



# Bride-price and domestic violence: Empirical perspectives from Nandom district in the north western region of Ghana

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## Abstract

This paper explored the link between the practice of bride price and domestic violence in Nandom District, Ghana. Bride price is used to cement and validate marriages in many sub-Saharan African countries including Ghana. Based on qualitative focus group discussions, In-depth interviews and key informant interviews with men and women aged 18-50, this study aimed to gain useful insights into the knowledge, practice and attitude related to bride price and its connection with domestic violence. It was revealed that bride price is a deep-rooted cultural practice with almost all participants supporting its continuity. However, recent commercialization has changed the practice and its cultural relevance is less clear in present time. Although bride price provides protection, respect, and acknowledgement of women within marriages, the paper argues that the practice rather prescribes the role of women in marriages and further subordinates women to men. This study highlights the need to engage with communities/traditional leaders on possible mitigation of the negative impacts of bride price on women, men and community development at large.

**Keywords:** Bride price; Domestic violence; Ghana; Cultural practice; Impact

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## 1. Introduction

Bride-price is the most common practice used to validate customary marriages in Africa including Ghana. The practice of bride price is central to marriage rites and is deeply embedded as a valued cultural norm in Ghana as it legitimizes marriages (Hughes, 1985). Bride-price in Ghana is typically a contract where material items such as cattle or other animals, cowries and/ or money are paid by a prospective husband's family to the bride's family in exchange for the bride (Mbaye and Wagner, 2013). The practice of bride price (whichever form and definition it takes) is not peculiar to sub-Saharan African countries alone; it is a global practice which dates back to 3000 BCE (Murdock, 1967). For instance, in the Global South, expensive diamond rings are given to the bride by the groom, a practice which typifies the exchanges of goods and money to validate marriages in Africa.

Bride-price as a repugnant cultural practice has been at the centre of many international debates and discussions and has received condemnation globally (Hague et al., 2011; Mangena and Ndlovu, 2013). Despite the international calls for its abolishment and Ghana is signatory to most of the international human rights conventions such as CEDAW, the practice is still prevalent in Ghana especially among the *Dagabas* of Nandom district where patriarchy and patrilineal family systems are strongly upheld. There has been growing recognition that in urban areas of Ghana and among the matrilineal families in southern Ghana, the practice of bride price is fast changing as goods and money rather than animals are more commonly given in the form of non-refundable gifts to the bride's family. However, in rural communities in Northern Ghana including the Nandom district, traditional bride-price practices remain entrenched and are extremely common and tend to be accepted as the cultural norm albeit the practice varies considerably by context-tradition, culture, socio-ethnic group (see Bishai et al., 2009).

Evidence suggests that the tradition of bride-price historically is believed to have beneficial consequences-gives formal recognition to marriages, maintain social control, construction of society identity, protects wives against possible abuse, stabilizes the partnership, promotes social cohesion and joins the two families together (Ansell, 2001; Muthhegeki et al., 2012). In Islamic marriages, bride-price functions as divorce insurance to the bride (Kressel et al., 1977). However, in present day, the practice appears to have become monetized and commercialized hence have lost much of its traditional essence and value in many circumstances. Bride-price, thus appears to involve bargaining and buying of a wife as a 'commoditized' item in the marriage market, which can result in domestic violence towards a woman if she does not fulfil her 'value for money' expectation (Kambarami, 2006; Chireshe and Chireshe, 2010; Srinivasan and Bedi, 2007; Matembe, 2004). In the Nandom district, a woman seeking for divorce can only do so if the bride-price is repaid to the husband's family. In situations where such payments cannot be returned, it is not uncommon to see women leaving abusive marital homes likely to be sent away from their (women) natal families if the latter are unable to repay the bride-price.

