

**THE INFLUENCE OF GENDERED PERCEPTION OF BRIDE WEALTH ON ITS
PRACTICE IN KOIBATEK SUB-COUNTY, BARINGO COUNTY, KENYA**

BY

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DECLARATION

DECLARATION BY THE CANDIDATE

This thesis is my original work and has not been presented in any other University for examination.

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DEDICATION

I salute my father Henry Tumo and my mother Lucy Kiptum, for instilling the value of education and discipline. My siblings: Faith, Thomas, Vincent, Brian, Tony, Allan, Roy for their prayers and support. Finally, my friend Rebecca and Boniface for moral support, love, prayers and understanding

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ABBREVIATIONS

- AMREF - African Medical and Research Foundation
- CEDAW - Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
- NACOSTI - National Commission of Science, Technology, and Innovation
- LNC - Local Native Court
- UNGA - United Nations General Assembly

ABSTRACT

Bride wealth which is a dominant morality in formalizing marriage is undergoing drastic change resulting from mobility of things and ideas in the context of modernization, urbanization, internationalization, and globalization. These factors have not only changed people's realities but have also given individuals freedom and autonomy in making choices about bride wealth. Although much scholarly work exists on the socio-cultural and economic function of bride wealth in most communities, there is a paucity of empirical data on the gendered perception of bride wealth. Guided by Gender Intersectionality theory, this study investigated the influence of gendered perception of bride wealth on its practice in Koibatek-Baringo County. Specifically, the study aimed to achieve the following objectives: to explore individual gendered knowledge about bride wealth, to establish what informs individual gendered knowledge, and to determine how gendered knowledge informs individual practices towards bride wealth. The study adopted an exploratory research design using qualitative approaches. Data was collected from 42 research participants who were selected through snowballing, direct and purposive sampling using in-depth conversational interviews. Additional data was collected from five purposively selected key informants, informal discussions, and observation. Data from in-depth interviews and key informants were in form of narratives and were transcribed ad verbatim. The transcribed data were read and reread and thematically analyzed in relation to the study objectives. The study found that individuals had varied knowledge about bride wealth which was drawn from socio-cultural and religious repertoires on marriage. This knowledge was gendered in terms of age, marital status, level of education, religious affiliation, occupation and ethnicity, and was agentively (re)negotiated, contested and reinvented for the pursuit of self-accomplishment in terms of honor, respect and social acceptance. The study also found that the individuation of bride wealth in terms of honor, respect and social acceptance influenced individual practices toward bride wealth in pursuit of aspired identity and status. The study concludes that an individual's knowledge about bride wealth is a gendered and synthesized (re)interpretation of socialized sociocultural understanding of bride wealth in pursuit of individual identities and status. The study recommends that in order to understand an individual's knowledge about bride wealth it is important to take into account individual positionalities in terms of gender, age, level of education, religious affiliations, marital status and ethnicity, and their own desired identities and social status contextually.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION.....	ii
DEDICATION.....	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	iv
ABBREVIATIONS	v
ABSTRACT.....	vi
CHAPTER ONE	1
INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1 Background of the study.....	1
1.2 Statement of the Problem	6
1.3 Purpose of the study	7
1.4 Research objectives	7
1.5 Research questions	7
1.4 Justification of the Study	7
1.5 Scope of the Study.....	8
1.6 Delimitations of the Study.....	8
1.7 Limitations of the Study	9
1.8 Definition of Terms	10
CHAPTER TWO.....	11
LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK	11
2.1 Introduction	11
2.2 Marriage	12
2.3 Understanding the concept of bride wealth	13
2.4 Socio-cultural functions of bride wealth payment.....	14

2.5 Changes in bride wealth practices	17
2.5.1 Education.....	17
2.5.2 Urbanization and Migration	19
2.5.3 Modern judicial and legal system.....	21
2.5.4 The coming of Christian missionaries.....	23
2.5.5 Individualization of bride wealth	25
2.6 Individual positionality and bride wealth practices.....	28
2.6.1 Level of education and bride wealth practices	28
2.6.2 Gender and bride wealth.....	29
2.6.3 Social class and bride wealth practices	30
2.6.4 Religious affiliation and bride wealth practices	31
2.6.5 Marital status and bride wealth practices	32
2.7 Individual agency and bride wealth practices	33
2.8 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK.....	34
2.8.1 Gender intersectionality theory	34
2.9 Summary and conclusion	36
CHAPTER THREE.....	36
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	36
3.1 Introduction	36
3.2 Study site	37
3.3 Research Design	38
3.4 Unit of Analysis.....	38
3.5 Sampling of the study site and sampling procedure.....	38
3.5.1 Snowballing.....	39
3.5.2 Direct approach	40

3.6 Methods of data collection	41
3.6.1 In-depth interviews.....	41
3.6.2 Key informant interviews.....	41
3.6.3 Informal discussions and participant observation	42
3.7 Data Analysis.....	43
3.8 Reflexivity	44
3.9 Ethical considerations.....	45
CHAPTER FOUR.....	46
DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATIONS	46
4.1 Introduction	46
4.2 Socio-demographic factors of respondents	47
4.2.1 Gender	47
4.2.2 Marital status	48
4.2.3 Education.....	49
4.2.4 Occupation.....	49
4.3 Gendered knowledge about bride wealth	49
4.3.1 Bride wealth as a route to formalizing marriage	50
4.3.2 Bride wealth is seen as commodifying/objectifying women.....	52
4.3.3 Bride wealth as social status.....	56
4.3.4 Bride wealth as an avenue of exploitation.....	60
4.3.5 Bride wealth as asserting one-independence.....	62
4.3.6 Bride wealth as a symbol of love	65
4.4 Socio-cultural factors informing the gendered knowledge about bride wealth.....	66
4.4.1 Social acceptance	67
4.4.2 Respect	69

4.4.3 Honor.....	70
4.5 Gendered knowledge and individual Bride wealth practices	72
4.5.1 Investing together	72
4.5.2 Writing a will as a security towards property	74
4.5.3 Cohabiting	76
4.5.5 Seeking social recognition.....	78
CHAPTER FIVE.....	83
SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	83
5.1 Introduction	83
5.2 Summary of major findings.....	83
5.2.1: Gendered knowledge about bride wealth	83
5.2.2 Socio- cultural factors informing the gendered knowledge about bride wealth.....	87
5.2.3 Gendered knowledge and individual Bride wealth practices	88
6.1 Conclusion.....	89
7.1 Recommendations for future research.....	90
REFERENCES.....	90
APPENDIXES	97
Appendix I: Informed Consent.....	97
Appendix II: In-depth-Interview Guide (Semi-Structured Interviews).....	98
Appendix III: Key Informant interviews	100
Appendix IV: Research Permit	101

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

This chapter focused on the background of the study, statement of the problem, research objectives, and research questions, significance of the study, scope, and definition of key variables

1.1 Background of the study

In Africa, the giving of the bride wealth is one event among many that defines the marriage process, especially the stages of betrothal and courtship. Bride wealth is a gift or payment made to the parents of the bride in various forms, depending on the ethnic community, for solemnizing marriage. It involves presenting gifts such as cattle, tobacco, local brew, foodstuffs, money, and clothes, as well as the provision of physical services to the bride's family. It has been and is still the most important and valued aspect of the marriage process (Anderson 2007), albeit undergoing drastic changes.

Traditionally, bride wealth acts as an expression of appreciation given to the bride's family for bringing up their daughter and also serves as compensation for losing a productive and reproductive family member (Parkin, 2018). More importantly, the payment enables women to be considered full members of their husband's family and brings a commitment to the marriage union.

Payment of bride wealth tends to create a permanent relation between two clans and enhance the alliance between bridegroom and bride. To safeguards against threats to marriage institutions such as divorce by strengthening and nurturing bonds between the two parties involved in marriage.

In addition, the bride wealth served as a source of income, essentially for the bride's family. Through marriage, girls increased family wealth subsequently providing a means for their brothers to marry (Kenyatta, 1978). Cagnolo (2006) also added that this applied mostly to poor families, where girls were seen as a source of income through marriage contracts. However, he noted that although the bride wealth was substantial, sometimes individuals were motivated to marry off their daughters to the highest bidder, irrespective of their preferences. This limited a girl's agency in deciding who to get married to.

Though bride wealth is an important practice in solemnizing marriage in most African communities, it has experienced drastic changes ranging from the value attached to it to the mode of payment, and payment timespan (Shadle, 2006). Although historically this exchange occurred between families and the process was dictated by culture, it is now mostly individualized with the bridegroom, and the immediate family is responsible for negotiation and payments of bride wealth (Ansell 2001; Yarbrough 2018). This has led to (re)negotiation, transformation, and (re)invention of new modes of paying bride wealth.

The mode of payment has also changed from cattle to cash in many communities. The amount to be paid is not universal but relative to individual families' socio-economic status. This has created a loophole where bride wealth has been commercialized (Hague, Thiara, & Turner, 2011). This has raised questions about the value of bride wealth in marriage.

Payment of bride wealth has undergone drastic changes due to structural forces and exposure to new worldviews, which have affected marriage and the family structure.

Waller, (2007), notes that the value of marriage in most communities has changed. The premium of children as a source of status and identity has decreased, and alternative forms of marriage such as same-sex marriage and single motherhood have become less stigmatizing.

Changes in bride wealth have been linked to urbanization, greater mobility, individualization, increased secularization, and women's empowerment processes, which have transformed marriage and family from an institution based on collective morals, values, and customs to one based on companionship, love, individual autonomy, and rights (Parkin, & Nyamwaya, (2018). These changes have made bride wealth to be constructed differently among social groups. This has nevertheless put enormous pressure on individuals to either conform to their traditional norms of bride wealth or meet new expectations in marriage. This has birthed divergent discourses about bride wealth contextually.

According to Lowes, (2017), the practice of bride wealth is perceived as outdated and entrenches gender inequality while promoting male dominance. This reinforces patriarchy in society. This significantly lowers the status of women relative to their male counterparts. Also, Nunn, (2017) notes that payment of bride wealth limits a woman's reproductive autonomy and thus makes them subordinate to men.

Mangena (2013) also observes that bride wealth makes a woman lose decision making power at the household level. In most African communities, for example, once the bride's wealth is paid, women's rights are taken over by a man who undermines women's autonomy and due to these women lose control over their reproductive rights, and they are forced to seek permission to access health care services, especially those touching

on reproductive health. This makes women subordinate to men and thus increases their vulnerability to gender-based violence (Bawa, 2015). Consequently, this practice is constructed as violating women's rights and dignity (Agrawal, 2018).

Tosam (2016) also notes that commercialization of the practice hinders women from realizing their potential as equal members of the community. This is because some parents force young girls out of school to enrich themselves from bride wealth. It denies a girl child the right to education. In Kenya, early childbearing has been identified as the major cause of interrupted and discontinued education (AMREF, 1994).

Despite the fact that bride wealth is constructed as disadvantaging women, other scholars and researchers perceive bride wealth as significant in stabilizing marriage. For example, Dery, (2015) observes that bride wealth acts as a security to a woman in case of marriage dissolution as it strengthens the bond between the partners. Also, bride wealth enabled women to be assimilated into the man's lineage as a wife and a mother which accorded women proper identity in the community and access to resources. At the same time, it gave a man social paternity to all children given birth by the wife regardless of their biological paternity.

Bride wealth in most communities in Sub-Saharan Africa is part of a dominant local morality, intersecting gender, ethnicity, religion, and social class to constitute not just identities but also moral personhood. However, with fast-changing social realities informed by structural changes such as modernization, urbanization, internationalization, and globalization, emphasis on human agency has emerged as important in understanding what informs the construction of an individual's everyday lives and decision-making processes.

The debate of agency and structure in human society is age-old in sociology. The inclusion of human agency in understanding social facts such as bride wealth is to do with an individual sense of control and freedom of choice. In this case, a person has a choice either or not to adhere dominant morality of bride wealth as informed by their social construction of social reality.

According to Blurr, (2003), individuals construct social realities in relation to prevailing contextual contexts (political, social, economic, and cultural). This in essence means that individual perception (Knowledge, attitudes, and practices) towards bride wealth, for example, is informed by synthesizing what they have been socialized regarding bride wealth from their social institution, everyday language, and shared meanings in relation to prevailing contextual realities.

The synthesized realities thus inform what bride wealth means at an individual level and subsequent social action towards it. This means there is no universal way of understanding or social action towards bride wealth at an individual level. Logically, individuals have multiple ways of understanding what bride wealth means and subsequent social action. This, however, is an —illusion‖ if we do not take into account the social positionality (Lonsdale, 2012) of each individual in terms of gender, age, level of formal education, marital status, religion, and social status.

Consequently, guided by gender intersectionality theory (Collins, 2015), this study investigated the influence of gendered perception of bride wealth on its practice in Koibatek- Baringo County. Specifically, the study aimed to achieve the following objectives: to investigate individual gendered knowledge about bride wealth, to establish what informs individual gendered knowledge, and to determine how gendered

knowledge informs individual practices towards bride wealth as intersected by age, level of formal education, marital status, social status, and occupation.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Traditionally, bride wealth forms an essential element of a stable marriage. However, payment of bride wealth has undergone drastic changes ranging from value attached to bride wealth, mode of payment, and timeframe for payment (Shadle, 2006). These changes are influenced by structural changes such as urbanization, increased mobilization; individualization, rising secularization, and the emancipation of women, all of which have affected marriage and the family structure (Amoti, 2004). Consequently, the practice of bride wealth has evolved into a matter of individual choice, even within societies where it was once considered a matter of moral obligation.

According to Fassin, (2014), Laidlaw, (2014); Karseinti (2012), and Olivier, (2008), choice is perceived as an individual ability to rationally evaluate and reflect on what is right as part of universal aspiration contextually. The choice is, however, constructed differently according to contextual setting and individual social positioning in terms of gender, marital status, level of formal education, social status, occupation, family values and, religious beliefs. As a result, there exist multiple individual encompassing knowledge, attitudes, and practices) concerning bride wealth. Informed by gender intersectionality (Collins, 2015) theories, this study investigated the influence of gendered perception of bride wealth on its practice in Koibatek- Baringo County.

