

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON BRIDE PRICE
16th – 18th February 2004, Kampala-Uganda
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Topic: Education and Critical Consciousness on Harmful Social-Cultural Practices: Attitudes and Conception of Phenomena of Bride Price Among Undergraduate Students in Uganda (Research Based)

1. Introduction

This is a research based paper focusing on university students conception and attitudes towards bride price. The study was originally supposed to be conducted at Makerere University, but by the time the researcher got confirmation from the organizers, the students were already doing their end of semester examinations, so it was shifted to the Uganda Christian University, Mukono.

Bride price is a common cultural practice in Uganda. This concept embraces the wealth paid to a maid's family when he is getting married to her spouse. It is usually in cash or kind (goats, chicken and cattle). Bride price appears to be a harmful social-cultural practice which subordinates women to inferior status in society and creates problems for men, but also has its cultural advantages.

Education is meant to empower people with knowledge, skills and correct attitudes towards life and work. It is meant to impart to the learners critical consciousness of their environment, integrity of character, morals, discipline and creativity, all of which is vital for progress at individual, community and national levels. The problem focused on in this study is that the phenomena of bride price is so deeply rooted in African cultures that it appears to be taken for granted even among the educated people. This is, in spite of its harmful potential in terms of affecting development, gender relations and human rights.

This study was a survey, with a sample of 44 students of social-sciences, in second year used. These were given a 32 item questionnaire, with open ended items to fill in. The results of the study are presented below:

1. Results of the study:

Age of the respondents:

a)	20-25 years	:	31
b)	25 years and above	:	9
c)	Not stated	:	4

Gender of the respondents:

a)	Female	:	27
b)	Male	:	15
c)	Not stated	:	2

Ethnic background:

a)	Baganda (U)	:	5
b)	Banyankole (U)	:	5
c)	Rwandese (R)	:	4
d)	Acholi (U)	:	3
e)	Banyoro (U)	:	3
f)	Karamojong (U)	:	3
g)	Bagishu (U)	:	3
h)	Bakonjo (U)	:	3
i)	Bahororo (U)	:	2
j)	Bateso (U)	:	2

k)	Samia (U)	:	1	
l)	Ha (T)	:	1	
m)	Langi (U)	:	1	1
n)	Batooro (U)	:	1	
o)	Bafumbira (U)	:	1	
p)	Zande (S)	:	1	1
q)	Lugbara (U)	:	1	
r)	Bakiga (U)	:	1	
s)	Bagwere (U)	:	1	
t)	Alur (U)	:	1	

U	=	Uganda
T	=	Tanzania
R	=	Rwanda
S	=	Sudan

Religious affiliation:

a)	Christians	:	38
b)	Moslem	:	1
c)	Not stated	:	5

The meaning of bride-price definitions were given:

a)	Transfer of wealth from a man's to a woman's family	:	4
b)	Gifts to a woman's family from a man's family	:	4
c)	Payments by a man's family to a woman's family in form of cash, materials or cows	:	15
d)	Payments from a man's to a lady's family as appreciation	:	11
e)	A reward from a man's family to a woman's family as a present for bringing her up	:	3
f)	An exchange / compensation process by a man's family for the loss of the woman and her services to her family	:	5
g)	Exchange of gifts between a man and a woman's family as part of cultural marriage practices	:	3

Advantages of bride-price:

a)	Respect for the woman	:	19
b)	Cultural way of expressing appreciation	:	18
c)	Marriage recognition and security	:	16
d)	Income/wealth for the woman's family	:	10
e)	Creates family stability	:	10
f)	Seals family relationships	:	9
g)	Respect for the woman's family	:	8
h)	Strengthens relationships between the partners	:	8
i)	Respect for the man	:	8
j)	Serves cultural and identity purposes	:	6
k)	Compensation to the girls family	:	5
l)	Can help the brides brothers to marry too	:	2
m)	It is a fair give and take process	:	1
n)	Promotes preservation of virginity	:	1

Disadvantages of bride price:

a)	Women lose their right to equal status	:	23
b)	Women are rated as commodities	:	18
c)	It breeds domestic violence	:	18
d)	Poverty for the man's family	:	16
e)	A very expensive affair, frustrating lovers	:	16
f)	It has been commercialized	:	12
g)	Promotes exploitation of women	:	
	11		
h)	Failure to marry a spouse of one's choice	:	11
i)	Difficulty of divorcing for the women	:	7
j)	Cattle rustling and crime to raise money	:	
	5		
k)	Strained relationships between families	:	5
l)	Selling off girls prematurely by greedy parents	:	4
m)	Late marriages for men	:	2
n)	Elopement	:	1
o)	Failure to get married	:	1