Domestic violence against women and violation of women's reproductive rights has also been reported to have a link (direct or indirect) with bride-price payment (Kaye et al., 2005; Wakabi, 2002; Tamale, 2004). Despite the burgeoning evidence that bride-price payment can have far-reaching influences on domestic violence; it remains a much neglected area and has attracted relatively little scholarly attention and policy

focus in Ghana. Although considerable insights on bride-price, dowry and domestic violence have been gained elsewhere, many puzzles remain in Ghana hence the need for this study. The present study therefore seeks to examine the connection and impact if any, between bride-price payment and domestic violence in Ghana, focusing on the Nandom District of Ghana's Upper West Region where the practice is deeply entrenched and pervasive (Ghana News Agency, 2014). Recognizing that the exchange of goods and other items is part of many marriages validation processes throughout the world and not unique to African countries, the study locates this enquiry within the wider context and also conscious to avoid the possibility of stigmatizing African traditions, values and customs.

## **2. Materials and methods**

### **2.1. Research design**

This paper forms part of a larger research that the author carried out between August 2013 and December 2014 to investigate bride price and its impact on domestic violence. The research adopted a participatory action research methodology (McTaggart, 1997), employing qualitative methods to collect data. Participatory action research methodology feeds into, and leads to social change in a dynamic process through careful reflection. As such, this study was based on the belief that research in rural contexts cannot be super-imposed but should evolve through collaboration with local people on their lived experiences of a particular subject of discussion. Since this research aimed to explore the social processes and cultural nuances relating to bride price and domestic violence, the use of a qualitative approach was appropriate and ideal. The qualitative design provided a detailed description of men and women's perception, attitude and reaction on bride price and its impact if any on domestic violence in the Nandom District of north western region of Ghana.

### **2.2. Study Context**

This study was conducted in three communities in the Nandom district between August 2013 and December 2014. The district covers a geographical area of 567.6 square km and has a population of 46,040, comprising 52.4% females and 47.6% males (Ghana Statistical Service, 2012). The district is predominately rural with about 82.5% of the total population characterized as rural (Ghana Statistical Service, 2011). The primary economic activity is agriculture, with approximately 65% of the active labour force engaged in agriculture (Ghana Statistical Service, 2011). Women constitute the majority of the farm labour-force as well as contributing substantially to various agro-processing activities.

In the Nandom District in particular, and Ghana as a whole, gendered-based role differentiation, discrimination, male domination and superiority which reinforce patriarchal beliefs and gender misconception are entrenched and pervasive (Ampofo and Boateng, 2008). As such, men are in charge of decision-making and are seen as the family providers and women have less decision-making power both at

the domestic arena and the public realm. Women's opinion is seldom considered even in situation which may adversely affect their lives such as bride price.

### 2.3. Participants

The main research participants were adult men and women aged 18-50years. To gain multiple views on bride price and domestic violence, other key informants: community leaders-chiefs, women's leaders (Magazia<sup>1</sup>) and Assembly members were also interviewed. In general, the ages of the participants ranged from 18 to 50 years. Majority of the participants were illiterates and were also smallholder farmers with few others being professional teachers. All the participants were married at the time of this study.

### 2.4. Sampling and Recruitment

The study communities were purposively selected to capture a diversity of perspectives on bride-price and domestic violence. Convenient purposive sampling techniques were used to select individual research participants. This was a judgmental selection based on a number of pre-set inclusion criteria: ease of recruitment, participant's availability, willingness to participate in the study, and ability to consent to participate in the research. Since the study took place during the farming season and the main economic activity of the study area is agriculture, convenient purposive sampling techniques were ideal.

Participants were invited to take part in the study by the researcher and communities' leaders who were deeply briefed of the study and this facilitated access to the study communities from the beginning. The main criteria for inclusion in this study was not based on experience of domestic violence, but was based strictly on firsthand knowledge and experience of bride price such as community leaders and the general public including clan heads, elderly men and women who were involved in deciding and making decisions about bride-price within the study communities, as well as married men and women. All adult men and women were invited to participate in the study. The Assembly members then helped the researcher to recruit interested individual participants for discussion and interviews. Having grown up in the study communities, the Assembly members were very conversant with the local dialect and cultural nuances and were, therefore, in a good position to advice the researcher on suitable participants, and arrange interview meetings and dates. The community leaders such as chiefs and women's leaders (*Magazia*) were also deeply involved in helping to recruit participants since they are the gatekeepers to the study communities. Their involvement particularly facilitated and enhanced the cooperation of the other participants.