This study in particular, seeks to answer the following questions taking into account intersecting variables such as by age, level of formal education, marital status, social status, religious affiliation, ethnicity and, occupation:

1.3 Purpose of the study

The purpose of the study is to investigate the influence of gendered perception of bride wealth on its practice.

1.4 Research objectives

1. To investigate individual gendered knowledge about bride wealth
2. To establish what informs individual gendered knowledge
3. To determine how gendered knowledge informs individual practices towards bride wealth.

1.5 Research questions

1. What is individual gendered knowledge about bride wealth?
2. What informs individual gendered knowledge?
3. How does gendered knowledge inform individual practices towards bride wealth?

1.4 Justification of the Study

The findings of this study can inform policy development and social interventions. Understanding the factors that shape individual attitudes and practices related to bride wealth can guide policymakers and advocacy groups in designing culturally sensitive interventions. It aid in formulating laws and policies that promote gender equality within marriage traditions. By addressing the root causes of gendered perceptions, policymakers can work towards fostering social change and creating an environment where cultural practices align with principles of equality and human rights.

This study is crucial within the context of gender studies. Analyzing how gendered knowledge influences individual attitudes and practices towards bride wealth can provide significant insights into gender inequalities within societies. This research can help identify whether perceptions around bride wealth reinforce existing gender disparities or challenge traditional gender norms. Understanding how these perceptions affect individual practices can inform efforts aimed at promoting gender equality, by pinpointing specific areas where education and awareness-raising initiatives can be targeted to challenge harmful stereotypes and promote more egalitarian practices.

The community can be empowered when they understand the factors that affect their cultural practices. They are enabled to discover ways to preserve their cultural practices or how to adapt to new situations.

1.5 Scope of the Study

The scope of this study is primarily focused on investigating the intersection of individual gendered knowledge about bride wealth with various individual positionalities such as age, level of formal education, marital status, social status, religious affiliation, ethnicity, and occupation on its practices.

1.6 Delimitations of the Study

Delimitations refer to boundaries and limitations consciously set by researchers when conducting a study. These constraints are required to uphold the focus and feasibility of the research. Some potential limitations in the context of the study on individual gendered knowledge about bride wealth, as it intersects with individual positionalities, include:

Geographical area: This study purposively selected three locations in Koibatek SubCounty because of their inherent diversities in terms of urban, semi-urban, and rural features. These locations are Eldama Ravine which is an urban area thus, heterogeneous in terms of ethnic composition, Kabiet is a peri-urban, and Koibatek is rural and inhabited majorly by the Kalenjins ethnic groups. This limited the geographical scope of the study to maintain the cultural relevance and context of the practice to achieve the objectives of the study in the study area.

The study specifically focused on the intersection of individual gendered knowledge about bride wealth with individual positionalities such as age, marital status, level of education, religious affiliation, occupation, and social status; hence it may not capture all the possible contextual factors that influence individual knowledge and perceptions concerning payment of bride wealth.

1.7 Limitations of the Study

The limitations of a study refer to the challenges that researchers encounter while conducting their research (Kombo, & Tromp, 2014). Due to the fact that all tribes in Kenya practice bride wealth, the researcher encountered difficulties in targeting the entire tribes in the country due to limited resources and the high cost associated with conducting research. Therefore, the study was limited and narrowed to Koibatek SubCounty. Hence, the findings of this study cannot be generalized to all other SubCounties in Kenya but would be of great impact on the institution of bride wealth and marriage.

Moreover, the collection of primary data posed another significant challenge during this study. Primary data refers to information that is directly gathered from the respondents themselves (Kombo, 2014). In this study, the primary sources of data collection included

semi-structured interviews, informal discussions, and in-depth interviews. Thus, by the nature of the process, some respondents were hesitant in giving out information as the subject matter also touched on people's feelings, values, and emotions. Hence, due to the inherent nature of the process, some research participants displayed hesitancy in giving out information, as the topic at hand also delved into individuals' feelings, values, and emotions.

Being a qualitative study in nature and utilization of sample size, diversities formed the basis of how participants of the study were selected

1.8 Definition of Terms

Attitudes - refers to the male and female beliefs and behavior towards bride wealth in their lived lives

Bride wealth - is a material or non-material value or gift made to the parents of the bride in various forms amongst different communities for marriage that is intended or has taken place. Marriage is established through the payment of bride-wealth.

Gender- is a social construction of who is male or female contextually

Gendered- Refers to the process of differentiating and attributing certain characteristics, roles, behaviors, and expectations to individuals based on their gender.

Knowledge - It refers how males and females construct or make meaning of what bride wealth means in their lived lives based on their positionality in terms of age, gender, marital status, level of formal education, religious affiliation, occupation, social status and, ethnicity

Practices- It refers to (inter)subjective action towards bride wealth contextually and informed by individual positionality in terms of age, gender, level of education, marital status, income, ethnicity and, religious affiliation.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a comprehensive foundation for our study by reviewing existing literature thematically, ensuring that our research is well-informed and poised to contribute substantially to the understanding of the influence of gendered perception of bride wealth on its practices in Koibatek Sub-County, Baringo County, Kenya. It seeks to show what scholars have written as well as identifying existing gaps which this research seeks to fill. The literature is reviewed under the following headings: marriage, understanding the concept of bride wealth, socio-cultural functions of bride wealth payment, changes in bride wealth practices and the driving factors behind its transformation, individual agency and bride wealth practices, including age, gender, level of formal education, ethnicity, and religious affiliation. Lastly, gender intersectionality theory plays a crucial role in enhancing our understanding of this study. It not only impacts knowledge about bride wealth but also influences active practices related to it.

2.2 Marriage

Marriage holds significant importance as the prevailing dominant morality in many African communities. It serves not only as a means to maintain lineage but also as a rite of passage for young individuals transitioning into adulthood, granting them access to family resources and the establishment of their own identity (Shadle, 2006).

The value attributed to marriage is exemplified by Mayer's (1975) "grey hair rule," which forbade a woman from aging (acquiring grey hair) while residing at her parent's homestead. This rule underscored the expectation that marriage offered women the opportunity to create their households and take on adult responsibilities. Further, the death of an unmarried woman in her natal home resulted in her burial far away from the homestead to avoid bringing disgrace upon the family.

Similarly, Shadle (2006) noted that the passing of a young man who had undergone circumcision and reached marriageable age without finding a wife was considered a curse upon the family. This belief demonstrates the immense societal importance attached to marriage, as failing to meet this expectation was viewed as a misfortune for the entire family.

In traditional African societies, marriage was solemnized through the customary practice of bride wealth payment, an integral requirement for formalizing matrimonial unions. Although widespread across various communities, the specifics of bride wealth payment, including its form and magnitude, varied significantly. This practice of presenting marital gifts held immense cultural and social importance as it not only validated the marriage but also ensured the woman's acceptance into the marital family.

and granted the man social recognition as the father of any offspring born within the union (Yarbrough, 2018).

The significance placed on children within the institution of marriage was of paramount value. A woman's success as a wife was often measured by her ability to bear children (Shadle, 2006). Consequently, if a woman, who had received bride wealth payment, tragically remained childless, her husband had the right to seek the return of the bride wealth.

Additionally, within the context of childbearing, male children were esteemed more highly than females. This belief stemmed from the perception that boys would serve as direct heirs to their father's lineage, while girls were expected to join other clans through marriage. Historically, some men opted for polygamy or sought surrogate women to ensure the birth of male heirs. In modern times, some men engage in multiple sexual relationships with the hope of having a son with any of their intimate partners (Dery, 2015).

2.3 Understanding the concept of bride wealth

The practice of bride wealth, widely practiced in many societies, has been extensively explored and defined by scholars and writers. Oguli Oumo, (2004) defines bride wealth as a contractual arrangement where the groom offers material goods, often cattle or other animals, or money to the bride's family. In return, the groom acquires the bride, her labor, and her ability to bear children.

Anyebe, as referenced in Sembe *et al* (2013), provides a comprehensive analysis of bride-wealth and emphasizes its role in legalizing marriages and establishing the legitimacy of offspring. Accordingly, bride wealth serves as compensation to the

woman's family for the loss of one of its members who possesses the potential to bear children.

Rakhimdinova, (2005) also conceptualizes bride wealth as the monetary or material wealth paid by the groom or his family to the parents of the bride upon marriage. This payment is intended to represent the perceived value of the girl or young woman.

Additionally, bride-wealth is seen as a symbolic act of friendship involving the transfer of cash or property from the husband's family to the bride's family. However, in reality, it signifies the transfer of productive and reproductive services to the husband's family

(Kaye *et al.*, 2005).

In addition, Fuseini (2013) and Falana (2019) perceive bride wealth as a traditional or customary practice. This payment is made to ensure the legitimacy of the union.

Consequently, Bride-wealth can generally be described as the initial and obligatory payment, either in cash or goods that a man offers to the parents of a girl or woman he plans to marry. This payment is made to establish his rightful ownership of the woman as well as legitimize the marriage.

2.4 Socio-cultural functions of bride wealth payment

In most cultures in Africa, the practice of paying bride wealth at the time of marriage is common. This payment made by the groom to the bride's family was seen as compensation for the transfer of the bride's labor and reproductive capabilities to her husband's household. Historically, bride wealth often consisted of manual labor provided by the groom and his family to the bride's family because the departure of a

woman from her own family would result in a loss of her labor to that household (Anderson, 2007, Hamer, 2015, Onyango, 2016).

Bride wealth is the most important element within the customary law of marriage. Without the payment of bride wealth, a marriage is not recognized within the community. This is because once the bride wealth is paid, either partially or in full, it bestows upon the couple certain rights and obligations according to customary law (Fuseini, 2013).

The payment of bride wealth itself carries significant importance, as it is mandatory to complete unless waived by the bride's family. In essence, if the husband dies before fulfilling the payment of bride wealth, his children are obligated to pay the remaining amount to be socially acknowledged and fully accepted as his legitimate offspring.

Nevertheless, statutory marriages have provided relief to couples, as they no longer necessitate the payment of bride wealth for the marriage to be deemed valid. This exemption of bride wealth requirement in statutory marriages raises interesting questions about the influence of state law on the autonomy and choices of couples who are married under both customary law and statutory law (Fuseini, 2013).

According to Lowes and Nunn (2017), the payment of bride wealth was seen as the primary indicator of a valid marriage. It signified the transfer of a woman from her parents' family to her husband's and the assumption of his surname. This is also reflected in Kenyan customary law where the payment of bride wealth is considered an essential part of a valid marriage (Scheidler, 2010; Diala, 2014). In Christian marriage also payment of bride wealth establishes the legitimacy of marriage and children born from it (Ogoma, 2014).

Bride wealth symbolized the groom's commitment to the marriage. The payment of the bride wealth was seen as a demonstration of the groom's sincerity and showed that he was fully invested in the relationship (Scheidler, 2010). Before the payment of the bride wealth, the couple would not have any physical contact, making it a crucial symbol of faithfulness similar to the use of wedding and engagement rings in modern times (Nambozo, 2004; Falana, 2019; Ojua, Lukpata, & Atama, (2014); Scheidler, 2010).

Bride wealth also demonstrated respect and honor in some cultures. The payment of the bride wealth signals that the groom is economically capable of supporting his wife and children, and failure to pay it can impact a man's respect (Lowes, & Nunn, (2017) and Nambozo, (2004). In some African cultures non-payment of bride wealth can be seen as demeaning to the woman rather than the defaulter (Lowes, & Nunn, (2017).

The payment of a bride-wealth holds great importance in consolidating marriages within diverse tribes in Africa. According to Chuunga, (2015), this tradition serves to validate marriages, affirm the official wife's position, and establish her as a respected and valued woman. It instills a sense of worth and honor within the wife, elevating her status in the community. On the other hand, when the bride-wealth is not paid, the woman's presence in her husband's household is deemed illegitimate, and she may be treated as a mere domestic servant (Moono, 2019).

Bride wealth often serves as a unifying symbol, for the two families signing marital contracts. It reinforces kinship ties and establishes a sense of shared responsibility. By exchanging bride wealth, the marrying families commit to nurturing the children born from the union and actively working towards the prosperity of the marital relationship. Therefore it makes married women live peacefully in marriage because they are valued,

particularly when they bear children, and can provide a sense of security to daughters in their new marital homes (Chilufya, 2008).

2.5 Changes in bride wealth practices

Bride wealth is a dominant morality in most African communities. Marriage is an important and valued rite of passage in most African communities. However, bride wealth has undergone drastic changes such as a shift in what constitutes bride wealth, negotiation of payment and functions (Horne, 2013). These changes have implications on the dynamics of marriage, gender relations, and, socio-cultural changes in diverse contexts. Importantly, bride wealth has created spaces for individuals to (re)negotiate; contest and, (re)invent dominant moralities which are culturally significant. Changes in bride wealth are influenced by:

2.5.1 Education

Before the coming of colonialism, education in African communities was a means of preparing children for adulthood obligations. This is because people were learning different aspects of life to sharpen one's common sense which helps them to cope with the worldly reality of life. Knowledge was passed through folk tales, songs, myths, parables, and other traditions passed down from generation to generation (Nwanosike, 2011).

The coming of colonialism, however, introduced a formal education system where parents entrusted their children with a professional teacher who teaches them how to read and write and learn new skills to relate to the world (Onyije, 2011). Unlike the then informal education, formal education has a systematic school curriculum completed at a certain standard and certificates are awarded upon completion. Individuals pursue

their preferred careers to attain self-actualization and paid employment. Education promotes different ways of doing things as well as different perspectives on life.

The paradigm shift to the education of the girl-child has seen many women enroll in higher institutions of learning to take up even courses previously reserved for men such as medicine and engineering (Ndolvu, 2013). Consequently, marriage and bride wealth are no longer a priority to such women who feel economically empowered. Education has enabled some women to get well-paying jobs and careers hence they are self-reliant (Mangena, 2013). The idea of being pinned down to procreation and working on the farms due to bride wealth payment no longer holds water for such women. Education status has surpassed some qualities that were considered key in choosing a good wife such as virginity, submissiveness, and hard work leading some women to marry men of a similar class while denying other men the opportunity to marry.

A study conducted on Evolution of Beliefs and Practices of Bride Wealth and Their Role in Marriage among the Bukusu reported that western education did not undermine bride wealth but gave the practice a new face where men who took their daughters to school had the right to be compensated properly through payment of a reasonable amount of bride wealth (Muntz, 2011). Additionally, an educated and empowered woman is the cornerstone of community development.