Student's own rating of their understanding of bride price:

a)	Adequate	:	28
b)	Inadequate	:	11
c)	Unsure	:	5

Relevance of bride price:

a)	Relevant	:	23
b)	No longer relevant	:	16
c)	Unsure	:	5

Reasons given: relevant:

a)	Formalising relationships between families	:	4
b)	Uniting families	:	
	6		
c)	Appreciation of the girls family for bringing her up	:	3
d)	Maintenance of family stability	:	4
e)	Cordial part of our social culture	:	
	2		
f)	Needed for approval of marriage	:	1
g)	Good but needs to be streamlined	:	1

Reasons given: not relevant:

a)	It is commercialized, money oriented	:	7
b)	Reduces women into commodities	:	6
c)	It is abused for personal gain	:	7
d)	It is wastage of time and resources	:	5
e)	It is outdated, discriminates and subordinates women	:	5
f)	It justifies abuse of women's rights and domestic violence	:	4

1.11 Bride price and oppression of males:

a)	Financial exploitation /burden	:	17
b)	Loss of maids they love	:	
	8		
c)	Psychological stress	:	7
d)	Lack of respect if not paid	:	3
e)	Poverty after marriage	:	3
f)	Failure to marry	:	
	3		

1.12	Bride price and oppression of females:		
a)	Reduction to property status	:	17
b)	Limited rights, speech and property	:	9
c)	Victims of domestic violence	:	6
d)	Slavery/bondage in homes	:	6
e)	Forced and early marriages	:	3
f)	Many women stay single	:	2
g)	Social disrespect if it is not paid	:	
	1		
1.13	Bride price and exploitation of males:		
a)	Financial and material losses	:	17
b)	Poverty and debts due to high costs	:	14
c)	Failure to marry	:	
	6		
d)	Heavy work to raise the costs	:	3
1.14	Bride price and exploitation of females:		
a)	They are overworked (rural areas)	:	19
b)	No freedom of speech and property rights	:	7
c)	Sexual abuse and marital rape	:	
		:	7
d)	Abuse of their rights	:	
		:	7
e)	They are condemned to poverty	:	
		:	2
f)	Domestic violence	:	
		:	1
1.15	Bride price and reproductive health:		
a)	Production of many children	:	12
b)	Early marriages and complications	:	16
c)	Sex slavery and marital rape	:	5
d)	Promotion of polygamy	:	
	1		
e)	Provides room for re-marrying if the first wife is barren:		1
f)	Control of sexual promiscuity among women	:	1
g)	Promotion of sexual immorality	:	
	1		
1.16	Bride price, STDs and HIV/AIDS:		
a)	Marriage of young girls to infected men	:	
	10		
b)	Men oppress women, cheat on them and infect them	:	4
c)	Polygamy encourages spread of diseases	:	
	4		
d)	Spread of diseases through sexual immorality	:	4
e)	Spread of diseases through sharing/inheriting wives	:	1
f)	Delayed marriages may result in infections	:	1
1.17	Bride price and domestic violence:		
a)	Encourages wife battering	:	18
b)	Women are abused by men	:	17
c)	Women are rendered helpless	:	5

	d)	Fighting and beating children results	:	4
	e)	Women suffer in silence	:	:
		2		
1.18	Gender labour roles:			
	a)	Women are abused and overworked in homes	:	22
	b)	Women are discriminated, kept at home	:	:
		5		
	c)	Men don't work but give orders	:	:
		3		
	d)	No property rights for women	:	3
	e)	Women are exploited as sex objects	:	3
	f)	Men (in towns) overwork as bread winners	:	2
	g)	Women denied the right to work (in towns)	:	2
1.19	Bride price and women's self-esteem:			
	a)	Women are accorded low status	:	:
		22		
	b)	Women are accorded property status	:	8
	c)	Women are denied equal rights	:	5
	d)	Women are given good status and protection	:	5
	e)	Women have little say in homes	:	:
		2		
	f)	Women are given a sense of belonging	:	1
2.20	Bride price and men's self-esteem:			
	a)	Makes men develop superiority complex	:	:
		12		
	b)	Makes men proud and arrogant	:	9
	c)	Earns men more respect	:	:
		9		
	d)	Gives men power over women	:	5
	e)	Makes men who fail to pay feel inferior	:	:
		4		
2.21	Bride price and poverty:			
	a)	Hardships for the new couple	:	20
	b)	Man's family is made poorer	:	11
	c)	Causes misery, crime and debts	:	8
	d)	Wealth in the girls family improves	:	7
	e)	Women are denied land rights	:	2
	f)	Poor men just cohabit	:	2
	g)	Poverty causes early girl-child marriages	:	2
2.22	Bride price and women's rights:			
	a)	Women's rights are violated	:	20
	b)	Freedom of speech is denied	:	20
	c)	Property rights are denied	:	4
	d)	The higher the price the more the respect	:	1
	e)	Bride price empowers women	:	1
		Bride price and men's freedoms:		
	a)	Too much freedom, abused by men	:	12
	b)	Too much freedom from domestic work	:	:
		7		