### 2.5. Data collection

Focus group discussions (FGDs) were the main data collection methods. This data collection technique was adopted partly because of its practical relevance in helping to reproduce men and women's opinions on bride-price and domestic violence in a normal peer-group interpersonal exchange.

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<sup>1</sup> Women's leader or Magazia in the context of Nandom refers to a woman who represents all women within a particular society just like the chief as men's leader

In all, 9 focus group discussions – three in each study community - were completed with men and women. In each community, the focus groups were segmented by gender and age (i.e. males, females, 18-30 years, and 31-50 years). This was necessary because initial discussions with communities' leaders hinted that there were gender and age hierarchy conflicts in the study communities. In other words, women and younger men (18-30years) were less likely to freely express their views in the presence of elderly men and women (31-50years) because of cultural norms, which require young people to listen to their elders. Segmenting discussants by similar gender and age groups, therefore, ensured that each participant was comfortable expressing their opinions on all the issues as well as sharing their experiences within the group context without any barrier. Each group consisted of 5 - 8 participants and lasted slightly above 1.30 minutes and ended when a point of saturation was reached. All focus groups discussions were held in the study communities and were recorded with participants' consent. FGDs were held at locations convenient to both the participants and the researcher, and all the discussions were held in the local dialect – *Dagaari*. This was because the literacy rates are low among the study participants. The researcher was conversant and fluent in both *Dagaari* and English. In the view of Grewal and Ritchie, a shared dialect could facilitate communication between the researched and the researcher (2006). The researcher's ability to conduct interviews using a shared language with participants (*Dagaari*) fostered rapport and social conversation with the local people. The shared dialect also facilitated the communication between the researcher and participants, as there was no need for a translator.

To complement the focus groups discussions, in-depth interviews were also conducted with some of the men and women who took part in the focus group discussions. The choice of this data collection technique was informed by the fact that group-based discussions may not give some discussants the opportunity to express their true experience and opinion on a sensitive topic such as bride price and domestic violence especially in this part of Ghana where patriarchy is pervasive. For this reason, the focus groups data were triangulated and validated with the individual in-depth interviews. A major advantage of this method was that it addressed sensitive issues such as personal experiences of bride-price and domestic violence. In all, 30 in-depth interviews - 15 with men and 15 with women - were completed. Each interview lasted between 20 to 30 minutes. Interviews were conducted in both *Dagaari* and English and at location convenient to both the researcher and the participants.

Finally, key informant interviews were also conducted with 3 chiefs, 3 women leaders, and 3 Assembly members. The key informant interviews were conducted to gain additional insights into communities' views on bride-price and the link to domestic violence. Interviews were conducted in both *Dagaari* and English, and lasted between 20 to 30 minutes.

## 2.6. Research instruments

Focus group discussion was used as the main data collection tool for this study. According to Neumann (2000), focus group discussions involve a group of people who can share information on a particular area of interest hence bringing to the fore their attitude and ideas towards the subject of discussion in a relaxed atmosphere. Here, discussants engage in a free discussion with other participants on the issue at hand and

this allows participants to query one another's views and bring forth rich and validated arguments. The main focus of FGD in this study was to draw upon participants' feelings, attitude, ideas, experiences, and beliefs in a manner which would not have been possible using other methods such as questionnaire surveys, observation etc. Nine FGDs (3 in each study community) were held.

Semi-structured in-depth interviews were also adopted as it is flexible in scope and depth (Neumann, 2000). Through semi-structured questions, participants (men and women) were able to speak openly and freely. Semi-structured in-depth interviews are flexible and allow participants' ideas guide the interview process. However, semi-structured interviews may be time consuming in documentation hence may not favour participants who have time constraints.

Key informants interviews were used in the data collection process as they elicited in-depth information from key informants what they (key informants) know about the subject of the study. The focus of the key informant interviews for this study was to unpack rich information from a wide range of people such as traditional leaders, women leaders and Assembly members who have firsthand information about the study area and bride price problems. Engagement with traditional and community leaders also helped built rapport, established relationship and access to respondents as community leaders are the custodians of the land.