Education has been found to play a crucial role in bringing changes in the bride wealth practice in many cultures. According to Kipkemboi *et al.* (2010), women's education has a significant impact on reducing the amount of bride wealth required or even eliminating the tradition. This is because education empowers women, providing them

with economic independence and better bargaining power in negotiations over bride wealth.

Jewkes, R. *et al.* (2002) in their analysis in South Africa found that women with higher levels of education were less likely to accept harmful traditional practices, such as early marriage or the payment of high bride wealth, as they were more aware of their rights and had greater confidence to challenge these practices. This highlights the role of education in transforming traditional norms and practices related to bride wealth. Therefore, increasing access to education for women can help to reduce the exploitation and oppression that may be associated with the tradition and promote greater gender equality in marriage negotiations.

According to Mangena, (2013), women with higher levels of education tend to command higher bride wealth, as they are perceived as being more economically and socially valuable. Education boosts woman's potential in the job market making them a more attractive prospect for marriage. Being educated means women are a valuable asset in marriage specifically to their husband and his family. Furthermore, women with higher levels of education were perceived to have more bargaining power when it comes to bride wealth negotiation as well as determining the terms of their marriage. However, education may also change cultural attitudes towards women, making them more valued in society and reducing the need for bride wealth as a symbol of their worth (Ndolvu, 2013).

2.5.2 Urbanization and Migration

Migration and urbanization continue to transform bride wealth even in the 21st century. As the people migrate and settle in towns and other places in Kenya, cultural interaction has occurred making some people adopt marital customs other than their cultural values

which makes bride wealth payment compulsory. Onyango, (2005) posits that urbanization has led to the mingling of different cultures between different groups of people thus leading to the introduction of new ideas of bride wealth by which some people pay a little, others nothing while still others avoid marriage because of the requirement to pay bride wealth. Most urban women are giving their economic independence priority and not marriage.

The urban areas depict different economic structures as compared to the rural setting with a greater prominence on the increasing economic development, increased cash flow, and a shift from traditional agrarian economies to modern industrial economies. This has led to changes in occupational patterns and economic opportunities, which can influence the ability of grooms or their families to meet the customary demands of bride wealth (Hossain, 2017).

Urbanization has led to an increased cost of living resulting to in competition for housing, employment, and other resources for development. As a result, the customary demands for bride wealth may also increase to reflect the changing economic dynamics of urban areas. Thus, the increasing cost of living in urban areas has led to higher demands for cash payments as bride wealth as compared to rural areas (Hossain, Khan, 2017). This was perceived as a way for brides' families to secure their economic wellbeing.

Urbanization often leads to changes in social norms and values, which can impact the practice of bride wealth. There are changing gender roles within communities, as women's roles and status may change with increased access to education, employment opportunities, and exposure to different cultural norms. It gives women greater

autonomy, in terms of decision-making power and mobility. This has influenced the practice of bride wealth, with women in urban areas having more autonomy in marriage negotiations and being less dependent on bride wealth as an economic exchange (Oyedemi, T. O., & Akindipe, O. O. 2019). As a result, bride wealth may become less significant or even seen as outdated in urban areas.

2.5.3 Modern judicial and legal system

The post-independent government made attempts to enact laws on marriage and bride wealth but there isn't a consensus. The Kenyan government's marriage laws date back to 1967 when a commission was appointed by the government to draft marital laws that the parliament rejected and deemed —un-African because the laws did not consider African traditions and customs. The Marriage Bill (2007) was introduced in parliament and re-introduced in 2009 but it has not been passed (Lowes, & Nunn, 2017). Article 54 of the Marriage Bill (2007) would make bride wealth payment optional. The article states that one does not have to pay bride wealth to get married and therefore a union is deemed complete irrespective of whether bride wealth was paid or not. Article 55, of the same bill, states that no action may be brought for the return of bride wealth whether in whole or part (Ibid). However, the bill does not outlaw bride wealth either hence if this bill is enacted into law, then payment of bride wealth will be a voluntary matter thus putting the Kenya communities' custom of bride wealth in jeopardy.

The establishment of modern judicial and legal systems had a profound impact on the practice of bride wealth in terms of the cultural and religious significance of the practice in marriage. The role of elders in determining the amount of bride wealth and overseeing the overall marriage process was undermined by the establishment of the Local Native Court (LNC) and the African courts that took over the role of resolving cases that were

related to bride wealth and marriage among the traditional communities. This resulted in the elders losing the positions they once enjoyed like reprimanding men who failed to pay bride wealth. Thus, the modern legal systems replaced the role of elders in bride wealth negotiations and marriage, (Asante, & Offei-Awuku, 2007).

In many countries, laws and regulations protect women's rights in relationships and marriages, reducing the need for bride wealth as a means of securing protection and rights. As a result, the legal system protects and guarantees women's rights to property and marital inheritance, protection from domestic abuse, and right to divorce irrespective of whether bride wealth was paid or not. Therefore, bride wealth becomes less necessary as a way to ensure that a woman's rights and protections are secured in a marriage, as these rights are already guaranteed by law (Smith, & Johnson, 2019).

Moreover, CEDAW an international treaty adopted by the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) in 1979 and endorsed by over 190 countries requires countries to take into account all appropriate strategies to eliminate discrimination against women in all sectors including the marriage law. In this regard, many countries have enacted domestic violence laws that provide women with protection and support in cases of abuse, regardless of whether or not a bride wealth was paid (United Nations, 1979).

In the Kenyan government as well as South Africa, for example, the Prevention of Domestic Violence Act offers a comprehensive outline for the safeguarding of women and children against domestic violence (Chula, 2020). Also, laws that govern individual rights to inheritance have been changed to ensure that women enjoy equal rights regardless of their marital status. For instance, in India, the Hindu Succession Act of

1956 gives equal rights to both sons and daughters regarding the inheritance of property (Majumdar, 2010). Also, in Nigeria, the Matrimonial Causes Act of 1970 dictates that a wife has the same right to property as her husband, whether bride wealth was paid or not (Ijaodola, 1971).

2.5.4 The coming of Christian missionaries

The missionaries termed bride wealth as a primitive and, barbaric custom of buying wives. Thus, the African converts developed a negative attitude towards the practice (Amastsimbi, 2009). The Friends African Mission, for example, took a firm stand on polygamy. Consequently, monogamy became the yardstick for African leadership in the mission churches and, non-payment of bride became a norm (Okuro, 2002).

According to Robel, (2004), missionaries condemned all the ceremonies that accompanied bride wealth such as feasting, offering sacrifices and pouring of libations, and terming the activities unchristian. The ring, vows made and the certificate signed by the couple and their witnesses and not the bride wealth became the symbol and seal of marriage. As a result, approval of marriage by the parents of the bride and the groom and their relatives was ignored as church marriage vows became promises of the husband and wife that henceforth they were going to live in harmony and help each other to maintain a stable marriage. Furthermore, those who were already married traditionally and wanted to join the church had to solemnize their marriages as a condition for full membership in the mission churches.

The coming of the missionaries into the various facets of people's lives drastically reduced the enthusiasm with which they engaged in their traditional practices such as bride wealth and marriage. The individuals, whose allegiance alternated between

devotion to their culture and Christianity were duly punished by their churches. Church discipline which involved the denial of confirmation of a church member through baptism had to be exercised frequently (Mvududu, 2002).

Marriage and bride wealth which were traditionally compulsory among the Africans were no longer mandatory for some opted to join seminaries to train as priests while some girls became nuns thus causing the community to miss out on bride wealth, a concept that was misunderstood by the missionaries (Robel, 2004).

According to the missionaries, the marriage process especially the exchange of bride wealth was like purchasing a wife for cash. They assumed a man's wife was an indication of his wealth and that fathers valued their daughters for the bride wealth they would fetch from them, missionaries failed to recognize that marriage was a social and communal affair and not an arrangement involving only the bride and groom (Anderson, 2007).

Marriage and bride wealth negotiations involved both families of the bride and the groom and the bride wealth was given to different family members. The missionaries required the bride, groom and their best couple as witnesses to formalize the Christian marriage. Bride wealth was a guarantee that marriage would last. However, if divorce became prospective husbands inevitable, the parents of the wife would return her bride wealth to her husband's family (Robel, 2004).

Wife inheritance, a practice that was founded on payment of bride wealth by which a woman could be inherited by the late husband's brother or a close male relative to perpetuate the deceased's man lineage was attacked by the missionaries who termed it evil, thus interfering with some communities such as Bukusu levirate marriage and family. Marriage, instead of offering social and economic support to the widows and

orphans through wife inheritance became a point of tension as missionaries pressed on the colonial government to enact laws that banned it, (Okuro, 2002).

Christian missionaries depicted wife inheritance as pagan and the practice viewed women as movable property. Polygamy, wife inheritance and bride wealth exchange which served a religious and cultural purpose as marriage was concerned were interfered with (Hague and Thiara, 2009). Missionary efforts to eradicate these practices disintegrated traditional marriage patterns. The missionaries brought about the notion of marriage being a contract between two people and hence the death of one partner meant the end of the marriage. A widow was not supposed to have more children after the death of her husband lest she remarried from the church otherwise she could be denied sacraments. The missionaries also brought about celibacy and emphasized that a single state was a vocation worth equal respect just as marriage thus eroding the key purpose of marriage, procreation, (Okuro, 2002).

Therefore, the profound impact of missionaries in spreading Christianity continues to influence the transformation of African bride wealth and marriage. Christian teachings oppose bride wealth as they equate the practice to the inferiority and mistreatment it causes to women. Some churches do not support the return of bride wealth on the basis of barrenness as Christian marriage is complete with or without children (Ndirangu, 2019)

2.5.5 Individualization of bride wealth

In the African societies, women are mostly involved in agricultural production. Bride wealth is commonly practiced in agrarian communities thus women are perceived as the major contributors to their families (Jones, 2011). In this case, there is a need for compensation for the loss upon marriage. It means that the bride's family has lost their

productive member to the husband's family and that's the need for bride wealth payment. The process of bargaining the amount of bride wealth depicts the capitalist nature (Mangena, 2013).

Bride wealth had a cultural value and not monetary value as cattle were not traditionally sold in the market as they provide people with meat and milk. Cattle in marriage legitimized children and guaranteed marital stability. The entrenchment of capitalism in African communities transformed the bride wealth system as money was used to acquire almost everything and acquainted the people with new forms of owning property. Cattle payment began to be gradually replaced partially with cash (Chapata, 2013).

Cattle given during bride wealth had been for the entire kin of the girl which strengthened marriage but with cash, cattle ceased to be an important factor in marriage transactions. The few lucky men who could use their earnings to buy cattle realized they could negotiate with the parents of the girl and not the entire kin leading to a loss of bride wealth. Taxation, livestock diseases and difficulty in meeting daily needs due to exploitative economic policies hastened the replacement of bride wealth exchange in cattle with money (Asiimwe, 2013).

Consequently, some fathers or parents started giving out their young daughters in marriage after receiving little tokens of cash to deter other members of the family from bride wealth negotiations. This led to many girls complaining that they were being forced to marry against their wishes. This forced the LNCs to resolve with little success that it was an offense for any man to marry off their daughter until she attained fifteen years of age (Jones, 2011).

Marriage alliances involving cash payment altered communal setup which included extended families to a contract between individuals. In this regard, private ownership of bride wealth was embraced (Mangena, 2013). Today, some men do not involve other relatives in bride wealth negotiations for their daughters. They silently receive cash and cheques from their son-in-law and other monetary gifts such as cars and even land. Relatives only get to learn of such a marriage when there is a problem. The money economy undermines the religious and cultural value of bride wealth as some fathers demand livestock with huge sums of money for the exchange of their daughters. Monetization of the economy has diminished the symbolic value of bride wealth of validating marriage to reducing women to material objects which money can buy. The relatives who are denied the opportunity to partake in marriage and bride wealth negotiations distance themselves in case of marital disputes which continue to undermine the sanctity of marriage (Ndolvu, 2013).

As a result, the individualistic family setup replaced the diminishing family ties which compromised cohesiveness and integration in society. Today it is the sole responsibility of the kin and the marrying man to pay the bride wealth. Similarly, the father of the bride receives the bride wealth paid not the entire kin as it was in the past. This is a result of the perception that he solely raised her daughter and so he is entitled to enjoy the fruits of his labour (Bawa, 2015).

The introduction of money has made the girl be assigned a cash tag with which to fetch bride wealth from their parents. Money is replacing the use of animals in bride wealth exchange thus undermining the cultural role of bride wealth in appreciating parents for taking care of the girl. Instead, failure to pay the required amount of money leads to severed family relationships and marital breakdown (Asiimwe, 2013).

2.6 Individual positionality and bride wealth practices

Positionality is the social and political context that creates an individual identity and how that identity influences and biases their perception of and outlook on the world. Individual positionalities can play a significant role in bride wealth practices, as they can influence how a person perceives and interacts with cultural traditions and social norms surrounding marriage and family as hereafter discussed.

2.6.1 Level of education and bride wealth practices

Education promotes women's sense of independence and self-determination. This influences their attitudes toward bride wealth practices thus more likely to challenge traditional practices of bride wealth as discriminatory or commodifying. This is different among woman who has less education because they are conservative and thus closely tied to traditional cultural practices that make them accept bride wealth practices as a natural part of marriage and family life (Fafchamps, & Quisumbing, 2004).

Similarly, a man's positionality can also play a role in how they interact with bride wealth practices. A man who values education and seeks a partner who is educated may be more willing to pay a higher bride wealth for a woman who meets this criterion. These men placed a high value on education and believed that an educated spouse would bring economic and social benefits to their household. On the other hand, a less educated man is conservative thus placing more preferences on the physical appearance of the bride, family background and wealth and may be less concerned with the brides education (Njenga, & Nzioki, 2018). It signified a traditional belief that a woman's primary obligation is to be a caregiver and homemaker, rather than an independent economic player.

