . psychology of women” (Mitchell, 1974:402). In her 1979 work, Heidi Hartmann maintains

the radical feminist definition of patriarchy as the dominance of men over women and attempts to examine how this is connected to the structure of the capitalist labour system. Eisenstein (1979) stated that patriarchy may be seen as a kind of sexual hierarchy that is evident in the many roles assigned to women within the family, wherein the woman's responsibilities are limited to those of a mother, domestic worker, and consumer. In addition, several pieces in the publication *Women Take Issue* (1978) have used the idea to expressly denote the reproductive relationships that occur inside the familial context.

Consistent with its patriarchal nature, Rwandan society is characterised by well-defined gender roles that individuals adhere to throughout their daily lives. For instance, since birth, children in Rwandan culture are assigned certain gender roles as determined by societal norms. Consequently, the children are raised with a conscious understanding of society gender norms and subsequently grow up to fit those roles. These societal expectations restrict individuals to prescribed modes of conduct and domains of activity, predicated on their biological classification as either male or female. Azodo and Eke (2007) posits that within traditional African societies the role of women is primarily confined to the domestic sphere, where they are responsible for childbearing and childrearing. In contrast, men are expected to engage in activities outside the home such as pursuing employment opportunities and participating warfare, which are often associated with adventure (Uzoamaka & Ngozi, 2007 p3). In essence, the traditional societal structure designates men as leaders and heads of households, while women assume the role of caring for and nurturing their families and managing the household.

In her book published in 1979, Juliet Mitchell used the term 'patriarchy' to denote kinship relationships characterised by the exchange of women by males, as well as the symbolic authority wielded by fathers within these systems. (Mitchell, 1974, p402). In Rwanda, as in many other patrilineal African societies, the responsibility for paying the bride price falls squarely on the groom's family. "After payment, some husbands feel that they have 'bought' the wife into their household, a feeling that creates male dominance and feelings of 'total manhood' reinforcing their hegemonic masculinities. It is again this crave for the feeling

‘total manhood’ that encourages majority of men to insist on paying even when the bride price is not demanded” (Asiimwe 2013; p3). In some cases this act leads to “the negative aspects of the practice of the bride price *that* result into the institution of marriage ceasing to be a partnership to become an absolute dictatorship of the husband who claims all possible rights on the women he has paid for” (Zondi, 2007; P:22). This financial transaction reinforces the perception that women are commodities, owned by men, and leads to power imbalances within the marriage as whenever a woman tries to claim her right as a human being or her voice to be heard as a partner, there are always these expressions reminding her of her position in the society like “who is the man in this house? If you have forgotten, let me remind you, you are a woman and I paid bride price for you” (Zondi, 2007; P:22), not the other way around. In addition, “among most communities it is expected that if the marriage later fails, materials or gifts paid are supposed to be refunded to the groom’s family irrespective of the length the time the spouses have stayed together” (Asiimwe, 2013, P:4). In the context of Rwanda, bride price entails the acquisition of various household items, including kitchen, bedroom, dining room, and living room (for some) materials, as well as clothing, which the bride would bring to her husband. Any remaining amount, if available, are allocated towards the organisation of the ceremony and the reception of guests. Therefore, the practice of bride price being subject to reimbursement in the event of marital dissolution within *Rwandan society* may potentially influence women to remain in abusive situations, since their parents may lack the financial means to return the sum (Thiara and Hague 2011, P 558).

Furthermore, to avoid facing social stigma women may prefer to endure abusive relationships, or forced to remain in harmful relationships, unable to exercise their agency to seek help or leave abusive partners because as Caritus (2016) argued using Zondi’s (2007) idea, “the subordination of women is underscored by the tradition of bride price, which reinforces the notion that a husband has purchased and now owns his wife” (Mazibuko, 2016; P. 7373).

2.3 Masculinities and Bride price in Rwanda

Situated at the core of societal expectations and conventions, the notion of masculinity arises from a complex relationship between cultural dynamics and social constructions. Complementary to femininity, masculinity is constructed by way of socially assigned attributes that establish the societal norms and duties expected of males in a particular community. According to Mubaiwa (2019), Masculinity does not exist except in contrast with femininity, thus it involves the socially constructed characteristics of men or what is expected of men, especially in relation to women. These characteristics are socially constructed and differ from community to community and are not static as they evolve as society undergoes change. In several African societies characterised by patriarchal arrangements, men are expected to be strong, intelligent, and dominant (especially over women). These beliefs influence how society is organised and how different activities and practices are performed. (Mubaiwa, 2019, p 69).

This idealised notion of masculinity operates as both an ideology and a set of normative constraints. It offers a set of traits, attitudes and behaviours (the “male role”) as well as organising institutional relationships among groups of women and men (Coston & Kimmel, 2012 p98). Within the complex fabric of human identity, the pursuit of self-expression and acknowledgment manifests in various ways, intricately entwined with societal expectations and cultural norms. The process of self-discovery for men is frequently connected with the complex structure of masculinity, a concept that is constantly evolving and extends beyond personal reflection. The pursuit of asserting and validating one’s gender identity becomes a central focus for individuals, as they navigate complex surroundings where societal norms intersect with personal authenticity. As asserted in their passages West and Fenstermaker (1995) for men, masculinity often includes preoccupation with proving gender to others (West & Fenstermaker, 1995).

In different societies, a complex set of idealised standards has been constructed to delineate the characteristics deemed exemplary for men. These standards encompass qualities such as bravery, dependability, emotional stability, strength, as well as intellectual attributes including critical thinking, logic, and rationality.

Moreover, the archetypal male is expected not only to possess wealth but also to wield authority and power over others. (Coston & Kimmel, 2012). Connell's (1987, 1995) social theory of gender has emerged as one of the most influential strategies for conceptualising the asymmetrical ordering of masculinity and femininity. With an interest in theorising how gender difference is maintained, Connell highlights the operation of power in governing the boundaries which symbolically delineate masculinity and femininity. This dynamic is captured by the term "hegemonic masculinity", defined as "the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women" (Connell, 1995: 77). Explicit attention is given to processes that allow a particular group to acquire and sustain dominance not simply through the use of force but through "cultural consent, discursive centrality, institutionalisation, and the marginalisation and delegitimising of alternatives" (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005, p846). Hegemonic masculinity is upheld by its dynamic relation with subordinated masculinities, most notably homosexual masculinity, because "in patriarchal ideology" that is subordinated is the repository of whatever is symbolically expelled from hegemonic masculinity' and easily assimilated to femininity" (Connell, 1995: 78). (Retrieved from (Budgeon, 2014 p322)).