## 2.7. Data Analysis

The qualitative data was analysed using thematic analysis process. Following the completion of discussions and interviews, I transcribed all tape-recorded interviews and translated all non-English transcripts into English for further analysis. I repeatedly read and reviewed all the transcripts and personal interview notes for overall understanding. This first step was completed with separate summaries for each transcript outlining the key points participants made. The process of data coding continued until theoretical saturation was reached. The themes represented some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set. To ensure that the themes reflected the data, the data segments related to each theme were thoroughly cross examined. Where necessary and appropriate, verbatim quotations from interview transcripts were used to illustrate relevant themes.

## 2.8. Ethical considerations

There was no identifiable risk for participating in this study; nonetheless, the researcher was careful in dealing with interviewees particularly women on issues of bride price and domestic violence within these culturally entrenched communities. As such, women were interviewed separately from men. This allowed each woman to feel free to share their experiences and opinion. The researcher explained to participants the essence of the study and how findings could be beneficial to them and other people. Participating in this study may mean exposing some issues that may be considered private. Recognizing this and the fact that such revelation may have far reaching consequences for participants, voluntary participation and participants' verbal consent was first obtained in addition to consent from the respective community leaders.



### 3. Results

Participants' perspectives on bride price and domestic violence converged on a number of themes, which are explored below.

#### 3.1. Participants' Knowledge on bride-price

Findings from this qualitative study indicated that bride-price is an embedded and deeply engrained practice in the cultural ethos of the people in the study area. Participants noted the historical meaning and usefulness of the practice and all the participants considered it necessary to preserve although some participants thought that there was need to reform and improve the practice of bride-price. Culturally, participants argued that, it is wrong to ask for the hands of someone's daughter without compensating the parents of the lady. It was revealed that bride-price traditionally symbolizes a union and brings together the families of both the man and woman-It is a symbol of acceptance of both families. A community leader opined that: *'Payment of bride price symbolizes that the man or woman is duly married. It brings together both families and respect is given to the man'*.

Some participants also looked at bride-price from legal perspectives. They argued that before any marriage is solemnized in the Christian way or in the law court and publically recognized, the bride-price had to be paid first. The practice gives men the rights over the woman and her children in a patrilineal society such as Nandom (Dodoo, 1998a; Dodoo, 1998b; Nukunya, 1999). When a man is unable to pay the bride-price of his wife and she passes on, the wife's family owns the corpse and surviving children according to the tradition and custom of Nandom. A participant said: *'If you don't pay the bride price of your wife, it is considered an illegal marriage. After paying the bride-price, the woman now belongs to you (man). It is then left unto them to decide whether to wed or not'*.

Throughout the interviews and discussions, participants rather preferred to describe bride-price as "Token" or "Appreciation". When probed why participants described bride-price as token or appreciation, argument was made to mean that human beings cannot be bought and as such, bride-price serves as compensation to the parents of the lady for the care, expenses and bringing her up to this stage (see Vroklage, 1952). Women who took part in the study used words such as *security, gift, and respect* to describe bride-price. Women want bride-price to be paid because it shows respect and stability. They attach value to it. Some women's participants also noted that their status as wives is enhanced through this process. *'You know....., when your bride-price has not been paid, you look like a common house maid to your husband's family' (Female respondent IDI)*. Another female participant buttressed this statement saying: *'When your bride-price is paid, you the woman's dignity, status, security is respected' (Female participant FGD)*. However, some women were of the opinion that the practice takes away their rights and further enslaves them as they (women) have limited choices in decision making within the family. *Bride-price renders women to 'commoditized objects' whose value is equated to material items or money (Female participant IDI)*.

#### 3.2. Historical and changes in bride-price over time

The research participants gave a long and complex background of bride-price. Participants emphasized that, analyzes of bride-price must look at the practice in its historical context and perspective. As such, items use to pay bride-price were categorized into traditional/cultural items such as cowries, cattle, fowls, and added that money is a recent item (Note, cowries could be converted into money).