2.6.2 Gender and bride wealth

Gender refers to the array of socially constructed roles and relationships, personality traits, attitudes, behaviors, values, and relative power and influence that society ascribes to the two sexes on a differential basis associated with being male or female. This involves the social attributes and opportunities associated with being male and female and the relationships between women and men and girls and boys. These attributes, opportunities and relationships are socially constructed and are learned through socialization processes. They are context/time, specific and changeable. In African communities, bride wealth is a gendered practice that obligates men and their families to fulfill societal expectations of legalizing marriage, while the bride and her family are expected to receive the payment. As a result, gender norms and expectations can shape how individuals view and negotiate bride wealth practices (Goody, 1973).

In patriarchal societies, men are traditionally seen as the breadwinners and providers for their families, and paying bride wealth can be seen as a way to demonstrate their financial stability and status as responsible husbands. Hence, husband's inability to pay a large bride wealth leads to financial struggles and social exclusion for his family and children. However, regarding men as traditional providers and guardians, gives them power to exercise authority over women. As a result, women's voices may be marginalized and their ideas may be disregarded, sustaining uneven power dynamics within the family unit (Bawa, 2015).

The cultural practice of bride wealth places women in a position where they have to prioritize their families and domestic roles over personal interests and aspirations. This can result in some women feeling pressured or obligated to accept a prospective partner

based on their ability to provide a significant bride wealth payment, rather than based on shared values and compatibility (Nnaemeka, 2005).

Bride wealth practices tend to perpetuate traditional gender roles, with women viewed as passive objects to be exchanged between families. This objectification of women has the potential to constrain their autonomy while also perpetuating unequal power dynamics within marriage and family institutions (Hirsch, 2003). Women may be regarded as commodities whose value is defined by their marriageability, beauty, and ability to fulfill household tasks.

Bride wealth practices contribute to the perpetuation of patriarchal norms by reinforcing the idea that women are dependent on men for their financial security. In many cultures, the bride's family relies on the bride wealth payments as a source of income, and women are often encouraged to marry for financial gain. This reinforces the notion that women are not capable of earning a living for themselves and that their financial security is dependent on their relationship status (Bawa, 2015).

2.6.3 Social class and bride wealth practices

Social class involves various social stratifications of individuals in a society structured in hierarchically. The classes can be broadly classified as upper class, middle class and lower class. Similar to gender, class is a relational concept that represents vertical disparities or hierarchies among individuals, groups, tribes, races, castes, and positions within the production systems.

Social status directly influences the amount and the form of bride wealth exchanged between the two families. This applies to societies where economic resources are scarce thus taking advantage of bride wealth practice as a form of wealth distribution. It

helps lower status families to access wealth through marriage alliances with the higher status families. On the other hand, individuals from high social classes use the practice of bride wealth to maintain their economic advantage and protect their wealth (Yanagisako, 1979).

In African societies, the practice of bride wealth is directly associated with economic and political power. In this regard, bride wealth reflects and reinforces the existing social hierarchies within society. High social status leads to increased demands for bride wealth exchanged. This is because the amount of bride wealth is seen as a marker of prestige and recognition therefore raising the status of the bride's family. This is common, especially in societies where individuals' social status is tied to economic growth thus perceiving bride wealth as a means of consolidating power and, maintaining social order (Goody, 1973).

2.6.4 Religious affiliation and bride wealth practices

Religious or spiritual beliefs, values and, practices to which a person adheres to which a person belongs. In this regard, some religious affiliations may be marginalized or discriminated against because of their religious affiliation while those who belong to dominant religious groups may exercise authority and status, and enjoy privileges, due to their religious identity.

Among the Muslim, bride wealth payment "mahr" is viewed as a mandatory obligation for the man to fulfill but not seen as payment made for compensating the bride but as a form of financial security. The amount of mahr is agreed upon by the bride and groom or their families and, can vary depending on factors such as the social status of the families and the financial means of the groom (Mohammad Fadel, 2022). However,

there have been debates that bride wealth practices can be exploitative and objectify women, particularly in situations where the amount of mahr is exorbitant or where women are forced to marry against their will (Jasser Auda, 2008). There is emphasis on considering consent and agency in marriage, and also practicing bride wealth in accordance to Islamic principles of justice, equality, and respect for human dignity.

Similarly, in some Hindu traditions, the payment of dowry or "dahej" is discouraged or prohibited based on the belief that it reinforces gender inequalities and violates women's rights (Amartya Sen, 2001). Some Hindu leaders and institutions have advocated for alternative marriage customs that emphasize mutual respect and partnership between spouses, and reject the idea of women as property or commodities to be bought and sold Uma (Chakravarti, 2003).

In Kenya, where Christianity and Islam are the dominant religions, attitudes towards bride wealth practices vary depending on local traditions and cultural norms Karen (Tranberg Hansen, 1980). In terms of Christianity, the practice of bride wealth may vary depending on the specific denomination and cultural context. Some Christian and Muslim leaders have emphasized the importance of mutual respect and equality in marriage, and view bride wealth as an acceptable practice within their cultural traditions and while others have criticized bride wealth practices that exploit or objectify women.

2.6.5 Marital status and bride wealth practices

Marital status is a social positionality that defines an individual's status as single, married, divorced, or widowed. Marital status and bride wealth practices are often interconnected, as they both relate to the social and economic dynamics of marriage.

In African communities there is no marriage without the payment of bride wealth. Therefore, the marital status of individuals determines their social identity in the community (Anderson, 2007).

2.7 Individual agency and bride wealth practices

Bride wealth practices are often based on cultural laws that shape the exercise of individual agency. This significantly depended on the degree to which individuals resisted with respect to their age, religion, gender, social status, economic status and level of education.

In African communities, bride wealth holds a deep and integral part of the cultural heritage. The preservation of these practices is essential for affirming cultural continuity and reinforcing a sense of belonging among the community members. However, as the world becomes more interconnected as a result of globalization and acculturation, individuals may question the importance of cultural practices such as bride wealth.

Therefore, individuals tend to renegotiate their cultural identity leading to the reaffirmation of traditional norms as well as an adaption of values that align with contemporary customs (Appadurai, 1996).

The payments of bride wealth often include significant economic transactions. This can have far-reaching consequences for both the families involved as well as the larger community, because it acts as a mechanism for wealth distribution, allowing social mobility and contributing to the bride's family's economic well-being (Goody, 1973). As a result, bride wealth can perpetuate economic disparities among those who cannot afford and, thus disadvantaged in relation to marriage. Hence, the economic constraints

significantly impact individual agency limiting the prospects and desires of both the groom and the bride (Bledsoe, 1990).

Bride wealth practice involves the payment of gifts or goods from the groom's family to the bride's family, hence women are positioned as commodities exchanged between the two families. The commodification of women in the payment of bride wealth perpetuates gender inequality treating women's as property which limits women agency as their worth and dignity is measured by their marriageability (Oyewumi, 1997).

2.8 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The study attempted to determine the influence of gendered perceptions of bride wealth on its practices as it intersects with age, marital status, level of formal education, religious affiliation, ethnicity and occupation. This study was guided by gender intersectionality theory.

2.8.1 Gender intersectionality theory

Gender intersectionality theory, as proposed by scholars like Collins (2015) and Choo and Ferree (2010), challenges the notion that gender can be studied in isolation from other social categories. Instead, it emphasizes that individuals possess multiple identities and experiences due to the intersections of these identities, such as gender, ethnicity, religious affiliation, marital status, level of formal education, sexuality, and disability.

By recognizing the interconnections between gender and other social categories, Gender Intersectionality theory provides a more nuanced and comprehensive understanding of individuals' lived experiences, particularly in about bride wealth. This

theory acknowledges that social categories intersect and mutually constitute one another, shaping individuals' experiences within society.

One important aspect that Gender Intersectionality theory addresses is the power dynamics inherent in gender relations. This enables researchers to explore how bride wealth practices either reinforce or challenge existing gender norms and power imbalances. In this study, this enabled the researcher to investigate whether bride wealth reinforces individuals' autonomy and, freedom of choice within specific cultural and social contexts.

Another essential aspect emphasized by the gender intersectionality theory is gender and social status. This study therefore closely examined how socio-economic status influenced individuals' perceptions of bride wealth. This examination sought to determine whether bride wealth serves as a valuable resource for individuals in pursuit of self-accomplishment in terms of honor, respect, dignity and wealth.

Cultural and, ethnic contexts play a significant role in shaping perceptions of bride wealth. Hence, this study must explore how cultural norms and traditions intersect with gender within specific communities. Understanding this interplay helps identify whether cultural values and practices surrounding bride wealth informed an individual's social construction of bride wealth agentively. Also, gender intersectionality theory emphasizes individual agency. Consequently, this took into account individuals' agency in (re)negotiation, contestation and (re)invention of wealth practices.

In conclusion, applying gender intersectionality theory in the study moves beyond simplistic analyses that solely focus on gender. Instead, it reveals a more nuanced understanding of how multiple social identities intersect and shape individuals'

experiences and perceptions regarding bride wealth. This approach contributes to a more comprehensive and inclusive understanding of the practice among individuals of different positionality and contexts.

2.9 Summary and conclusion

This chapter has discussed the gendered perception of bride wealth. Specifically, it examines how cultural norms, values and society shape individuals different construction of bride wealth. The chapter argues that individual understanding of bride wealth is agentively constructed based on gender, level of formal education, marital status, occupation, income, and, religious affiliation.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The choice of a particular method of social research depends, *inter alia*, on the nature of the research problem, the data needed, and political factors such as institutional and

legal practices guiding research in a particular context. These issues determine who to study, how to study, and how and which knowledge to use. In particular, this chapter explores the methodological processes and practices that informed the present study's attempts to determine the influence of gendered perceptions of bride wealth on its practices as it intersects with age, marital status, level of formal education, and occupation. In particular, the chapter shows how gender intersectionality theory and study objectives shaped the choice of research design, research site, target population, sample size, sampling procedure, data collection methods, instruments, data collection procedures, data analysis, interpretation of data and ethical issues involved.

3.2 Study site

The study was purposively done in Koibatek Sub-County. Three locations were purposively selected because of their inherent diversities in terms of urban, semiurban, and rural features. These locations are Eldama Ravine, Kabiet, and Lembus Kwen. Eldama Ravine is an urban area, thus heterogeneous in terms of ethnic composition due to (im) mobility and affiliations. Therefore, residents are exposed to different moralities regarding bride wealth due to different ethnic affiliations and the circulation of knowledge and ideas, which are aided by the forces of urbanization. Kabiet is a periurban area and residents are exposed to both urban and rural knowledge and ideas on bride wealth. Koibatek is rural and inhabited mainly by the Kalenjin ethnic group. This means most residents are exposed to the local dominant moralities of bride wealth. All these factors enriched this study due to the different diversities of exposure to the moralities of bride wealth due to (im) mobility and affiliations.

3.3 Research Design

A research design is a procedure for collecting, analyzing, interpreting, and reporting data in research studies (Creswell, & Plano Clark, 2007). This sets the procedures necessary for obtaining the required information, the methods to be employed to collect and analyze data, and how all of this is going to answer the research questions (Grey, 2014).

This study employed an exploratory research design using a qualitative approach. The researcher adopted an exploratory research design to explore the unknown because the researcher was seeking people's perception of bride wealth.

The rationale for using the qualitative approach was to allow the researcher to go into the depth of the participant's experience, social processes, and discourses about bride wealth, to explore complexities of bride wealth that may be beyond the scope of more controlled approaches and aid in illuminating agentive contextual explanations on bride wealth (Mason, 2002; Gillham, 2000).

3.4 Unit of Analysis

The unit of analysis for this study was any male or female aged 25 years and above in a household who is either married or not married. The choice of those aged 25 is because in Kenya the legal age of marriage is 18 years. According to World Bank (2015), the average age of marriage in Kenya is 25 years.

3.5 Sampling of the study site and sampling procedure

The sample size is a subset of the total population that is used to give the general views of the target population. The sample size must be representative of the population in which the researcher would like to generalize the research findings (Ogula, 2005). This

study adopted qualitative sampling methods because the study objective was to investigate the agentive gendered perception of bride wealth and the theory adopted is gender intersectionality theory. Qualitative sampling methods enabled the researcher to collect in-depth and contextual data while taking into account diversities among the targeted unit of analysis. The following qualitative sampling methods were used:

3.5.1 Snowballing

In each of the three purposively selected sites, the researcher initially identified one person aged 25 years above, (not) married, and (not) paid bride wealth. After identifying the said person, the researcher negotiated consent by explaining what the study entailed, its objectives, why the person was selected to participate in the study, how the information collected would be managed and the right to decline to participate, answer any question or withdrawal at any time of the interview.

Negotiation of consent involved responding to various issues raised by the research participants. The most common concerns were: why they were identified and how their information would be used and managed. Those who gave consent to participate gave oral consent. Initially, the study envisaged to have written consent. However, during the process of negotiating consent, it was observed that most research participants who had initially agreed to participate declined when asked to sign to confirm their consent. The reason why research participants preferred to give oral consent was more informed by their experience of the legalism of written documents.

In selecting research participants, individual diversities such as level of education, gender, age, occupation, social status, family values, and religion were taken into account: The identified research participant was interviewed after giving consent. After

the interview, the research participant assisted in identifying subsequent participants. To avoid interviewing research participants within the same network, after some time the researcher would identify another research participant who meets the inclusion criteria, negotiate consent, and then interview. This process of identifying research participants continued until the level of saturation. Using snowball sampling technique,

I managed to interview 30 participants in a span of four months.

The rationale for using the snowball sampling technique in selecting participants was to gain insights into a social network. Asking participants whether they were married or had paid bride wealth seemed intrusive; therefore, by using snowball sampling, participants were more likely to refer others who shared similar experiences or characteristics, potentially leading to a diverse and relevant sample. This study also aimed to gain in-depth insights and rich narratives from participants.

3.5.2 Direct approach

During the course of research, the researcher was acquainted to so many people at the research site. Some were inquisitive about the research. Using this acquaintance, the researcher started approaching the research participants and requesting them to participate in the research. Those who agreed to participate were explained what the research entails their rights when participating and how their data would be managed.

Those who consented did so orally and were interviewed. Unlike when using the snowballing method where those identified would ask so many questions, especially on why they were identified before giving consent, in the direct approach they did not.

Using this approach, I interviewed 12 participants.