According to Connell (2005) This is not to say that the most visible bearers of hegemonic masculinity are always the most powerful people. They may be exemplars, such as film actors, or even fantasy figures, such as film characters. Individual holders of institutional power or great wealth may be far from the hegemonic pattern in their personal lives. (Thus, a male member of a prominent business dynasty was a key figure in the gay/transvestite social scene in Sydney in the 1950s, because of his wealth and the protection this gave in the cold-war climate of political and police harassment.) Nevertheless, hegemony is likely to be established only if there is some correspondence between cultural ideal and institutional power, collective if not individual. Connell stress that hegemonic masculinity embodies a "currently accepted" strategy. When conditions for the defence of patriarchy change, the bases for the dominance of a particular masculinity are eroded. New groups may challenge old solutions and construct

a new hegemony. The dominance of any group of men may be challenged by women. Hegemony, then, is a historically mobile relation (Connell, 2005 p79). The normative definitions of masculinity, face the problem that not many men actually meet the normative standards. This point applies to hegemonic masculinity. The number of men rigorously practising the hegemonic pattern in its entirety may be quite small. Within that overall hegemonic framework there are specific gender relations of dominance and subordination between groups of men (p78). (Subordinate masculinity) The most important case in contemporary society is the dominance of heterosexual men and the subordination of homosexual men. However, Gay masculinity is the most conspicuous, but it is not the only subordinated masculinity. Some heterosexual men and boys too are expelled from the circle of legitimacy. These men include but not limited to those from the working class who abstain from alcoholic abuse, those who head straight home after work to participate in household responsibilities instead of stopping at a bar every evening to socialise with their peers, those who sit down with their families to plan out how to best use the salary, those who never yell at their wives or children, and those who don't have the means to pay bride prices. On the other side, a boy who spends the majority of his time with his mother or playing with girls rather than his age peers or father is also regarded as non-manly and consequently placed in a position of subordination. This process is marked by a rich vocabulary of abuse. Yet the majority of men gain, since they benefit from the patriarchal dividend, the advantage men in general gain from the overall subordination of women (ibid p79).

As a result of industrialisation and societal development, the social structure is shifting in favour of women, giving them a more prominent position in society, and further undermining the dominance of masculinities. For instance, women are actively engaging in formal education and achieving advanced qualifications, they are also actively participating in formal employment, and earning salaries that are competitive with or even higher than those of their male counterparts. For some families, males losing their employment may be interpreted as they no longer have the position of breadwinner, even if the “women subordination and man domination structure still persisting despite many local reveals like female teachers with male students for instance” (Connell

2005, p 74). an increase in households headed by women, and a diminished role of the “traditional’ family structure like where the responsibility of courting was in family’s hands, but which is no longer the case as a man and a woman have right to meet and decide for themselves if they need to marry one another and then inform the family after the decision is taken. These changes have posed a challenge to traditional notions of masculinity (Cleaver, 2002 pp1-25).

De Neeve (2004) states that the construction of masculinities, which refers to the understanding of idealised manhood, is influenced by various factors such as the surrounding environment, social dynamics, and spatial arrangements within the community. These factors not only shape the formation of masculinities but also stem from societal norms and expectations regarding appropriate conduct. This point made me brought up concerns about masculinity and the sensation of dominance which are used to explore the exercise of authority in controlling the tradition of bride price in the contemporary Rwandan society. this will be examined in order to get answers on whether or not a man’s sense of superiority is related to the amount he pays for a bride, whether or not a man’s sense of dominance over his wife increases with the amount he pays, whether or not men who pay less than the norm feel their manhood and power are threatened, and if the amount of money a father receives affects his manhood or pride and status in his household and community. In addition, the wives’ viewpoints about men men’s behaviours vis-à-vis the amount of bride price paid will be explored.

2.4 Political economy of marriage, gender division of labour and the practice of bride price in Rwanda

The institution of marriage is often frequently exhibiting a significant interconnection with economic exchanges that occurs between the families involved. This exchange of resources is of outmost importance in shaping the institution of marriage as it serves as a reflection of societal norms and traditions. Among the various forms of marriage payments, bride price and dowries stand out as notable practices that involve the financial aspects related to the union of two people. Lucia and Alessandra asserted that these “Transfers of resources between spouses and their families are a crucial element in the marriage culture

of many developing countries. Bride price payment is a cash or in-kind transfer given by or on behalf of the groom to the family of the bride upon the marriage. On the contrary, dowry payments involve a transfer from the bride to the family of the groom upon the marriage” (Lucia & Alessandra, 2016 pp7-8). Although the marriage might have been arranged very early on, the payment of bride price is the trigger that allows the wife to join her husband’s household and actually start their marital life. In addition, the amount of the bride price is negotiated between the two sets of parents and is largely determined on the basis of local norms. (Hotte & Lambert, 2023 p3).

The payment of the bride price implies quite a number of things among which are, consolidation of the relationship between the families of the bride and the groom, enhancement of the value of the woman in the society, it also includes ownership of the woman and her belongings, among others. Consequently, bride price involves the transfer of the right in the woman to her husband (Eniola & Aremo, 2020).

This commodification of women via the practice of bride price manifests in many ways across different cultures reflecting the diverse ways societies perceive the value of women in context of marriage. In some societies bride price is considered as a gesture of respect and appreciation towards the family of the bride while in others it functions as a mechanism of establishing economic alliances. For instance, in Rwanda, the custom of bride price is deeply engrained in the cultural practices. Here it is customary for the groom to provide livestock or money to the bride’s family as a symbolic gesture indicating the groom’s capacity to provide for his future wife. This transactional nature perpetuates the perception of women as commodities and reinforces traditional gender roles that position women as dependent entities by assigning them the responsibility of domestic duties like cooking, cleaning, childcare and tending to household needs in addition to their participation in agricultural work, particularly in tasks related to planting, weeding and harvesting while men take on roles primarily associated with outdoor work such as agriculture, herding livestock and construction. In addition, they are expected to provide for family financially and manage activities outside their home. However, when a significant bride is paid, it can be seen as

an investment by the groom's family in the bride. Consequently, there might be expectations tied to this payment, for instance, the bride might be considered as obligated to fulfil more traditional domestic roles to reciprocate the value placed on her through bride price.

In addition, the act of giving the bride price to the girl's parents is the symbolic subordination of women. Through providing resources (money or animals) to the bride's family, the groom assumes a similar role to that of a buyer acquiring property. This dynamic reinforces the age-old notion that women, in the context of marriage, are possessions or assets to be acquired. Therefore, this tradition becomes a symbolic significant action that reinforces the subordination of women by reducing them to the status of object exchanged within the institution of marriage.