Participants further stressed that all work on bride-price must take into consideration its historical usefulness as an ancient and valued cultural practice which has aided communities and promoted social cohesiveness and harmony throughout time tested history. The interviews with key cultural leaders on the issue revealed that bride-price had cemented and brought families together in pre-Colonial days and was not regarded in acquisitive terms, but as a tradition to build and strengthen communities and families. In pre-Colonial days, bride-prices were relatively uniform within societies and do not vary by familial wealth and that few cowries (100) could be given to the bride's family to symbolize a token for bringing the lady up and also to compensate the lady's family for any loss in the absence of their daughter. It came to light that, today, one needs at least 360 cowries, 2-4 cattle (each costing GHC 1,000= \$3,200) and other items to pay as bride-price depending on the community from which the man wants to marry from.

In this 21st Century, participants reported that bride-price is fast becoming a commercialized and monetized practice which in their opinion is losing its traditional essence. The study revealed that this could be particularly common among illiterates and poor families. Thus, the traditional/cultural value of bride-price is now unclear due to the commercialization of social customs in contemporary Ghanaian society including the Nandom district. The women's leader (*Magazia*) in one community is quoted as: "*Bride price has become a commercial business where parents think it is the surest way out of their poverty. It is like the girl's parents are selling off their daughter in order to become richer or to escape poverty* (women's leader, KII). Another young married man said: '*Hmmmm....., the practice is a lucrative business in many of our communities and this has lot of consequences on young women and women*'. The recent increased in prices of cowries and cattle were largely cited as a major problem that adds a different dimension to men's inability to meet the economic demand of bride-price.

Although bride-price is paid in the name of the bride and in pre-Colonial period, brides were deeply involved in the negotiations process, current trends indicate that brides can only give agreement on acceptance of the husband. She has no control or involvement in negotiating and accepting bride-price. A woman narrated her tale: "*When my husband came to pay my bride price, my (lady) family mentioned a huge sum of money (GHC2000=\$6,400) and other items which to the best of my opinion my husband cannot afford. My husband's family had to bargain until a more affordable amount (GHC1, 200=\$ 3,840)*". In circumstances of familiar abuse, it is the woman's lot to endure the situation as her natal family may not be able to repay the bride-price to the man.

### 3.3. Positive impacts of bride-price

Women and men were divided in opinion about the usefulness of bride-price during marriage rites in the current social and economic context.



According to participants, bride-price represents a symbol of appreciation to the wife's family. It was seen by participants as a recognition and partial compensation in that the woman is leaving her biological family and will no longer be able to contribute directly to that household. Through the practice, daughters' considerable and often painful loss is partially recognized. For instance: "*It is a token of what you have done for your daughter, her education, training, general upbringing etcetera. She is now leaving your home; here is some compensation*" (Male Interviewee FGD).

Participants thought that the practice legitimizes marriages and promotes the official wife and seals her status as wife, and as a worthy woman. She may feel that: '*She is worth something and is honoured and respected. When your bride price is not paid, your stay at your husband's house is considered illegal and you're sometimes treated like a common house maid*' (Female Interviewee IDI). Another woman argued that bride-price is good: '*you know...you sit in your marriage peaceful, it gives you value especially when you produce children, it is good. However, it can sometime enslave you especially when your bride-price was expensive and you're unable to bear children, it can be like hell*' (Female respondent, IDI). Although bride-price was said to give the woman importance and value which helps her avoid abuse, some women opined that bride-price further subordinate them with little or no voice in familiar decision making and render them to bought property or cattle.

It gives the parents of the girl some wealth in that even a poor family can use the bride-price to buy livestock and land. The cows can also be sold in situation of economic hardship. Bride-price can be used by the brother of the girl to also marry. A community leader recounted this: '*I personally did not pay for the bride-price of my wife. Traditionally, bride-price has cultural value and you cannot just spend it. When you have sisters, their bride price is used to settle the bride price of their brothers*' (Community leader, KII). To acquire wealth from bride-price, however, some participants noted that girls are forced to marry at a very young age, and many are forced to leave school for marriage, a practice which was noted as alarming.