3.6 Methods of data collection

In this study, the researcher used qualitative methods for data collection. This is because qualitative methods enabled the researcher to get in-depth contextual data on the knowledge, attitude, and practice of research participants (Mason, 2002). The methods used were:

3.6.1 In-depth interviews

In-depth interviews involved a two-way process where the researcher interacted with the research participant in a conversation. In this interaction, the researcher not only asked the research participant questions but also shared his/her experiences which were significant in the generation of knowledge while guided by an interview guide that had various themes. In using in-depth interviews, the researcher was able to have a collaborative dialogue with research participants. This was important as it enabled the researcher to get clarifications on issues asked as well as respond to research participant concerns in the process of generating knowledge about bride wealth (Burke, 2002; Mason, 2002).

Data from in-depth conversational interviews was tape recorded with consent from each research participant. The researcher also took short notes during the interview process.

In this study, three research participants did not consent to tape recording.

The researcher respected their decision and only took notes.

3.6.2 Key informant interviews

In this study, key informant interviews were used to get specialized information on issues regarding bride wealth. Key informant interviews were short and mostly focused

on getting information that was not easily accessible to the public. Key informants were purposively selected based on their perceived knowledge:

1. 3 clan elders, each from Eldama Ravine, Kabiet and Lembus Kwen. The clan elders are the custodians of societal traditions given their old and, involvement in community affairs. This helped to understand what bride wealth means, how it has changed and the practices individuals engage in relation to bride wealth.
2. 2 religious leaders, each from the protestant and, Catholic Church. Religious leaders are involved in officiating marriage. In most communities, before marriage is officiated there must be payment of bride wealth. This means they are privy to privileged information on changes in bride wealth and to a large extent marriage.
3. 1 official from Attorney General's chambers who is involved in officiating civil marriage.

Interviews with key informants were aided by guiding themes in the form of questions.

The interviews were tape-recorded with consent from each key informant.

The key informants were aged 65 years and above.

3.6.3 Informal discussions and participant observation

In the course of fieldwork, the researcher participated in many social activities such as negotiation and, payment of bride wealth activities, weddings and funerals. In weddings the researcher observed and engaged those present in informal discussions on marriage and payment of bride wealth. The funerals were also found to be sites where issues of marriage and bride wealth were canvassed. This is because payment of bride wealth is mandatory before any of the cohabiting partners is interred. The researcher also

observed materiality associated with the payment of bride wealth during in-depth interviews. Data collected using participant observation and informal discussion was recorded in the form of field notes.

In data analysis, the researcher found field notes from participant observation and informal discussion were crucial as they aided in clarifying and putting into context data from in-depth conversational interviews (Knowles, 2000).

3.7 Data Analysis

The narratives from in-depth conversational interviews formed a large corpus of data analysis. These narratives were taken as discourses that not only transferred information on the influence of gendered perception of bride wealth on its practices but also indicated what individuals or cultures can accomplish through language. Audio-taped narratives from in-depth conversational interviews were first transcribed ad verbatim to ensure that all emerging issues were captured during analysis. Individual transcripts were then read and re-read several times to identify key themes, which were then noted. Similar themes together with their supporting verbal quotes, from all interviews were grouped to facilitate easier analysis.

To understand gendered knowledge on bride wealth, what informs this knowledge and, how this knowledge informs bride wealth practices, all the narratives were analyzed using hermeneutics methodological framework. In this case, each research participant's narrative was examined in relation to other participants' narratives. In addition, the analysis utilized Ricoeur, (1980) notion of "symbolic senses" to examine the symbolic use of language and the common metaphors that people in reference to bride wealth. All the themes that emerged consistently in most narratives were noted. Unique themes

were also noted. These themes were then shared with some research participants to determine if they were a true reflection of what they said for reflexivity. After this, the themes were used to discuss the agentive knowledge, attitudes and, practices towards bride wealth.

3.8 Reflexivity

Reflexivity is a technique for evaluating the role of the researcher in a research process to eradicate bias in methodology, theory, research design, and analysis to maintain the objective position of the researcher. Reflexivity is the critical process of evaluating the researcher's positionality as well as acknowledging that his or her position may influence the research process and outcome (Berger, 2015).

In this study, the researcher was an insider. This because: hails from the study site, is conversant with the culture of the targeted group, and was female and single. As an insider researcher, I was able to understand concepts used to describe bride wealth, and language used to discuss various practices of bride wealth. Personal experience has also been found to be important in understanding what is normally —taken for granted.

Admittedly, being an insider may have blurred the boundaries between personal and research participants' understanding of bride wealth. It is important, however, to underscore the fact that the lives of participants —are filtered through us and the filtered stories of our lives at present (whether we admit or not) in our written accounts (Cotterill et al 1993).

Consequently, in making sense of my personal experience in relation to that of my research participants, I was aware that that in research on bride wealth in a community where it's a dominant morality, an insider researcher and the researched share their

subjectivity within a given research context. In this regard intersubjectivity (Lakoff and Johnson 1980) formed the basis of understanding and interpreting data.

3.9 Ethical considerations

Ethical issues are considered an important component of research that respects the rights of the individuals being studied. The researcher applied;

The researcher sought permission from the National Commission of Science, Technology, and Innovation (NACOSTI) through the Ministry of Higher Education. Secondly, consent of respondents was obtained first, by talking to local leaders such as District County Commissioner and chiefs to gain trust, support, and permission to conduct research.

The researcher negotiated consent with the respondents before interviewing them. She explained clearly to the respondents the nature of the study and its objectives and the use of the audio recorder so that they could make an informed choice at the end of the day on their right to participate or not participate in the study.

In this study, the researcher allowed voluntary participation by the respondents and gave the respondents ample time for answering questions. Furthermore, the study maintained a high degree of confidentiality of information received to gain the trust of respondents.

The researcher ensured this by using pseudo names in referring to each respondent.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATIONS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents findings on the influence of gendered perceptions of bride wealth on its practices. Specifically, this chapter analyzes individuals' gendered knowledge about bride wealth, what informs gendered knowledge, and agentive practices towards bride wealth.

4.2 Socio-demographic factors of respondents

4.2.1 Gender

This study collected data from 42 respondents over a period of four months. Out of the 42 respondents, 30 were female, and 12 were male. One plausible reason why more women than men participated in this study was because they found the study on bride wealth very relevant to their lives. Unlike men, bride wealth in most SubSaharan communities provides security for women. This is given credence by Mary, a 28-year-old female who is married and with secondary education:

Indeed, every woman who cares about her present and future life must have an interest in the issues of bride wealth. Imagine staying with a man for over twenty years without paying bride wealth to your parents; you are a single woman as well. The man can wake up and marry another woman, and you cannot complain.

On the other hand, several men shied away from participating in this study because, to them, bride wealth does not have a significant impact on their lives. This is because bride wealth has no impact on men's access to and security of resources. This viewpoint was elaborated by Kipsang, a 29-year-old man with primary education, who is married and has three children

I am not interested in this topic of bride wealth because it adds no value to my life. Even if I pay or don't pay bride wealth, no one will temper my resources..... You better go and talk to women, as they benefit more from bride wealth payments.

The findings by Kipsang and Mary show that participation in research on bride wealth is more influenced by gendered social functions associated with bride wealth. In patriarchal communities, men hold greater social, economic, and political power than women in marriage. As a consequence, this negatively impacts men willingness to participate in research which was perceived as having little tangible benefits, especially for those who were married and had not yet paid bride wealth.

4.2.2 Marital status

In this study, there were 12 single participants, 21 married participants, 6 separated participants, and 3 widowed participants. Out of the 12 single participants, 5 of them were engaged. This distribution shows that marriage was a dominant morality at the study site. This observation was articulated by Mr. Kosgey, a 40-year-old male teacher with post-secondary education

In fact, it is abnormal for a person, either a man or a woman of a certain age not to be married, or be involved with a person of the opposite sex

Kosgey's sentiments were also echoed by Miss Jebet, a 25-year-old secondary school leaver, who said:

In this life, women and men are created to marry at a certain age. This is both in our traditions and even in Christian teaching. I sometimes wonder why some people do not want to marry, yet they endure a lot of pain from being single.

Among those who were single, they also recognized marriage as an important step in one's life, but they believed it required having resources or the ability to provide for

one-self or dependents. This perspective was expressed by Susan, a 35-year-old single woman and university graduate.

Yes, marriage is important in one's life. Though it has a lot of demands which require one to have resources before going to it... you need to be prepared financially if marriage is to be enjoyable

4.2.3 Education

In this study, 3 of the research participants had no formal education; 13 had primary education; 20 had secondary education; and 6 had post-secondary education. These findings show that the literacy level was high. This can be attributed to the Kenyan government's emphasis on compulsory, free primary and secondary education.

4.2.4 Occupation

In this study, 32 participants were in informal employment, while 10 were formally employed. Those who were informally employed were farmers and shopkeepers while those who are formally employed were working either in government or private organizations. The high number of participants in informal employment is attributed to the high level of unemployment in Kenya (World Bank, 2021; KNBS, 2021).

4.3 Gendered knowledge about bride wealth

In this study, there was a diverse understanding of what bride wealth meant in their lived lives. These meanings were drawn from cultural and religious repertoires regarding its significance. However, these cultural and religious repertoires were contested, (re)negotiated and (re)invented to inform individual knowledge about bride wealth

based on their age, gender, marital status, religious affiliation and ethnicity as hereafter discussed:

4.3.1 Bride wealth as a route to formalizing marriage

In this study, bride wealth was constructed as a means of formalizing marriage. Formalizing marriage was seen in terms of an individual being recognized as being married within a particular culture or community. This was observed by David 45-year-old marriage counselor married with 2 children:

In my understanding, bride wealth is the payment made by the groom to the bride's family in order to formalize marriage. Marriage can only be a marriage if the groom pays the bride wealth. Without this payment, what transpires cannot be considered a marriage but something different altogether?

Moreover, bride wealth was conceptualized as a tangible manifestation of the marital contract, signifying the formal recognition of the bride and groom as a legitimate couple. It not only holds cultural and social significance but also serves as a means of establishing the legitimacy of the marital relationship within the broader community and family structure. This marks the moment when the bride and groom transition from being individuals to becoming a recognized husband and wife within their respective families. John, a 65-year-old village elder, also added that:

Bride wealth symbolizes that the bride and the groom are officially married. It makes both bride and groom to be recognized as wife and husband by their respective families...

Mercy, a 32-year-old lady with two children who married but was not paid bride wealth, had this to say:

I have been married for 5 years; however, I cannot refer to myself as a married woman because my husband has not paid the bride wealth. I perceive my relationship as more of a 'come-we-stay' kind of arrangement. This situation is genuinely distressing for me because if my husband were to decide to abandon me, I would lack the power to resist.

However, Mercy's sentiments were disputed by Joan, a 40-year-old university graduate who is married and has 6 children. Joan argued that what matters more is recognizing someone as married if they have children. She stated:

I am married even though my husband has not paid the bride wealth because we have lived together for 15 years as husband and wife. I have fulfilled my role as a wife, and he has likewise fulfilled his role as my husband. Therefore, bride wealth does not solely determine whether someone is married or not.

Some research participants with post-secondary education levels, working in the formal sector, argued that bride wealth is not the sole avenue for marriage recognition.

According to them, legal regulations now mandate that individuals who cohabit for a certain period be acknowledged as married. This legal recognition grants them equal rights to those whose marriages have been formalized through the payment of bride wealth. Jane, a 45-year-old female university graduate with four children, expressed:

My husband and I declined the payment of bride wealth. Instead, we opted for a civil marriage at the Attorney General's Office, which was much more affordable. We now possess a marriage certificate that symbolizes our formal union.

Jane's sentiments were also echoed by Magut, a 48-year-old male with secondary education, who is married and has six children:

Formalizing marriage involves obtaining legal recognition through a civil ceremony or registering with the government as a married couple

However, the sentiments of Jane and Magut were contradicted by religious participants who asserted that bride wealth is a precondition for formalizing marriage before religious ceremonies, such as weddings. According to this perspective, everyone must pay bride wealth, as emphasized by Boniface, a 26-year-old single Christian Union youth leader:

Personally I know that traditionally, bride wealth is important when it comes to legalizing marriage. However, as a Christian..... I firmly believe that involving Christ into your marriage will guide you along the right path.

4.3.2 Bride wealth is seen as commodifying/objectifying women

In this study, bride wealth was perceived as a tool used to commodify or objectify women within the institution of marriage. This means that women are treated as commodities or objects that can be exchanged for wealth or material goods as a result of bride wealth payments. Nelly, a 28-year-old single woman and university graduate, noted this observation:

Bride wealth is regarded as buying someone. That is why the family of the bride and groom haggle so much as what is paid.

Nelly's views were also supported by Jepkoech, a 29-year-old primary school teacher, who is single and has one child:

I have attended so many bride wealth payment ceremonies in my community, and it appears that some elders treat girls as commodities for sale. This is because others might end up disagreeing over the bride wealth amount demanded by the in-laws.

In this study, some research participants argued that the objectification of women is linked to the use of cash as bride wealth instead of livestock. Mary, a 38-year-old married woman with four children, elaborated on this point:

Cash is a symbol of the sale so women are seen as objects for sale

Among the young research participants in this study, the commodification of women was perceived as viewing girls as an investment. In this case, parents regard their daughters as a potential source of future wealth. Joan, a 27-year-old single university graduate, made this observation:

A daughter is like a bank account from which parents draw resources from time to time, especially during marriage processes.

Similarly, the commodification of women was also constructed in relation to the 'price' assigned to girls in the context of bride wealth payment. As observed by Millicent 27-year-old, university graduate who has been married for 6 months:

For example, in-laws may be required to provide items such as 20 sheep, 5 cows, and some other items in the form of cash...that is a “price” put on girls believed that their value is equivalent to that specified amount.

Among other research participants, objectification was based on submissiveness and subservience. In this case, after the bride wealth is paid, women are expected to be submissive and subservient to their partners. Consequently, women are perceived as objects that can be controlled, manipulated, and dominated by their husbands. This observation was made by Jane, a 43-year-old woman who completed secondary school, is married, and has 7 children.

Women in marriage are objects that can be controlled and expected to follow what their husbands say.