Beyond the specific transaction of bride price, the broader concept of marriage itself is often involved with market-like dynamics, especially in societies where arranged marriages are prevalent and where parents are entitled to decide what amount of money, or the number of animals is acceptable in exchange of their daughter. In such contexts, families may actively engage in matchmaking processes, and the negotiations of their daughters' price treating marriage as an economic exchange where considerations such as wealth, social status, and familial connections take precedence over the individual desires of the bride and groom. The commodification of women is evident in the way these arrangements prioritise economic and social factors over the women's wellbeing. Furthermore, this commodification of women in marriage markets often leads to forced marriages, child marriages, and domestic violence. Moreover, in situations where women lack agency in choosing a life partner, this marriage market can result in severe consequences for women, impacting their emotional, and psychological well-being.

2.5 Conclusion of the chapter

This chapter explored the multifaceted impact of bride price within Rwandan society, shedding the light on its role in perpetuating gender subordination. It delves into various theoretical frameworks to examine how patriarchal

structures; masculinity constructs and the political economy intersect with practice of bride price. Overall, the chapter underlines how bride price becomes a toll for the commercialisation and subjugation of women embedded within patriarchal structures and reinforced by the concept of masculinity. In addition, it serves as a crucial lens through which social norms and power structures in Rwandan society may be examined in the context of marriage and gender relations.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

3.1 Introduction to the chapter

The study employs social science methodologies, feminist theories and methodologies to analyse data gathered from interviews with men and women in four provinces in Rwanda: Rulindo in Northern province, Nyamagabe in Southern province, Bugesera in Eastern province, and Ngororero in Western province.

3.2 Study Design

The study took on a phenomenological design. Marriage is a communal affair among Rwandese, studying a marriage rite such as bride price needs a study design that could facilitate comprehension of several people's lived realities to develop a deeper understand on the tradition. According to Creswell (2007) phenomenological research describes the meaning of many people of their lived perspectives of a phenomenon. The researcher under this design relies on the "what" people experienced and the manner in which they experienced it. In this research, the researcher focused on what participant's had experienced of bride pride tradition (telling what happened, why did it happen the way it happened and how it happened) and the meaning that these participants make out of those experiences. The data for this study was collected using in-depth interview and at the stage of analysis, information transcribed was reduced to codes (significant codes) which make an understanding of how participants experienced the phenomenon of bride price. A cluster of codes then formed basic themes that were combined to form organised themes. Phenomenology does not only include descriptions of what participants went through but also the interpretive process in which the researcher makes an interpretation of the meaning of the lived realities (Van Manen, 1990: 26). In this part, the researcher mediates between the varying meanings of lived perspectives while setting aside his/her

own experiences as much as possible and take a fresh understanding of the phenomenon under study (Moustakas, 1994).

3.3 Research Method

The research sample consisted of 20 participants who were chosen via purposive sampling in order to get respondents with relevant data that may enhance the study. The participants were chosen based on factors such as gender, age, and marital status. Interviews were used to get first-hand information from the main source for this paper. Twenty married women and men (12 women and 8 men) aged between 21 to 60 years old, married and who paid or whose families' received bride price have been interviewed. The study was done with the help of a local NGO that works on a number of problems, including improving women's wellbeing in Rwanda. The organisation assisted in identifying suitable respondents for online interviews. Besides in order to ensure that all answers and nonverbal cues were recorded the researcher herself conducted all of the interviews. Furthermore, secondary data were collected from the textbooks, journal articles, previous, research papers, newspapers, government records and reports, and NGO reports, in order to acquire additional concepts and connections that could not be obtained from the primary data. In addition to formal techniques of data collecting, the study also used informal approaches such as talks with people who were not part of the sample. These included conversations with relatives and peers and listening to other people's conversations as long as their topics were in the area of the research interest. Moreover, attending and observing the bride price payment ceremonies and noticing how people interacted, talked, exchanged goods, and went through the customs and processes was also an additional way to figure out how issues of patriarchy, masculinity, family & marriage, and the economy manifested in both actions and conversations.

3.4 Data Analysis

In order to develop relevant sequences of facts to use in paper writing and developing conclusions, one-on-one interviews, secondary data, and notes from informal sources were analysed. This process included repeatedly listening to all

the one-on-one interview conversations in order to enhance comprehension, rectify errors, address data deficiencies, and provide more clarity. Consequently, I carefully documented comprehensive notes derived from several sources, and then classified them based on sex, gender, and age categories, with the aim of discerning patterns of connections and interactions. Furthermore, the data was categorised based on the prevalent subjects, themes, and conceptual frameworks to facilitate the examination of relationships. This case encompasses several subjects, including but not limited to the examination of patriarchy, masculinity, marriage, economy, and the relationship between these factors and the practice of bride price. Subsequently, a thorough examination was conducted on these entities to ascertain their adherence and responsiveness to the main research question. In addition to the documented answers obtained from discussions and interactions, I also considered and analysed the notes pertaining to nonverbal cues, emotions, and gestures shown by the respondents. These supplementary observations were used to derive more insights and interpretations.

3.5 Scope and Limitation of Research, and possible practical problems

During the process of data collection, almost all of the respondents were consistently engaged in either informal employment or self-employment within the agricultural sector. After completing their farm activities, they would dedicate their evenings to domestic responsibilities such as preparing dinner and procuring grass for the cows and other domestic animals to consume. This made them unable to allocate sufficient time for conducting detailed interviews or discussions lasting beyond 40 minutes. In order to address this matter, I arranged interviews based on the respondents' availability, predominantly during evening hours. Furthermore, to remunerate the work that was expected to be completed while engaging in discussions with me, I paid incentives. This has become a matter of concern in one of the districts, where spouses would inform their partners about their whereabouts and the partners decided to accompany them to receive the incentive as well. However, I had to clearly reiterate to them that the interview would only be conducted with those who had my invitation and has agreed to provide trustworthy information. Also, I encountered challenges

during the interviews due to my gender, particularly when interviewing male candidates. The male participants often attempted to engage in confrontational conversations, but I consistently responded by stating that if I possessed the knowledge they were seeking, I would not be in the position of asking them questions and added that I was seeking their perspective as people with experience in order to gain a deeper understanding and acquire knowledge regarding the bride price tradition which was the reason for engaging in that conversation with them. Furthermore, I have also encountered a lack of Rwandan literature related to the subject matter. For this matter, I used the limited literature resources available, (that I had to translate in English because almost all of them are written in the local language and my thoughts and analysis on the subject is drew upon my personal experiences as a Rwandan woman.