	c)	Worries over the money and wealth needed	:	2
	d)	Bride price cost is dictated to men	:	7
	e)	Worries over loss in case of divorce	:	2
2.23	Bride price and child neglect:			
	a)	Women are left to care for children without means	:	18
	b)	Girls are married off when still young	:	6
	c)	Education of the girl child is not given priority	:	6
	d)	Polygamy and production of many children are promoted:		3
	e)	High charges leave little resources to cater for children :		3
	f)	After divorces, step mothers neglect the men's children :		3
	g)	Bride price ensures protection of children by the two families:		3
	h)	Children suffer if parents take back the wife because of bride price:2		
	i)	Women see children as men's children thus neglect them:		2
	j)	Men abandon pregnant girls and their babies for fear of bride price:		
	1			
2.24	Bride price and child abuse:			
	a)	Forced child marriages	:	16
	b)	Failure to marry and defilement	:	
		8		
	c)	Girls are denied education	:	7
	d)	Wastage of resources on parties etc	:	6
	e)	Much suffering after separation (step mothers)	:	3
	f)	Encourages brutality in homes	:	2
	g)	Children are protected	:	2
2.25	Bride price and power relationships in homes:			
	a)	Perpetuation of oppression of females	:	20
	b)	Exploitation of women's labour	:	
		16		
	c)	Makes males arrogant and disrespectful to females	:	8
	d)	Men who have not paid are denied respect	:	3
	e)	Promotes equal rights between males and females	:	1
2.26	Property rights relationships:			
	a)	Men have rights over all property while women do not	:	20
	b)	Women become part of a man's property	:	14
	c)	Women are denied rights to property hence made poor	:	3
2.27	The Commercial dimension of bride-price:			
	a)	Bride price is more commercial than cultural	:	16
	b)	Transactions are dominated by men	:	5
	c)	Women are degraded into commodities	:	4
	d)	Making it hard for the poor to marry	:	2
	e)	Government should set a minimum price	:	
	1			
2.28	Bride price and religion:			
	a)	Religion blesses bride-price	:	9
	b)	Religion is against bride price	:	6
	c)	There is no religious problem if it is a gift	:	6
	d)	It becomes immoral once one involves money	:	4

2.29 Bride price and education:

a)	Educated women fetch very high bride price	:	16
b)	It affects the drop-out rates of the girl-child	:	8
c)	Girls education not valued; they are forced out of schools to marry:		
	8		
d)	Has led to many educated women failing to get married:		7
e)	Has helped sensitise women about bride-price	:	4

2.30. Bride-price and early marriages:

a)	It promotes early marriages for girls	:	19
b)	Poverty makes parents sell their daughters at early ages	:	7
c)	Boy's marriage is delayed by bride-price	:	2

2.31 Bride price and fidelity/faithfulness:

a)	Men are left free to have extra-marital affairs	:	22
b)	It binds women to be faithful to their husbands	:	14
c)	It promotes faithfulness to each other in homes	:	5

2.32 Respondent's attitude on paying/having bride price paid for them:

a)	It should be paid	:	16
b)	It should not be paid	:	23
c)	I am not sure	:	5

3. Conclusion

The responses of the subjects to the issues presented above generally showed that the university students have a reasonably good understanding of issues related to bride price in their cultures and in the context of modern African societies. The responses showed that a good number of them are not taking the phenomena of bride price and its associated social-cultural connotations for granted. They are well aware of its harmful potential in relation to development, gender relationships and human rights.