In this study, the act of paying bride wealth was found to objectify women, likening them to machines solely for the purpose of giving birth. The payment of bride wealth was perceived to reduce the role of women to their reproductive capabilities alone, as children ensured the continuity of the family lineage. This observation was made by Lucy, a 49-year-old married woman with 13 children.

If a woman died without children, the widower could legitimately demand the return of her entire bride wealth. Also, when bride wealth is paid, your most important role as a woman is to give birth to as many children as your husband wants. You have no say.

Salina, who is 45 years, divorced, and with three children, also expressed the belief that being termed a successful wife is often linked to bearing children for one's husband. Therefore, in this study there was a historical association between marriage and

procreation, where the concept of a successful wife has often been tied to the act of having children.

Even in a woman's lifetime, her attributes as a successful wife are linked to bearing children

Bride wealth was also constructed as a means of objectifying women as sexual objects. In this regard, women often lack control over their own sexuality, as they are perceived as sexual property by men. This insight emerged from findings in an informal discussion with women, as discussed by Jennifer, a 38-year-old businesswoman married with 5 children

It is like when a man pays bride wealth, he thinks that you are just there to satisfy his sexual needs regardless of your feelings. You become nothing more than his sexual object.

One of the marriage counselors in an Anglican church also added that:

As a marriage counselor, I have handled so many cases reported by women who are forced by their husbands to engage in sexual intercourse even when they are sick. Some of the reasons given for this coercion include the fact that bride wealth was paid for them (56-yearold marriage counselor).

However, some female participants argued that fulfilling their husbands' sexual needs is their obligation, ultimately benefiting them as well. This perspective revealed the underlying fear women lived with that denying conjugal rights might lead to their

husbands abandoning them. This sentiment was narrated by Wamaitha, a 35-year-old woman married with two children:

Why should I deny my husband sex? Giving him sex when he wants it is a way of protecting our relationship from potential infidelity, otherwise denying him is like giving him permission to seek sexual satisfaction from other women.

Similarly, a village elder, who was one of the key informants, failed to see the reasoning behind a wife denying her husband conjugal rights, especially when he has paid bride wealth for her. This insight comes from Hosea, a 66-year-old village elder and retired teacher with 8 children:

It is against our traditional values for a wife to deny her husband sex, unless she is sick or menstruating. When bride wealth is paid, the man has all the rights to his wife body for his satisfaction.

During an informal discussion, male research participants also expressed the perspective that bride wealth functions as an 'irrevocable permit,' granting them the right to engage in sexual relations with their wives at any time. John, a 42-year-old married man with three children, shared his viewpoint

Anytime I want sex I must have it...I took the initiative to pay bride wealth thus I have all the rights over her.

4.3.3 Bride wealth as social status

In this study, bride wealth was seen as a social practice that defined an individual's social standing in marriage. The payment of bride wealth comes along with social status-related

opportunities at both the individual and group levels. Social status significantly influences how individuals are perceived by others, as well as the level of respect and recognition they received within a marital union. This observation was exemplified by Jane, a 31-year-old married, teacher with two children:

I feel proud, honored, and valued by my husband because he paid bride wealth. The community looks at me as someone of great value, my husband is also respected by both family and community members, and it also influences him to honor me. He looks at me as someone of great importance in his life.

In this study, it was also observed that a substantial amount of bride wealth paid elevates the social status of the bride. Joan, a 26-year-old lady and businesswoman who got married two months ago, explains:

When a woman is paid a high amount of bride wealth it shows that she is of a high social class

Similarly, a higher amount of bride wealth paid defined the economic status of the groom. In this study, men who paid a substantial bride wealth demonstrated their capability to provide for their wives and the new families. This practice also signified the financial stability of the groom's family and the groom's commitment to marriage. This was observed by Kipchumba, a 32-year-old photographer who was planning to wed in December 2021:

We pay a high amount of bride wealth as an assurance to our in-laws that we can take care of their daughter

However, John, 65 years old, a village elder and a key informant, married with 4 children, argued that a man who pays a higher amount of bride wealth is simply showing off their wealth:

Some individuals tend to give expensive goods and huge amounts of money as bride wealth just as a show off to their friends. This show-off seeks unnecessary respect from people.

Among the female participants, social status was based on one being recognized as a wife. This recognition symbolized a woman's acceptance as a legitimate member of her husband's family, as articulated by Mary, a 50-year-old married woman with 10 children:

A woman whose bride wealth has been fully paid is culturally regarded as someone's wife.

Among the male research participants, social status was established by being recognized as a husband. In this context, bride wealth transformed the status of a man from that of a mere bachelor to being identified as someone's husband. This was observed by Noel, a 42-year-old teacher who has been married for 16 years and has 3 children:

You cannot be a man/husband enough if you never went before the parents of your wife to be known officially and pay bride wealth. It is something that separates men from boys.

Interestingly, newly married Evans (married for 2 years) shares a similar perspective with Noel (married for 16 years) on bride wealth as a social status.

To me paying bride wealth means you man up, people will start calling you “boyon” (Mr). There is a way society sees you in a different manner than before.

Similarly, in this study, the responses of some female research participants echoed sentiments similar to those expressed by Noel and Evans. These participants perceived their husbands differently after the bride wealth was paid. For instance, Anna, a mother of 3 children who had cohabited with her boyfriend for some time before the payment of her bride wealth, shared the following:

In the first place, I used to address him as my boyfriend. But now, (laughs) he won an award, I now address him as my husband because he was bold enough to take up that step that most men cannot do.

Payment of bride wealth is not something that all men can do.

In contrast to the above findings, it was discovered that a man loses respect if he fails to pay bride wealth to his in-laws. This was believed to affect a man's social standing in marriage. Paul, a 70-year-old village elder and a key informant in this study, narrated:

A man who has not paid bride wealth is not entertained in his in-law's compound. Even when there are important ceremonies, they are not recognized.

Additionally, a man who fails to pay bride wealth would not receive the bride wealth for his daughter until he settles the bride wealth owed for his wife. This situation brings shame and disgrace to men and their families due to their inability to fulfill their cultural

obligations. Nanjala, a 68-year-old woman with 3 children whose bride wealth was not paid, shared her observation;

When our first daughter was getting married, we were told we cannot receive her bride wealth. This is because my husband had not paid for me. It was very shameful for me and my husband. This forced my daughter to be married without payment of bride wealth.

4.3.4 Bride wealth as an avenue of exploitation

In this study, bride wealth was seen as an avenue of exploitation because it created a loophole where individuals took advantage of the practice to exploit others for personal gain or revenge. This observation was made by Rose, a 35-year-old farmer who had been married for 10 years but eventually got divorced

My husband used to beat and mistreat my children by claiming that he was beating what he paid for... I was forced to run away for the sake of my safety.

A Similar experience as Rose's was shared by Jonah, 50-year-old pastor married with 2 children:

Sometimes bride wealth enslaves the woman, some men disrespect their wives because they think they have bought a woman because they don't understand the importance of paying bride wealth.

He continued:

One of the problems that come with the payment of bride wealth is that women take subordination positions to their husbands when bride wealth is paid

Bride wealth was viewed as an avenue for exploitation, with respect to the husband's ultimate authority over the wife. This was pointed out by Joseph, a 38-year-old farmer married with 3 children:

If my wife shows a sign of bad behavior, I have the right to complain to her relatives to change her behavior.

In this study, a similar view of exploitation emerged from informal discussions with men, where a majority asserted ownership of women based on the premise that they had paid for them. Joseph, a 48-year-old man who is a farmer and married with one child, explains:

As a man, I have full control of my wife since I have paid bride wealth in full and I expect my wife to be submissive to me. As a husband I am entitled to total obedience from my wife

Male research participants perceived bride wealth as a tool for exploitation based on the items demanded and the amount required to be paid. William, a 30-year-old university graduate who is married and expecting a child, expressed his complaints in this regard:

I am expected to give two hundred thousand in cash and a number of cows as bride wealth to my in-laws...I'll have to pay this...with this economy...I feel I am exploited.

Exploitation was also constructed in terms of women being regarded as a source of labor. In this study, bride wealth was given as compensation to the bride's parents for the loss of their daughter's labor in the family. From this perspective, women's domestic labor, which includes childcare, cooking, cleaning, and farm work, was closely linked to the payment of bride wealth. Judith, a 45-year-old woman married with 7 children, narrates:

As a woman I feel exploited by my husband because I do all the domestic work, child-rearing, I work on the farm but when it comes to harvesting, he takes everything from me.

4.3.5 Bride wealth as asserting one-independence

In this study, bride wealth was conceptualized as a mechanism for asserting individual independence. This assertion of individual independence in this sense meant fostering a healthy balance of autonomy and interdependence between partners within marriage.

This was observed by the case of Jane, a 42-year-old woman who is a farmer and is married with three children:

Bride wealth helps us women to freely to use the available resources to establish ourselves

Similarly, some female participants made the argument that bride wealth played a role in facilitating the establishment of their households. As discussed by Rebecca, a 39-year-old university graduate who works as an accountant and is married with four children.

You know that payment of bride wealth signifies recognition that I am now part of my husband's family, so I have all the freedom to engage in any income-generating activities for my family as a mother.

Rebecca also added that the payment of bride wealth helps to ensure that women's economic contributions are valued and recognized.

I know that men have the notion that they are the breadwinners but once the bride wealth is paid men value my wealth because I am his wife.

Bride wealth was also seen as a means of enabling women to exercise their decisionmaking power. This recognition stemmed from the fact that women whose bride wealth had been paid became acknowledged members of the marital family:

When a woman is married and bride wealth is paid...she gains a voice in decision-making due to the responsibility bestowed upon her for managing the household

In contrast, some female participants in this study defined the non-payment of bride wealth as a pathway to achieving self-independence. Consequently, women were not paid bride wealth enjoy the freedom of not being tied to a man, as bride wealth often reinforces a perspective of control and ownership by the husband. As observed by Joan, a 36-year-old shopkeeper with three children, who has been married for seven years without the payment of bride wealth

I live in a comfort zone with my children...no one control or dictate me

Joan's sentiment was further supported by Jean, who argued that being paid bride wealth

is akin to life imprisonment for a woman. Jean, a 45-year-old divorced nurse with two children, expressed this viewpoint:

How hell on earth is someone's son expecting me to seek his permission to visit my parents, people who raised me since my childhood.

Other women participants also associated the non-payment of bride wealth with selfindependence and the freedom to decide whether to have children or not, allowing them to delay parenthood. This connection stems from the societal expectation that a legally married woman is required to bear children; otherwise, she may face the wrath from her in-laws. Jane, a 37-year-old single lady working in procurement with one child, narrates the story of her sister's marriage

I don't think I will ever like being in a formalized marriage. My sister has gone through a lot in her marriage. She got married when I was still in high school, and her wedding was spectacular, which made me admire the idea of marriage. However, after some years, my sister was diagnosed with fibroids. She opted for two surgeries, but they never yielded any positive results. I mean, she was not able to conceive or have children. As she shared her experience, her emotions were evident. Her in-laws treated her horribly, using very offensive language and even chasing her away like a dog. This led me to contemplate that if she hadn't been married, she wouldn't have had to endure all of that

In addition, the non-payment of bride wealth to a woman empowered them to assert their autonomy in seeking medical attention and choosing their preferred family planning methods. In traditional contexts, married women often had to inform or seek

permission from their husbands before going for medical check-ups or making decisions about family planning. This dynamic stemmed from the perception of men as the sole providers within marriage, leading to women's social and economic dependency on them.

On the other hand, single women were seen working to make ends meet and thus would choose what is best for them at their disposal. This sentiment was reflected in the words of Lilian, a 32-year-old single secretary and mother of two, who remarked:

Women should love their bodies. When you feel unwell, visit the nearest hospital for treatment and use your preferred pills. Why should one have to seek permission for all this? It's your life, or is it because someone paid something to marry you? Remember, the moment you pass away, that man will find another woman, and life will continue

4.3.6 Bride wealth as a symbol of love

In this study, bride wealth was viewed as one of the ways through which love is expressed between a man and a woman in a relationship. This perspective was articulated by John, a 48-year-old who works in an attorney's office and is married with 2 children:

A man cannot pay bride wealth to a woman she doesn't love...meaning it is a symbol of love that the man loves the women he marries.

Similarly, the payment of bride wealth to the bride's family was grounded in the love that existed between the two families. As a result, the bride's parents' acceptance of the bride wealth intended for their daughter was considered a sign of affection towards their

son-in-law. This perspective is exemplified by Mary, a 42-year-old woman who is married with 4 children. She had recently married off her daughter two weeks prior to the interview.

We love and treasure our son-in-law and his family. By receiving the token they brought for us last week, we had a fruitful negotiation that yielded trust between the two families.

Mary also added that the payment of bride wealth was a proof that their son-in-law truly loved their daughter and would take good care of her:

We have many girls among us who have children while still living at their parents' homes. This is not a good picture for our younger generation. Therefore, when a potential son-in-law comes forward to marry your daughter, it signifies his love for her.

In summary this section explores the gendered understanding of payment of bride wealth. The findings suggest that individuals interpret the concept of bride wealth payment based on their cultural and religious beliefs regarding its role in marriage. These cultural and religious repertoires related to bride wealth are actively integrated, or sometimes challenged and reshaped, based on factors such as age, level of education, marital status, ethnicity, and religious background. These factors collectively shape each individual's unique perception and knowledge of bride wealth payment.

4.4 Socio-cultural factors informing the gendered knowledge about bride wealth

Gendered knowledge about bride wealth is informed by a complex interplay of cultural, social, and historical elements that shape perceptions and beliefs regarding this practice.

This section presents various critical components that lead to the development of gendered knowledge regarding bride wealth payment. These are:

4.4.1 Social acceptance

In this study, research participants who derived their understanding of the payment of bride wealth from cultural and religious repertoires viewed bride wealth as an essential element in the process of gaining social acceptance within their social network of significant others.

In this context, social acceptance indicated an individual's approval, acknowledgment, and validation within their group or society at large. As a result, bride wealth payment was viewed as an integral process by which an individual is accepted and included in social circles, connections, and various social structures based on their adherence to cultural norms, values, and practices governing marriage. According to John, a 45-year-old male university graduate who is married with four children, a man is only socially recognized as a husband through payment of bride wealth:

You can stay with a woman for many years, but as long as you have not paid bride wealth, no one will see you as her husband. In fact, when you die, your in-laws may not accept that you were married to their kin.