3.6 Ethical Choice, Political, and personal involvement

During our conversations (interviews), many respondents were comfortable discussing of their marriage journey from courting, engagement, and pride price payment ceremony to religious wedding. It gave them the opportunity to express their perspectives, opinions, and critics on the practice of bride price which is currently one of the most controversial topics. On the other side, a few numbers of people shared the perspective that in such topic there are some spots that need to be kept as private, consequently, they expressed discomfort in engaging in discussions related to what they referred to as confidential family concerns. Considerable effort was made to ensure that these participants did not experience any kind of pressure, and their boundaries were respected if they indicated discomfort in discussing certain topics. Personally, I began the interviews with some preconceptions regarding the topic. Nevertheless, considerable effort was made to ensure that I engaged in self-reflection before speaking or reacting to participants with the aim of reducing biases. All the interviews were recorded, and I insured that the proper consent was obtained before recording any conversation.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.1 Introduction of the chapter

This chapter relies on primary data generated from the fieldwork and analyses people's experiences of bride price practiced in Rwandan marriage grounding it on notions of patriarchal, masculinity, and political economy. The study investigated why people think bride price is good, or problematic, how gender roles play a part in bride price payment, why resources/gifts are only given to or in the name of the father, and how men use bride price as a way to control women and reduce their independence. The objective of the researcher was not to get responses only for the questions but understand how these responses are influenced by gender.

4.2 Motivation for bride price in Rwandan marriage tradition (Why bride price?)

Nowadays, people are motivated to compete and perform tasks superior to their peers. According to participant feedback, the aspiration to impress and surpass others appears to be a significant factor in the introduction of new bride price adjustments. People have a tendency to take part in activities that distinguish them from the majority (they desire to appear exceptional and distinctive). Xavier, who had just paid his bride price the year before (2022), said, "I wanted to do something different and unique, but I did it in a way that wouldn't hurt my finances. however, some men go even further their financial capacity and give motorcycle, or land titles as a bridesmaid's family gift, just to prove his wife, his family in law or the neighbourhood that he is a capable man as a way to gain their respect". This was also supported by Winny whose bride price was paid in 2016, In alignment with Xavier's argument she expressed that:

“The level of competition among marriages is high, with each woman striving to demonstrate to society that she has acquired a better husband who has provided abundantly for her family. Some brides hide their real parents, aunts, and residences in an effort to attract wealthy grooms without disclosing their modest backgrounds. ...The emergence of competition in marriage ceremonies is truly remarkable”. (Winny, female, 32 years old)

All participants supported bride price payment and other marriage gifts. Apart from competition, other reasons given was *natural and cultural practices* and the belief that each man should provide for the women he desires as his wife. They asserted that the payment sets the man as the primary authority within the household – thereby subordinating his wife. They further emphasized that the man lacks the legal right to control his family, including his wife if he has not paid his bride price. One participant, Emmanuel asserted that;

“Each man has the duty of paying the bride price and providing for the family, while each woman has natural obligations like tending to the needs of children and ensuring that domestic tasks are carried out properly. (Emmanuel, 39years, Male)”

This constructs a notion of masculinity tied to financial performance and the ability to fulfil economic obligations, reinforcing the expectation of men as the breadwinners. It also perpetuates the gendered division of labour where men are expected to excel in the public sphere, prioritising financial contributions over other forms of support or care within the family. On the other hand, it assigns women to the domestic sphere, confining their roles primarily to caregiving, homemaking, and domestic chores. This reinforces the traditional notion of femininity centred around nurturing, caregiving, and homemaking skills, effectively restricting women to these roles and diminishing the recognition of their capabilities beyond domestic duties. In addition, this quotation demonstrates the naturalization of the bride price and the extent to which Rwandan culture has normalized gender stereotypes and the subordination of women (women below men or under the control of a man).

Participants' narratives indicate that the payment of bride price serves the cultural purpose of establishing the woman's affiliation with a certain man, confirming the validity of the marriage, and solidifying their relationship. By paying the bride price, the man demonstrates his commitment to marry and signifies that he will be responsible for the woman's well-being, so providing her with a feeling of security. Ella (29years) said that:

...When my husband's family visited my family for *gufata irembo* ritual, they brought some drinks and other cultural gifts required at that stage. [...] this demonstrated that I officially belonged to him and not somebody else.

Marthe also asserted that "I expect any potential suitor of my daughter to possess financial stability as my husband and I have invested a lot into the exceptional young woman she is today. However, in order to earn the respect and recognition of our family, as well as the hand of my daughter, he must be prepared to demonstrate his commitment and determination". This statement reinforces the notion that men are the principal providers within a marital union, implying that a man's financial stability is an essential requirement to be considered a suitable partner and fails to acknowledge his other qualities and abilities that extend beyond financial resources, instead placing material wealth as the defining characteristic of a prospective partner.

This statement also illustrates the Rwandan societal beliefs that depict a dominant male figure in a household, with a submissive woman who is eager to follow orders and commands. This demonstrates that the dominant forms of masculinity held by men are challenged when the bride comes from a wealthier background or when the woman possesses greater financial or professional ability. This creates a sense of insecurity within the household and undermines traditional notions of masculinity. In some cases, husbands may even demand that their wives quit their jobs or businesses in order to exert control over them. Furthermore, It suggests that a man needs to prove his worth and commitment, not just to the daughter but also to the family. This structure perpetuates the idea of women being 'given away' as possessions, reinforcing patriarchal norms where the daughter's consent might be secondary to the approval of her family.

Additionally, it places the responsibility of proving commitment squarely on the potential suitor, further contributing to the imbalance of power in relationships.

Some respondents indicated that a man is expected to have a son to ensure the continuity of his family lineage. However, when a woman does not have a son, she continues to bear children or else the man looks for a concubine to give him a son as marrying more than one woman is against the law. However, being able to give birth to a boy is a way of proving the man's masculinity and the exercise of authority in his household. One participant Vincentia expressed:

“My husband had to look for another option to have a son which was having another wife since I only gave birth to four girls, and he was not good with it. However, I am still married and respected as a legal wife in the area”. (Vincentia, female, 53years)

This statement reflects the deeply ingrained societal preference for male children. This preference often places immense pressure on women to bear sons reinforcing the idea that woman's worth or value in a marriage is contingent upon her ability to produce heirs which perpetuate gender inequalities by devaluing the importance of daughters and reinforcing the traditional belief that sons are more desirable than daughters.

Another reason given for the payment of bride price is to reinforce the continuity of Rwandan cultural identity. Benjamin stated that;

“It was my duty as a male to pay the bride price because it is customary in our culture; my father did so to marry my mother, as did my grandparents and great-grandparents; therefore, it is impossible for me to alter a tradition that has existed for generations. Even though the price was higher than in previous years, I had to do it to maintain my status as a real man in the eyes of my wife her parents and the society”. (Benjamin, male, 56years)

The statement serves as an example of the intergenerational transmission of customs and norms, particularly regarding the payment of the bride price, within

a patriarchal societal framework. The respondents consider paying the bride price as his responsibility solely because of his gender. This notion of gender-based duty reflects a patriarchal mindset that assigns specific roles and expectations to people based on their sex. In this case, it implies that men are responsible for the financial aspects of marriage, reinforcing the idea of men as providers and women as dependents. Also, the notion of masculinity tied to financial obligations is a significant aspect of patriarchal culture. It implies that a man's worth and masculinity are measured by his ability to meet traditional expectations, such as paying the bride price. Benjamin feels the need to meet these expectations not only to fulfil his role as a husband but also to gain approval from his wife, her parents and community at large.

4.3 Commercialisation of marriage

The process of modernization has transformed the tradition of bride price from its original intention, which was essentially a gesture of gratitude given to the bride's family, into a costly process that has discouraged many young men from seeking marriage. This shift places a high importance on financial profit, as shown by the majority of participants who were interviewed. Although they may support this practice, they acknowledged that it has been commercialized, deviating from its original significance and transforming into an expensive celebration.

Participants stated that in the past, bride price involved the exchange of small symbolic products or gifts to strengthen the bond between two families. However, in some communities in Rwanda (Sothern and eastern parts), the exchange often involved numerous cows, a practice that continues today, alongside various other gifts. Cash exchanges were not prevalent, and the nature and quantity of gifts have significantly increased over time. In addition to large amounts of cash and cows, today exchanges include items such as flowers, land titles, cars (in the cities), motorcycle, chairs and so many others. The so-called modern items have rendered the practice expensive posing challenges for those with limited financial means. Due to the influence of imitation and peer pressure, many couples aspire to match or surpass what their peers paid. Those who

believe they cannot afford similar items often choose to forego bride price and marriage altogether until they can amass sufficient property.

One participant, Ephiphanie, stated a perspective based on class distinctions. She asserted,

“The amount paid should depend on how parents have spent on the daughter. If you educate a girl to university pursuing medicine or engineering, a man who comes for her must be equally heavy and ready to pay heavily, not just bringing a goat.”

Ephiphanie stated the need for a man to assess the status of the woman he is pursuing, suggesting that professionals like medical doctors/engineers should be paid for very expensively. The differentiations in class prove to be restrictive especially for men with lower incomes making it challenging for them to marry or pursue relationships with women from wealthier families even if they genuinely love each other.

Hebron (29years) shared his experience of having to work in the city to raise money for bride price when he got married, he managed to gather less money than he had been charged. When he approached his father-in-law to request leniency, he was informed that a poor man had no business marrying his daughter and was subsequently chased away. However, exceptions exist as not all affluent families insist on charging high bride prices. Some parents request a small token to solemnise the marriage while others allow the groom to bring what he can afford without setting specific items or engaging in bargaining. Even in cases where the groom is advised to bring what is within his means, there is a tendency to present substantial property.

Another element is some wealthy parents whom instead of demanding bride price, they provide property to the young couple for their development. However, it was revealed that some men are not comfortable receiving property from their wives' parents as it may empower the wife and challenge the man's power and masculinity. As seen in discussions earlier, men whose masculinity feels threatened by their wives' economic power develop weak masculinities and feelings of insecurity. In some cases, they exhibit overprotectiveness, suspicion,

or even violence as a way of compensating for the perceived economic and class gap.

Responses obtained from several participants also revealed that increasing affection for material things by daughters and their parents is one of the reasons why parents look for people who wish to marry their daughters. For example, Aurore observed that:

“Parents gave up their primary duties and have become excessively materialistic. Instead of prioritising the character of the prospective family, they now exert pressure on their daughters to attract rich men who can bring more material possessions than those brought by their neighbours’ daughters. This shift in focus contributes to situations where individuals end up with debts and bank loans following marriage ceremonies due to excessive demands. Before parents were more concerned about the character of the family their child was marrying into [valuing virtues over material possessions]”. (Aurore 27years).

Alphonsine, holds a similar view with Aurore. However, for Alphonsine it is not just parents who are materialistic minded, even other family members are fond of material things. She noted that:

“You find that in some families, parents are so demanding and pressurise their daughters to find rich men. There are also some aunties whose work is to look for rich men for girls as they anticipate that these men will save or improve the girl’s family financial situation. My friend (name withheld) comes from a wealthy background, when she found a man to marry, her family asked him an excessive bride price cost. However, the man changed his mind [because he could not afford] and up to now, my friend is not yet married”. (Alphonsine, 39years)

Meanwhile, Benjamin attributes all these to poverty and financial challenges that people encourage in the word today. He said that:

Modest families, see bride price practice as an opportunity to get money and a new family member who will help them to restore their financial or social status.

However, this is not for all parents as some of them do not pressurise their daughters to bring men with many demands. As Emmanuel attests to that effect, “my family in-law did not make life hard for me and they told me and their daughter to make a choice depending on what I could afford.

4.4. Gender roles and bride price payment

All 20 participants interviewed supported the bride price practice as they considered it relevant due to the culture, however, despite its necessity in formalising marriage, the actual payment and negotiation process make bride price look like the purchase of a wife. Due to the absence of a fixed bride price amount in Rwanda, each parent feels entitled to determine his own bride price amount or the quantity of cattle to be exchanged for his daughter. However, according to field interviews, the minimum bride price for an uneducated daughter is between 200,000 and 400,000 Rwandan francs, which is approximately 147 to 295 euros. For a daughter who completed high school, the bride price ranges from 500,000 to 1,000,000 Rwandan francs (approximately 370-740 euros), and for a daughter with a bachelor’s degree or higher, the price exceeds one million Rwandan francs. Given that ²“Currently, the minimum wage remains Rwf100, which was set in 1973” (Mahieu, et al., 2023, p8). it would take a man nearly eight and a half years to save enough money to afford the bride price cost for an uneducated female. This seems to be among the reasons why husbands may feel that paying bride price give them ownership or control over their wives’ freedom leading to mistreatment and the restriction of women’s agency. This idea agrees with Bishai and Grossbard (2008) who noted that bride price not only results in the purchase of women’s freedom but also translates into husbands asserting ownership over their wives’ sexual rights. They concluded that women whose bride price was paid are less likely to engage in extramarital relations – which is a trend not observed among men. This was supported in the interviews when Marcel stated that, “despite Rwandan

monogamous regime having many partners is a sign of power and strength for a man (masculinity) as long as i can provide for them”.