...

We pay bride wealth to be recognized as the legal husband of the woman to whom you paid the bride wealth.

John's sentiments were also shared by Mary, a 45-year-old female shopkeeper, with a secondary level education, and who has been married for 20 years and has four children.

Mary observed that the payment of bride wealth allows couples to be socially recognized as a wife. In this context, the communal understanding of the term 'wife' was based on the legal aspect of marriage, which is certified through the payment of bride wealth. This recognition holds particular significance for women, as it symbolizes their acceptance into their husband's family.

For a woman to be recognized as a wife, bride wealth must be paid.

Nothing else can achieve.

Other research participants argued that the payment of bride wealth enables an individual to be embraced by other significant members within their social network. According to Samuel, who is 32-years-old, it was only after paying bride wealth that he was recognized and accepted as an in-law. He mentioned that before he paid bride wealth, his in-laws were unwelcoming and made assuming:

Yes, it was only after paying bride wealth that I was recognized as a son in-law by my wife's family. It was awkward how I was being treated every time I visited them. Even in my family, my wife was seen as "a passing cloud"

In this study, it was also noted that to be socially accepted because of payment of bride wealth acted as —future insurance in case of unanticipated crisis in marriage. For example, Susan, a 54-year-old widowed senior teacher with three children, asserted that her acceptance as the rightful heir of her late husband's resources was solely due to the fact that her husband had paid bride wealth.

Among the research participants who perceived the payment of bride wealth as exploitation and a practice that objectifies women as commodities, there were those who advocated alternative means of gaining social acceptance in marriage. Kurgat, a 45-year-old businessman who is married, argued:

Yes, it is true bride wealth makes one to be recognized and thus accepted as married. But should it be the only avenue? As a man I have made a decision to focus on my wife by meeting her needs Since my wife is happy and contented, accepts me as a husband, what else do I need?

4.4.2 Respect

In this study, the desire to gain or show respect to significant others informed how individuals agentively understood the payment of bride wealth. Respect, in this case, meant individuals acquiring appreciation and consideration from others within a social context. It entails esteem and appreciation for individual accomplishments, particularly in the realms of marriage and family matters

As a result, some research participants' perceptions of the payment of bride wealth were influenced by their desire to show dignity and respect to their spouses. Stephen, a 32-year-old driver married with two children, narrated:

I paid bride wealth to my wife because I valued her as a mother to my children. I also wanted her to feel secure in her marriage.

Joan, a 28-year-old single university graduate, narrated that it is important to pay bride wealth before beginning life together as husband and wife. This practice acknowledges the value one is accorded by their future spouse.

When I will get married, I would like my bride wealth to be paid for because it will be a sign of how I am socially taken.

Although Kiprop, a 28-year-old newly married man expecting a child, regarded the payment of bride wealth as a cultural obligation, to him it signified how he embraced his wife and family. He explained

When I was getting married, I had to pay bride wealth first before we settled as wife and husband... This showed how much I respected my wife and her family.

Among some female research participants, the payment of bride wealth was perceived as an avenue for them to be admired by their kin. This admiration accords them proper status and identity as a wife. Jepng'etich, a 27-year-old university graduate who recently married, stated that:

Before my husband decided to come to my parents to officially pay the bride wealth, many men were eyeing me, but after that, they treated me with a lot of admiration, knowing that I am now married.

4.4.3 Honor

This study also revealed that the desire to gain honor had a significant impact on individuals' understanding of bride wealth payment. The concept of honor in bride wealth payment revolves around the societal recognition and respect that arise from fulfilling the customary tradition of paying bride wealth during the marriage process.

This means the desire to be communally acknowledged informed how individuals understood bride wealth payment. This was clearly captured by Mr. William, a 65-year-old retired teacher and village elder with 8 children:

You won't be appreciated as a man if you have not paid bride wealth.

You are appreciated especially by your in laws (laughed) ...as real man if only you have paid bride wealth.

According to Jane, a 32-year-old graduate with two children, the payment of bride wealth symbolically grants woman recognition in both her natal and marital homes.

This gesture serves to make the woman feel appreciated and honored. As she narrates:

There is no better feeling for a woman than to feel appreciated and honored. In marriage, this feeling arises from the formalization of the marriage through the payment of bride wealth. Indeed, when my husband paid the bride wealth, my status elevated. Those who used to despise me recognized me as a married woman....

In summary findings in this section demonstrate that individuals' understanding of bride wealth payment is influenced by the prevailing norms, values, and beliefs regarding marriage. This cultural context plays a significant role in shaping how people perceive the practice. Moreover, these norms, beliefs, and values are agentively redefined to emphasize respect, social acceptance, and honor as essential factors that inform knowledge about bride wealth payment.

4.5 Gendered knowledge and individual Bride wealth practices.

This section presents findings on influence of gendered knowledge on the individual practices related to bride wealth. The emphasis is directed towards the ways in which individual exercise their agency to engage in contestation, (re)negotiation, and (re)invention of the socio-cultural and religious roles associated with bride wealth in the context of marriage. The ensuing practices, as presented hereafter, stem from the individual's aspiration for autonomy and freedom within the institution of marriage.

These are:

4.5.1 Investing together

In this study, some research participants who perceived the payment of bride wealth as exploitative chose an alternative route. They opted to collectively invest the sum that would typically constitute the bride wealth payment. This joint investment approach was regarded as optimal, as it contributed to enhancing their economic standing a critical factor for fulfilling familial requirements. This sentiment was vividly captured by Susan, a female university graduate aged 45-year-old with four children:

My parents had passed away before I got married. At that time, I was already working... True, the payment of bride wealth is important, but in this case, those who were to receive it were my elder brothers... It doesn't make sense to give a lot of money to someone to use in the name of bride wealth when you yourself are struggling. Because of this, my beloved husband and I decided to use that sum to start a business which we coown as a family. Through our investment, we are able to provide for our family's needs without depending on others. In fact, the proceeds from our investment have given us the freedom not to rely on our

relatives.

Peter, a 50-year-old man with a secondary education level and five children, argued that it was not necessary to pay bride wealth to others for their benefit. Instead, you can use the sum designated for bride wealth to invest in your wife's future. This approach, in a way, has earned him respect:

I started staying with my wife when she conceived. She was in form three. After our first born child, I decided to enroll her in a local school to continue with her studies. Fortunately, she passed well in the national exam. I really felt obligated to do the best for her ... I decided to enroll her in a very good private university. I want the best of her. I have continued to support her professional career until now. The bride wealth I was supposed to pay is what I have used to empower. The good thing, she is very happy with me. The way I have struggled to educate her, I am really respected by many people including in-laws. Apart from this, with her good job now, she provided for our family.

In this study, some participants invested together as a way of justifying and showing commitment to their marriage. This was taken as the best way to create an everlasting bond because everyone knows the value of the other in marriage. This unlike when one pays bride wealth which is received by others not in the marriage union. This was elaborated further by Mary a 39 year old business lady with 3 children married for 10 years without the payment of bride wealth:

Five years ago, my husband and I jointly ventured into the hardware business. This business has greatly helped us meet our basic needs, and as a result, we are determined to maintain our relationship for the sake

of our children. The wonderful thing is that my husband values me not only as a wife but also as an equal partner in generating income to support our family's needs. This has enabled me to have a sense of dignity... I believe that if he had only paid bride wealth, I would be a mere housewife.

John 48-year-old teacher with three children also noted that investing together with his wife is the best way to show commitment in marriage. While he values bride wealth payment as important in showing commitment in marriage, he argues that such commitment is enforced by those not in the marriage. This is unlike when you invest together. He elaborates:

Personally we have bought a piece of land, established our home despite the fact that we have not formalized our marriage, investing together has created a good relationship with my wife. This good relationship has also transcended to my son-in-law. I think the reason of this good relationship is because I and my wife have common ownership of many things such as land. This makes us commit to each other. I strongly think that if one pays bride wealth as a symbol of commitment to marriage, that person is merely depending on their people to ensure his/her marriage works.... Such dependence makes you a slave of others.

4.5.2 Writing a will as a security towards property

In this study, the act of paying bride wealth is a dominant morality, considered a means of legitimizing marriage. A legitimized marriage granted women and their children the entitlement to access the resources of their husbands. Nevertheless, some of female participants in the study, whose marriages lacked formalization through bride wealth

payment, took steps to safeguard their rights and access to their husbands' resources by creating legally binding wills that designated them as the heirs. Susan, 42-year-old female accountant with a secondary level education and married with four children narrates:

You cannot force your husband to formalize marriage by paying bride wealth As things stands now it is you to use your intellect to ensure your rights and that of your children are protected in marriage. For me, I have ensured that I am legally recognized in all his properties as a wife. This means even if my parents have not received any bride wealth, I am legally recognized as his wife.... I think this a cheaper way of formalizing marriage and securing your rights in marriage.

Interestingly, one of the research participants, Noah, a 48-year-old chef who is married with three children, pointed out the important role of writing a will. According to him, a will acts as security for children born in unions where marriage has not been formalized through the payment of bride wealth

If you happen to have children, it is important to write a Will. This is because it will allow you as a parent to secure their future resources you own in the event of your death. Without this, your wife and children will be disinherited....Imagine what a shame your children becoming homeless when you die!

Furthermore, within the context of this study, drafting a will was perceived as a strategy to reduce conflicts and disagreements that can emerge over resources in marriage. This

perception does not hold true in cases where bride wealth is the sole means of formalizing marriage. For instance, Salome, a 32-year-old mother of two children, shared her perspective.

Writing a will clearly prevents disagreements over family resources that you have jointly acquired. This alone contributes to a commitment to marriage and treats each partner as equally important

4.5.3 Cohabiting

In this study, research participants resorted to cohabitation, especially when the demanded bride wealth was beyond their reach. These research participants lived together as 'married partners,' performing all the functions of marriage. By doing so, they sought to be recognized as married. Marriam, a 32-year-old female post-graduate student with two children, shares her experience of living with her partner without legal recognition of marriage.

We cannot afford to pay bride wealth. Despite this, I am sharing the same household with my husband and children. People refer to me as Abdul's wife. Doesn't that mean I am married? Although I recognize that I am in a 'come-we-stay' marriage because we have not formalized our relationship, we live happily, much like those in legally recognized marriages

Some participants in the study also opted for cohabitation as a strategy to navigate the issue of demanding high bride wealth. In this scenario, when these participants cohabit for an extended duration and have children together, they gain the autonomy to independently determine the amount of bride wealth to be paid. Under these

circumstances, the parents of the couple are left with no choice but to acquiesce to their decision. Silvanus, a 35-year-old male teacher with 2 children, who married without the payment of bride wealth, reported that:

I really wanted to formalize my relationship with my girlfriend's family before we married. However, her family demanded a lot of money from me as bride wealth. I tried to think with them, they refused completely.

Since we loved each other, she moved to my house and started staying together. After five years we had two children. At this point, I called my wife family that I wanted to formalize our marriage by paying bride wealth. Given we had children and lived together long enough, they accepted what I was offering.

Furthermore, this study found that the payment of bride wealth enforced a strong commitment on couples to remain married for life. Participants who viewed this commitment as a threat to their personal freedom and independence opted for cohabitation instead. Risper, a 30-year-old female university graduate who works as a community rights activist and is married with one child, observed:

Once bride wealth has been paid, you are someone's wife until death. This person can turn out to be a monster, but you have no way out. Seeking divorce is expensive and emotionally draining. However, it is come –we-stay (cohabitation), you just move out and start your new life.

Among certain male research participants, cohabitation granted them the freedom to showcase their 'manly prowess.' This perception of manly prowess was linked to having multiple sexual partners, often with resistance from the cohabiting partner. Jacob, a 25-year-old man with one child, shares his experience:

Being in a formalized marriage means you have signed an agreement to remain faithful to your partner until death do you part," he laughed. "On the other hand, individuals who are in 'come-we-stay' relationships are not bound to each other. This means my wife cannot question me about my other sexual partners. Instead, she regards them as competitors, wherein she has the advantage because we live together.

4.5.5 Seeking social recognition

In this study, the formation of a family unit is centered on the presence of children and the shared act of nurturing them. The mutual obligations and collaborative parenting were seen as grounds to validate marriage, especially in the absence of socio-cultural recognition. Max, a 25-year-old male accountant with a secondary level of education, elaborates:

Personally, I have chosen to live with my girlfriend, have children, and take care of them. We have lived together happily and shared the responsibility of providing for our children. Even without the payment of bride wealth, we are now recognized as married.

Risper, a 30-year-old female university graduate who works as a community rights activist, also observed that it is not the payment of bride wealth that formalizes marriage, but rather the children born out of the relationship between a man and a woman.

Once you have lived with a man for some time and you have a child together, you become his wife. The traditional practice of bride wealth is nonsensical. You form a family unit. If the man refuses to acknowledge that marriage, the court is available to compel him.

Research participants who had not fulfilled the bride wealth payment sought social acknowledgment from their significant others to solidify their status as a married couple. They did so by engaging in practices that symbolized belonging to a formal marital union. These practices were gendered and agentively undertaken with the sole aim of establishing the identity of a married person. Paul, a 34-year-old who has been married for 12 years and has three children, observed:

I have not paid bride wealth. I know that, in normal circumstances, brothers-in-law are not expected to recognize me as a brother-in-law. However, what I have done is assist them financially whenever they encounter problems. I provide this assistance even more than their close relatives do. As a result, they no longer insist on me paying bride wealth. In fact, everyone in the family now wishes to identify with me as a brother-in-law.

Paul's strategy of being recognized as married was by providing financial support to his brothers-in-law. By doing so, Paul became socially accepted as a married individual. On the other hand, Charles, a 53-year-old teacher who has been married for 25 years, noted that he is recognized as married by his wife's kin due to his consistent participation in and support for all important family activities. He explains:

There is no important family activity involving my wife's family in which I do not participate... I mean even those activities that are limited to blood relatives only. At times, they view me not merely as an in-law but as an integral part of their family. I genuinely feel a sense of belonging to their family. I vividly recall a recent incident when my brother-in-law invited me to participate in negotiating dowry for his son. In that moment, I found myself pondering my own situation, realizing that I had not paid bride wealth for their sister. It was at that point I realized they truly see me as one of their own.