Women interview in this study believed that while bride price payment might not be the primary cause of mistreatment in homes - it greatly contributes to violence against them. After paying bride price, a man perceives himself as being in control having bought the wife into his home (Kaye et al., 2005). Thus, “...a wife is expected to adhere to her husband’s instructions without questioning” (Ella, 29 years). This narrative diminishes women’s negotiating power for rights and other resources within the household.

Also, the payment of bride price may serve as both a cause and symptom of gender inequality within households, an issue that must be addressed if sustainable development is to be achieved. During the interviews, Annonciata (43years) argued that “divorce or run away from your marital relationship is against the culture because marriage is for life. In addition, if a man has paid bride price it means that he loves you, so when he falls into a mistake, it is important to forgive him, be patient with him, and pray to God and he will change him”. Also, another participant, Patrick (33years) expressed that, “a man who has not paid loses authority in his own home and feels insecure about the possibility of his wife leaving”. This results in weakened or subordinate masculinities for such men.

In some areas, bride price is expected to be refunded in case of separation and this compel many women to remain in violent relationships if their parents cannot afford to repay the value received. Such practices glorify male dominance while treating women as second-class citizens. Therefore, the payment of bride price limits the options available to wives especially those with few resources in times when the marriage becomes unpleasant. Even when parents have the capacity to refund bride price, the process itself can bring about embarrassment and stigma further forcing women to endure unsatisfactory relationships.

³ Note that the existing minimum wage of RWF100 per day is not legally enforceable and is based on labour laws that date back to the early 1970s, which is a long way from where the economy is now.

4.5 Women, Patriarchy, and bride price tradition

Narratives shared by some women indicated that they no more see bride price as a cultural tradition but as a display of established gender hierarchies. One participant, Ella shared her experience that:

“After paying the bride price, culturally a woman belongs to the man; they even start (family and friends) to call you in your husband’s to be name, like muka Petero for instance if your husband’s name is Petero (Peter)”. In addition, in case they want to indicate you to someone who have trouble remembering you instead of mentioning my name they will say Peter’s wife or Philip’s daughter-in-law”.

In this case the man sees himself as the owner because even the rest of the community affirm so. However, he expects her to be obedient and submissive to him. This statement was agreed by other discussants (peer conversations) who felt that “bride price payment creates a power dynamic where women are expected to follow the expectations from society without even questioning the role they have in the marriage”. To complete Ella’s assertion that many women feel the weight of societal expectations after the payment of bride price, another discussant explained “that it’s not just about the material exchange, it’s about the control it gives the man” (Anonymous). In Rwanda, there’s an unspoken assumption that, having paid this price, he (the man) now has the right to dictate the terms of the marriage. This practice demonstrates that the act of payment is symbolic of the husband’s perceived ownership over the wife.

This is also similar to what Winny (32years old) describe as increasing competition in marriage ceremonies where extravagant displays during bride price negotiations as seen as a measure of the woman’s worth. These norms of society place Rwandan women in a position where they conform to stereotypical expectations in order to gain approval from the community. Also, society putting value on extravagant displays during the ceremonies makes women a product for sell and instances where women choose to resist bride price expectations often lead to rejection by their families and communities. The women viewed

bride price as taking away their rights and reducing them to objectives meant for sale with values equivalent to material items or money. However, one participant, Regine expressed,

“When a man pays so much, he should be proud because his wife is worth the price demanded.”

While the bride price practice has cultural and symbolic importance, some responses suggest a perspective which devalues woman unless a payment is made. One participant, Anne (pseudonym) 31years stated:

“If men do no pay bride price, they will abuse their wives more. If they abuse us after paying a price to appreciate the value we have, how do you think they will behave if they do not pay anything at all. Obvious with disrespect as we will mean nothing at all”.

Failure to pay the bribe price leads to men demeaning or mistreating women. Anne indicates that by men not paying, they would increase the likelihood of abuse against their wives and would treat their wives as “cheap commodity” to agree with the saying in Rwanda that things acquired freely are not cared for well. Thus, some participants agree that the payment of bride price is a way of showing value and dignity upon women.

4.6 Men, masculinities, and bride price payment.

Male participants saw bride price tradition in form of male and cultural identity in marriage and society. One male participant expressed that, “paying bride price is a way we (men) demonstrate that we adore and respect our wives” (Martin, 35years old). Here the participant uses “we” as a communal marker to show the shared belief in the community and positions bride price as an important cultural practice which shows a recognised identity towards women. Another participant, Franciose (42years) puts it,

“Bride price is a good practice because it defines man’s role in marriage – one that he is the family’s provider.”

It is seen here the participant is positioning himself the role of a man which is associated with masculinity (Adjei, 2016). Another male participant put

emphasis on the payments of bride price and maleness in Rwanda when expresses that:

“I have to pay something to demonstrate how capable I am [...] I am worthy the woman given to me.” (Xavier, 33years)

The statement indicates that the male participant is invoking bride price tradition as a material condition which is necessary for maintaining culturally assumed masculine identity in community. This shows that bride price is seen as a moral obligation for men that they have to fulfil as a marker of the worth of man and his responsibility and an indicator that the man is capable to taking care or providing for his wife. Positioning himself as capable and worthy the woman, he constructs bride price tradition as one that leads to male identity and authority in the marriage. As men who cannot afford this obligation are regarded as not worth marrying undermining their identity and dominance in marriage.

Similar to the above, Benjamin puts it that:

“It was my duty as a male to pay the bride price because it is customary in our culture. I had to maintain my status as a real man in the eyes of my wife, her parents and society.”

This shows the pressure on men in Rwanda to adhere to the traditional gender roles which involves committing a financial obligations integral to their masculinity. Some men express concerns about the potential threat to their masculinity when the bride is from a humble background. The assertion by participants that, “real man must bring property for her family to earn respect”, creates insecurity and a construct which ties a man’s worth to his financial capacity. These further pressures men to feel the need to put control over their wives to safeguard their perceived masculinity.

4.7 Why is bride price payment only given to or in the name of the father?

In Rwanda, social structures uphold male dominance leading men to manage bride price property similar to other household resources. It is men who usually decided what the bride should bring and also apportioned the items to the different family members and any other person who is going to receive. During price negotiations, mothers and women are excluded completely from participation or proximity with the responsibility solely falling on men. When gifts are presented, men assume control of the property leaving mothers with little or nothing yet they both participate in child upbringing. One participant said that: “society still hold onto stereotypical beliefs which portrays women as a domestic servants or sexual objects who must always appear attractive to men and that men are seeking sexual favours from women not their points of view”.

Another participant simply stated that:

“The children belong to the father.” (Epiphanie, 51years)

Most of these people having been socialised in a gendered arrangement dominated by assumed male supremacy, have grown to believe that children inherently belong to the father. One woman expressed that what women usually receive for their daughters are only pieces of clothes, sometimes without even enough money to cover the tailoring costs. The use of ‘natural’ and reference to God reveals two aspects. First, it demonstrates how society tends to naturalise social constructs particularly in matters of gender and second it indicates how religion and the Bible have been employed to glorify male power over women. One participant indicated that cows and other things were paid for a girl who has born out of marriage and had grown up solely with her mother. However, due to patriarchal reasons – male dominance and a society that ‘naturalises women’s subordination,’ the properties were claimed by the father. This led to an immediate disagreement with the mother insisting on taking possession of the property. However, the surrounding people supported the father as the legitimate owner, and he retained ownership. This incident created some women to demand for division of bride price property into two shares. This demand by

some women indicates that not all members of society accept male dominance as 'natural' and are willing to challenge masculinities and male power.

Among participants in this study, 29 year old Jeanette whose bride price was paid stated that her mother took most of the decisions in her bride price despite having elder brothers and male older family members around. This is because her father deceased. However, the case is different for Diane, whose case is different:

“My parents are separated, me and my husband portioned the items and decided to allocate what to the father and to the mother”. (Diane, 26 years)

From the case of Jeanette and Diane where their mothers have taken part in the negotiations of bride price could be because of men's 'failure' to fulfil traditional family roles and responsibilities as expected by society, and their passive roles in the lives of their children as they grow up. However, other factors such as labour migration, growing awareness of women's rights and feminism, education, among others.

Another reason why the properties may be entirely taken up by fathers and not mothers is because of the division of labour in a marriage practice. In the custom of bride price payment, specific responsibilities are assigned to men and women. Men lead decision-making and negotiations such as determining money and establishing event dates. The paternal uncle and grandfather of the groom coach the groom, guiding him through marital sessions on managing his wife, family, and fulfilling marital duties. Particularly, the uncle instructs the groom on sexual performance. Men are also tasked with sourcing bride price items – ensuring all essentials are in place in the desired quantities. Men take on the role of master of ceremony duties on both the bride and groom's sides, exclusively a male domain. On the other side, women are responsible for all aspects related to food, cooking, and decorating the venue. Those on the groom's side are in charge of wrapping the items and arranging them. The mother, grandmother, and paternal aunt of the bride are tasked with coaching the bride in marital and family duties, guiding her in managing her marriage and husband. They are also responsible for beautifying the bride for her husband. The aunt just like the uncle

coaches the bride in sexual matters and guides her through rites of passage. Meanwhile, during the event, women accompanying the groom carry specified items especially those in baskets (lighter items), while men handle the heavier items following established protocol.

4.8 Summary of the chapter

In this chapter, I presented findings on bride price in Rwandan marriages assessing its connections to gender roles, commercial realities, and patriarchal influences. Drawing from primary data collected during fieldwork, I aimed to identify why people perceive bride price as either beneficial or problematic, the role of gender roles in bride price payment, the unequal distribution of resources between mothers and fathers, and how men employ bride price as a means of controlling women and curtailing their independence. The study established that the motivation for bride price in Rwandan marriage was unveiled through participants' narratives which showed increasing competition and a desire for uniqueness in marriage ceremonies. Participants indicated that the cultural and natural practices associated with bride price were because of male dominance in the household. The practice symbolises a man's intention to marry and signifies the woman's security in the man's hands. However, modernisation has altered the nature of bride price transforming it into a commercialised practice. The shift towards extravagant displays and expensive demands fuelled by societal expectations and competition has posed challenges for many individuals especially those with limited financial means. The commercialisation of marriage was criticised by participants as it shifted from the original purpose of solemnising the union to a display of material excess. The findings also indicated that bride price practice was a necessity within Rwandan culture. However, the actual payment and negotiation process raised concerns as it often made bride price look like the purchase of a wife. Women participants expressed their views on bride price as a patriarchal tradition that diminishes their autonomy, leads to violence, and restricts their agency in marriage. Men, on the other hand saw bride price as a crucial aspect of their identity and role in society. Paying the bride price was viewed as a way to demonstrate adoration and respect for wives and defining the man's role as the family provider. Men perceived bride price as a cultural and

moral obligation tying their worth and masculinity to their ability to fulfil these financial responsibilities. The unequal distribution of gifts between mothers and fathers in bride price negotiations was explored. Men typically control the property obtained through bride price, leaving mothers with minimal or no share. Some women challenged these norms demanding a fair division of bride price property.⁴

⁴ https://drive.google.com/file/d/1EonwONVC9KLcazIzqsFDL0k6B7BVtuaN/view?usp=drive_link Link for transcribed interviews.

CHAPTER FIVE

RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

5.1 Introduction to the chapter

This research presented evidence regarding the experiences of people on the practice of bride price in Rwandan marriage. The study's main question was how is bride price practiced in Rwandan marriage? In attempt to answer this question, field study was conducted in four provinces in Rwanda: Rulindo in Northern province, Nyamagabe in Southern province, Bugesera in Eastern province, and Ngororero in Western province using interviews.

5.2 Overview of findings

Though the study was conducted among 20 participants, findings reveal several similarities with the rest of Rwanda especially on matters of gender, class, and masculinities despite being in different provinces. In addition, some examples and literature were obtained from other places outside Rwanda where bride price and its related practices are done. The aim of this study is not generalisations for the whole of Rwanda or even to the whole study population since the sample and study time were limited but to provide a theoretically grounded association between bride prices and the notions of masculinity and patriarchy and how these concepts influence people's perception, experiences, and lived realities.

Study discussions indicated that bride price is widely supported by participants because it is believed to formalise marriages and act as a form of appreciating the family of the woman. When a family received bride price, it is widely recognised and earns community respect. On the side of men, bride price helps them to fulfil their need for a sense of "real manhood" and hegemonic masculinities – granting them greater control over women through an act of payment. The study found that many women have been socialised to belief that payment of bride price brings them respect among parents and their peers and see non-payment as depriving them of certain advantages in society.