Paul and Charles, both male research participants, sought social recognition of their marital status from their wives' kin. On the other hand, female participants sought social acknowledgment of their marital status from both their partners and their families of origin. In doing so, they engaged in various activities that symbolized their social acceptance as married. This concept was vividly illustrated by Marriam, a 32-year-old female post-graduate student with two children:

As a woman, you must be aware that your marital status as a wife does not solely depend on your husband. One day, your husband could become infatuated with another woman and leave you. Thus, your strategy should involve earning the goodwill of your husband's family. Support them, care for them, and strive to be a positive presence. In doing so, they may recognize you as an integral part of their family, even if no bride wealth has been paid. Furthermore, in your place of origin, consider investing in aiding your own kin. In times of hardship, they are likely to provide you with unwavering support.

In this study, it was also found that some female research participants who were single mothers engaged in practices aimed at attaining social validation from their parents through a self-marriage ritual. This self-marriage ritual involved the single mother presenting monetary gifts and items similar to bride wealth to her parents. In response, the parents would bestow their blessings upon her as if she were married. Delphine, a 47-year-old single mother, had this to say:

My parents educated me and did everything a parent could for a daughter. They held hopes for my marriage and the receipt of bride wealth. However, after giving birth to two children out of wedlock, no man wanted to marry me. I chose to remain single. To fulfill my parents' expectations, I organized a ceremony with my friends and offered them a sum of money nearly equivalent to what would have been my bride wealth. Through this act, my parents acknowledged me as 'married.' As a result, I now possess the rights and privileges enjoyed by my sisters who are married and have had bride wealth paid.

Within this study, social acknowledgment of being married, even though bride wealth had not been paid, was also achieved through social networks. In such scenarios, individuals in these unions participated in social events and gatherings as couples, which led others to acknowledge their relationships, as explained by Hillary, a 30-year-old secondary teacher with a university level of education, who recently entered into an informal marriage and has one child.

Let me tell you my story, I can't even remember when we got married, we dated for so long, we used to attend all the events that was held at home

be it weddings, parties and burial. My cousins used to ask me who that lady was to me but it reached a point where they referred to her as their sister in-law. In this case am I not married?

Likewise, social validation as a married couple was also associated with the display of relationships on social media platforms. For instance, individuals would share photographs together, use terms like 'wife' or 'husband' to refer to each other, and commemorate milestones within their relationships. This public display and performance created an image of a married couple.

In summary, this section has explored insights into how gendered knowledge influences individual practices related to bride wealth. The findings reveal intricate ways in which individuals exert agency. This agency is manifested through active participation in contesting established norms, (re)negotiating existing practices, and even (re)inventing the socio-cultural and religious roles that bride wealth assumes within the broader context of marriage.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter summarizes the research findings and draws conclusion. In addition, it gives recommendations and suggestions for future study.

5.2 Summary of major findings.

This research aimed to examine the influence of gendered perceptions of bride wealth on its practice. Guided by gender intersectionality theory, the study explored individuals' understanding of bride wealth. It identified the factors influencing this understanding and analyzed how these individualized perceptions informed practices related to bride wealth.

5.2.1: Gendered knowledge about bride wealth

The study's findings indicate that individuals understood the notion of bride wealth payment based on their cultural and religious beliefs regarding its significance within marriage. However, these cultural and religious repertoires were contested, (re)negotiated and (re)invented to inform individual knowledge about bride wealth based on their age, gender, marital status, religious affiliation and ethnicity. In this regard bride wealth was understood as a means of formalization of marriage, commodification and objectification of women, social status implications, exploitation, assertion of independence, and the symbolism of love.

In this study, the concept of bride wealth is depicted as a mechanism for formalizing marriages. The process of formalization involves conferring official marital status upon a couple, accompanied by societal approval. However, the degree of importance assigned to bride wealth in this formalization process is influenced by factors such as gender and level of formal education. For instance, women generally place significant emphasis on the role of bride wealth in formalizing marriage. This emphasis arises from the fact that bride wealth serves as a means through which they gain recognition as married individuals. This recognition, in turn, grants them access to their husband's resources and affords them rights over their utilization.

Conversely, among some men, the significance attributed to bride wealth in the context of formalizing marriage is comparatively lower. This reduced significance primarily stems from the consideration that, particularly within patriarchal societies, men traditionally hold the position of resource custodians. As a result, bride wealth is not perceived as a crucial factor in facilitating their access to and control over resources.

The perception of bride wealth as a method for formalizing marriages among women was subject to variations influenced by their level of formal education. Women with university education posited that legal recognition, specifically acquiring a marriage certificate, carried equivalent significance to bride wealth. Similarly, some women with a secondary level of education placed emphasis on a different aspect of formalizing marriage—namely, the importance of having children in cementing marital recognition.

In this study, the notion of bride wealth was found to be understood through the lens of the commodification and objectification of women. These entailed viewing women as commodities, either to be exchanged for monetary gain or solely for a man's

gratification. This practice of treating women as commodities was founded on the premise that women should be submissive and subservient to their husbands. They were perceived as tools for giving birth and satisfying men's sexual desires. This interpretation of bride wealth was predominantly held by educated women with university level of education who were single or divorced. In contrast, males of all ages and women who identified with Christianity opposed this viewpoint. They believed that bride wealth bestowed an irreversible permission upon men to demand sexual intimacy and reproduction from women, both of which they considered integral to the institution of marriage.

This study found that bride wealth held a dual role in terms of social status, both individually and within the community. At the community level, both men and women understood bride wealth as vital for gaining recognition as married individuals. On an individual level, particularly for women under 40, the amount of bride wealth symbolized their perceived value in the eyes of their spouses.

On the other hand, men under 40 understood the bride wealth amount as a demonstration of their capacity to support their wives and children. However, for men aged 60, the significance of the bride wealth amount shifted. It was no longer regarded as a meaningful indicator of their ability to provide for their families. Instead, it was seen as a mere tool for superficial display, serving the purpose of projecting a false identity.

Irrespective of factors such as age, level of formal education, religious affiliation, ethnicity and marital status, this study found that bride wealth was universally perceived as a platform for exploitation. This exploitation was defined within the context of being

taken advantage of for the interests of others. However, the notion of exploitation was delineated differently based on gender.

Among men, exploitation manifested as the commercialization of bride wealth, where demands for exorbitant sums of bride wealth were made by the bride's family. On the other hand, from the perspective of women, exploitation centered on the erosion of their autonomy within marriage. This loss of autonomy was characterized by adhering solely to the authority and decision-making power of the husband, along with providing labor exclusively for the husband's benefit.

In addition, the study revealed that women understood bride wealth as a mechanism to assert their independence within the confines of marriage. This assertion of independence was characterized by a woman's ability to actively participate in household decision-making processes and to have her economic contributions acknowledged and respected within the household dynamic. This interpretation stemmed from the sense of security that bride wealth bestowed upon the marriage.

This understanding regarding bride wealth was commonly shared among married women who had either not attained no formal education or with primary or secondary level of formal education. In contrast, unmarried women with university education held the perspective that bride wealth constrained their self-independence and freedom in terms of career progression and choices related to parenthood.

Furthermore, the study also discovered that bride wealth was often viewed as a symbol of love. This perception was shared among married couples without regard to factors such as formal education level, age, gender, religious beliefs, and occupation. However,

the study did not identify a consistent and universal interpretation of what exactly "love" signified, as it was taken for granted to encompass the notion of being valued.

5.2.2 Socio- cultural factors informing the gendered knowledge about bride wealth

This study found that the ways individuals understood bride wealth was informed by the prevailing norms, values, and beliefs associated with marriage. These cultural factors were found play a pivotal role in shaping individuals' perceptions about bride wealth by being agentively (re)defined or (re)interpreted for sole purpose of attaining self-accomplishment in terms of respect, social acceptance and honor.

In this study, for example, research participants who aspired for social acceptance and honor within their social networks understood bride wealth as a venue for formalizing marriage as articulated by cultural and religious repertoires on marriage. In this case, their understanding of bride wealth was informed by desire to be embraced and included within the social circles of their significant others for adhering to cultural and religious values and practices governing marriage.

Similarly, individuals who sought respect from their significant others also understood bride wealth in terms of social status and symbolizing love. On the other hand, those participants who prioritized individual autonomy and freedom perceived bride wealth as a form of exploitation and avenue for commodification and objectification of women viewing it as a constraint on their personal independence.

5.2.3 Gendered knowledge and individual Bride wealth practices.

Last but not least, the study found that the individuation of bride wealth in terms of honor, respect and social acceptance influenced individual practices toward bride wealth for purposes of attaining individual aspired identity and status.

In this study, research participants whose demand for bride wealth was exceeded their means resorted for cohabitation as a means of gaining recognition as married individuals. In this case, some participants used cohabitation as a strategy to exercise their autonomy to independently determine the amount of bride wealth to be paid.

Others pursued freedom and independence through cohabitation because it required less commitment compared to formalized marriage.

In this study, individuals who prioritized various aspects of formalizing marriage sought social recognition through collaborative parenting as a means to validate their marital status. Alternatively, some solidified their position as married couples by offering financial support to their in-laws.

However, the single women sought social recognition from their parents through selfmarriage ritual. In this case, women would present monetary gifts and items to their parent's equivalent to bride wealth. This involved single women with children, who paid their own bride wealth in order to receive bride wealth for their children.

Moreover, this study demonstrated that some participants chose to make joint investments instead of fulfilling bride wealth obligations. This collective investment approach stemmed from the belief that bride wealth served as a means of benefiting

others. Furthermore, this practice justified the commitment that the couples had to their relationship

This study found that the practice of bride wealth was not the only means of gaining access to marital resources and rights of inheritance. A will acted as a security for children and the marital property even in informal marriage. Writing a will minimized conflicts and disagreements that arise over resources in marriage.

6.1 Conclusion

In summary, study found that individuals had varied knowledge about bride wealth which was drawn from socio-cultural and religious repertoires on marriage. This knowledge was gendered in terms of age, marital status, level of education, religious affiliation, occupation and ethnicity, and was agentively (re)negotiated, contested and reinvented for the pursuit of self-accomplishment in terms of honor, respect and social acceptance. The study also found that the individuation of bride wealth in terms of honor, respect and social acceptance influenced individual practices toward bride wealth in pursuit of aspired identity and status.

In conclusion, that an individual's knowledge about bride wealth is a gendered and synthesized (re)interpretation of socialized socio-cultural understanding of bride wealth in pursuit of individual identities and status. The study therefore argues that to understand an individual's knowledge about bride wealth it is important to take into account individual positionalities in terms of gender, age, level of education, religious affiliations, marital status and ethnicity, and their own desired identities and social status contextually.

7.1 Recommendations for future research

This study suggests that in order to continue enriching the discourse on agency, structure, and what informs human behaviour, whether is it individual or communal sensibilities, this study recommends further study on gendered perception of marriage.

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APPENDIXES

Appendix I: Informed Consent

Kosgei J. Mercy

Box 3900,

ELDORET, KENYA.

Tel: 0728526366

Mail: tumomercy94@gmail.com

Dear Respondent,

RE: Request for participation in research study

Hello....My name is Kosgei J. Mercy, a postgraduate student at Moi University; department of Sociology, Psychology, and Anthropology. I am researching the influence of individual Gendered perceptions of bride wealth on its practices in Koibatek Sub-County. This research is for academic purposes required for the award of Moi University Master of Arts degree in Sociology. There is no right or wrong answer, so feel free to give your opinions regarding bride wealth. All reasonable efforts will be made to keep your information private and confidential. Taking part in this research study is voluntary. However, your participation could be resourceful. I freely volunteer to take part in this study. Please sign here as evidence of your informed consent

Signature of participant----- Date-----

Appendix II: In-depth-Interview Guide (Semi-Structured Interviews)

Thank you for taking the time to talk with me today. We will talk for about 60 minutes today. Your participation is completely voluntary. You can decide not to answer any questions simply by saying ‘I would prefer not to answer’. Participation is also confidential. We will not tell anyone that you participated in the interview today. With your permission, we will audio record

the interview and transcribe it. This is so that we can analyze the group interviews. We will not name you in the interview, or in the report that we produce.

Do you agree to Participate?

Thank you

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

1. Gender-----?
2. Age?
3. Level of formal education?
4. Marital Status?
5. If married is the spouse from the same community?
6. What is your religious affiliation?
7. Place of origin

BRIDE WEALTH

1. What's bride wealth to you (individual/community level?)
2. What's the importance of bride wealth at (individual/community level?)
3. What determines the payment of bride wealth?
4. Is payment of bride wealth an individual choice or community choice? Elaborate
5. Is bride wealth important in marriage?

6. Are there changes in bride wealth payment?
7. What are the causes of these changes in bride wealth at individual and community level?
8. How have the changes in bride wealth informed individual practices towards bride wealth?
9. What informs these practices of bride wealth?

Appendix III: Key Informant interviews

Thank you for taking the time to talk with me today. We will talk for about 60 minutes today. Your participation is completely voluntary. You can decide not to answer any questions simply by saying ‘I would prefer not to answer’. Participation is also confidential. We will not tell anyone that you participated in the interview today. With your permission, we will audio record the interview and transcribe it. This is so that we can analyze the group interviews. We will not name you in the interview, or in the report that we produce.

Do you agree to Participate?

Thank you

Guiding questions

1. What is bride wealth?
2. What are the function of bride wealth at individual and community level?
3. What has changed in bride wealth at individual and community levels?
4. What are the sources of changes in bride wealth?

5. How are the changes in bride wealth influenced its practices at individual level?

Appendix IV: Research Permit



REPUBLIC OF KENYA

Ref No: 855207



NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & INNOVATION

Date of Issue: 06/January/2022

RESEARCH LICENSE



This is to Certify that Ms.. MERCY JEBET KOSGEI of Moi University, has been licensed to conduct research in Baringo on the topic: GENDERED PERCEPTIONS AND PRACTICES OF BRIDE WEALTH: A CASE STUDY OF KOIBATEKK SUB-COUNTY for the period ending : 06/January/2023.

License No: NACOSTI/P/22/15057

855207

Applicant Identification Number

Walter Mwangi

Director General NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & INNOVATION

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