This acceptance and support of the bride price practice by both sides (men and women sides) becomes a way for reinforcing patriarchal norms and power dynamics by reducing women's value to economic terms, aligning with traditional gender expectations that positions men as providers and decision-makers within the family structure, supporting groom's sense of entitlement and authority over the bride and fostering a belief in male dominance and control which perpetuates the idea of hegemonic masculinity. In addition, the fact that women support bride price practice may specifically led to the validation of male authority by considering it a way to honour family ties or maintain cultural practices. In doing so, they indirectly contribute to the continuation of a system that subjugates them and reinforces masculinity. Moreover, the normalization of this practice may led to women's limited agency and autonomy; the support of bride price by women might arise from societal pressure, cultural expectations, or a lack of alternative options. This reinforces the limited agency and autonomy women may have in making choices regarding their relationships or marriages. In addition, it can restrict their ability to challenge or change traditional practices that perpetuate patriarchy. Furthermore, this adherence to bride price ritual might be a contribution to gender inequality. By endorsing this practice women reinforce their perceived economic inferiority, perpetuating the notion that their value lies in being married off and acquired through monetary exchange.

Bride price is also connected to social classes. as people seek to align their class expectations and peer influence over the bride price that they pay especially for the middle class while those in lower classes pay less attention due to inability to afford it. participants pointed out that unlike in the past, bride price is now more expensive since it requires a lot of gifts. This not only deprives men from modest households who may not be able to afford the cost, but it also deprives girls of the freedom to choose partners based on the emotional connections they have with them.

It is also accused of being commercial. the fact that bride price sets a monetary or material value on a woman might imply that a woman's worth is quantifiable and can be measured by the amount of bride price paid. This economic valuation reinforces the idea that a woman's value is primarily linked to her economic 'worth' within the context of marriage. these acts can lead to

feelings of inadequacy, devaluation, and a lack of empowerment among women, impacting their self-worth and well-being. It can also impact broader societal perceptions of relationships, potentially undermining the importance of mutual respect, love, and shared values.

5.3 Conclusion

According to research the findings, both men and women get advantages from the repayment of the bride price. These advantages include respect, acceptance from society, esteem, recognition, and a rise women's value. When a man pays the bride price, it indicates that he is prepared to take care of his wife and his family for a woman, it indicates that she has been brought up properly and that she is responsible. Even though this research did not include either male or female participants who failed to pay their bride price, it is important to highlight that males who fail to pay their bride price are subject to a loss of respect in their communities. Therefore, future research should include the perspectives of men who have failed to meet the bride price requirements to find out the challenges of failure to meet the societal expectations.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Consent Form

Researcher:

Working title: Bride Price within a Rwandan Marriage

The main objective of this study is to provide an understanding of people's experiences of bride price practiced in Rwandan marriage. The study is guided by the following research question: How is bride price practice in Rwandan marriage? It is assumed that bride price is used by men to control women and make them lose their independency. It also looks at the political economy of bride price in a Rwandan marriage explaining how women are taken as a commodity and generally understanding Rwandan as a patriarchal community. All these influences how people perceive bride price, this paper draws on field study of Rwandan marriage couples with my experience on women's rights, popular debates in parliament and informal discussions with different individuals.

What is involved?

You will be interviewed by me in an informed way which would be just like having a conversation. All this would be recorded in audio and then I would use this information in this study. The information will be completely anonymous (your name will not be used in the study) and all information securely stored. The recording and all the information will be destroyed when my degree is complete. This process will take you 20 – 45 minutes to complete. You will be able to withdraw from taking part in this study at any time before the research is complete, without giving a reason, and you can ask me any question you have about the study. Please take your time to think carefully about whether you would like to be involved. It is your choice and there is no problem if you decide it is not for you.

Consent:

I have clearly understood the purpose and objectives of the study and voluntarily accepted to participate in the study.

Signature: Date:

(Participant)

I have clearly explained the purpose and objectives of the study to the participant, and he/she has understood and consented to participate.

Signature: Date:

(Researcher)

Appendix B: Letter to request for assistance

REQUEST FOR ASSISTANCE

Speciose KUBWIMANA

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+250782730878, +31647978935

August 13, 2023

Corps Africa Rwanda

Innocent MUTABAZI

58 KG 9 Ave, Kigali, Rwanda

Dear Innocent,

I hope this letter finds you well.

My name is Speciose KUBWIMANA, and I am currently pursuing my thesis on the topic of the **role of bride price within Rwandan marriage**. As a crucial aspect of my research, I am seeking your organisation's assistance in identifying suitable respondents for online interviews, which will be an integral part of my study.

My objective is to gather valuable insights from individuals who have been regally married in Rwanda, specifically those for whom the bride price has been paid or received before their marriage. I aim to interview a total of 20 respondents from various regions across the country to gain a comprehensive understanding of this cultural practice within Marriage institution.

The criteria for the respondents are as follows:

Age: Between 21 and 60 years

Marital Status: Regally married.

Bride Price: Paid or received before marriage.

Gender Distribution: Preferably 3 women and 2 men in each province or 4 women and 1 man.

Here is an outline of the action plan and the proposed timeline for the activities:

August 21-25: Identification of Potential Respondents.

Collaborating with Corps Africa volunteers on the field to identify individuals who meet the specified criteria in each province.

August 28-September 1: Pre-Screening and Selection.

Conduct pre-screening interviews to verify the eligibility of potential respondents.

Select a diverse and representative sample of 20 respondents based on the criteria mentioned above.

September 4-15: Interviews

Schedule and conduct online interviews with the selected respondents.

Ensure that the interviews are conducted respectfully, ethically, and in adherence to research standards.

I sincerely believe that your organisation's support will significantly contribute to the success of my research. If you have any suggestions or resources that could assist in identifying potential respondents, I would be grateful to hear them.

Thank you for considering my request. I look forward to the opportunity to collaborate with your organisation and to contribute valuable knowledge to the understanding of this important cultural practice in Rwanda.

Sincerely,

Speciose

Appendix C: Interview Guide

1. How was your journey of engagement and bride price ceremony like?
2. How would you describe the significance it holds in Rwandan society?
3. How do you perceive your role as a woman/man in negotiating or participating in bride price transactions?
4. In your opinion, how does the practice of bride price influence the power dynamics between men and women within a marriage?
5. Have you observed any changes in bride price customs over the years, and if so, how have these changes affected the marriage institution In Rwanda?
6. From your experience or understanding, how does the payment of bride price affect your decision-making abilities as a woman/man in your marital households?
7. How can the cultural beliefs or traditions have linked to bride price limit women's freedom or independence within marriage?
8. In what ways do you think the practice of bride price contributes to gender inequalities in Rwandan society?
9. Are there any instances where bride price has been used as a tool for control or abuse within a marriage? If yes, could you share some examples?
10. From your perspective, do you believe bride price is essential for sustaining traditional values and maintaining strong family ties?

Thank you for your cooperation.