Bride-price was also reported by participants to join families to assist each other and work together in life as partners. A male respondent pointed out that: '*The two families become one family and one family's problems become yours, too-when one family is mourning, you're also mourning and when they are celebrating, you, too*' (Male participant, FGD). It also cements the relationship between communities and provides stability within the families and hence in the wider village.

### 3.4. Negative impacts of bride-price

In this section, the findings are summarised on key points which were found in majority of the discussions and interviews with participants.

According to the 1992 Constitution of [Ghana], both men and women should be equal in marriage. However, the practice of bride-price makes the marriage unequal because the woman is considered paid for by the man. Thus, the continued existence of bride-price and in particular, its recent commercialization promotes and cements gender inequality between men and women in familiar relations. '*The practice itself is not bad but how women are treated is very worrying-Every time your husband gives orders, you've to obey as most of them equates the woman to a property which was bought*' (Female, FGD). Thus, within marriages, the

man and his family see his wife as a piece of property they have bought from the market. This enslaves married women even in their own comfort zone-the home. Bride-price in recent era typifies bargaining for commodities at the market which can be synonymous to the 'commoditization' of human relationships. *'After paying your bride-price, he takes to flirting with other women outside and when you (wife) complain, he will beat you 'well well'. He will tell you "He is beating his cows" (Woman, FGD).*

A heated argument came up during the FGDs regarding relevance of bride-price payment in modern times among young participants and some suggested its abolition. The reasons were that presently, it is expensive, unaffordable and unacceptable. However, the consensus among the older participants was that it should be retained. The man may have to borrow substantially and go into excessive debt and more impoverishment when he is young and unemployed just to pay bride-price. In the view of male participants, the practice may cause a male inferiority complex if he is unable to pay his wife's bride-price. Some men may also decide not to marry because of lack of economic ability to pay bride-price. According to male participants, most young men have to travel to southern Ghana to engage in labour intensive activities or 'galamsey' just to get money for bride-price. *'I had to spend two years farming at Techiman to enable me pay the bride-price of my wife. I had to do this because I love her and don't want to lose her' (Male, FGD).* It was observed that some men are eventually left with nothing after successfully paying for their wives' bride-price. Some participants would rather call this practice 'financial maltreatment and robbery'. *'I suffer a lot (financial hardship) because, I paid huge amount of money to her parents. I have nothing left with me and I still need to provide for the up-keep of my family and even taking care of my wife. ....it is too exploitative' (Man, FGD).*

Another woman recounted this: *'My daughter experienced abuse because of bride-price. She left her violent husband when the abuse was unbearable. Her brother had to sell off iron sheets acquired from Techiman to repay the bride-price but the money was not enough. We had to borrow some from a credit union. She later remarried and the second husband contributed two cows to refund the first husband. She is still suffering even with the second husband but can't go back home because she is paid for' (Woman, FGD).*

### 3.5. Bride-price and its connection with domestic violence

As indicated earlier, experiences of violence were not a criterion for selecting participants. Rather experience and knowledge of bride-price was the criterion used. Majority of participants in the study believed that there is a connection between bride-price and domestic violence on the basis of gender inequality. The connection, however, was acknowledged not to be a straight forward one. The majority of the interviews with men did indeed believe that there was a connection, however, overall, more women believed this proportionally than men. Domestic violence was also seen by participants as a very broad and deep rooted social ill, and bride-price is a major contributing factor. However, in a small number of cases, participants expressed different views within the in-depth interviews, where the interviewees said domestic violence both was and was not connected with bride-price. Overall, majority of the women interviewed one-on-one revealed that they had experienced some forms of domestic violence such as being made to sleep without food, being verbally assaulted in front of children, sexually exploited, among others.

Many different instances of domestic violence resulting from bride-price payment were cited by research participants during the study. Domestic violence occurs because the man often feels that he has bought the wife and as such, owns the woman and she is therefore expected to be submissive. Thus, if the wife does not do the husband's wishes, he may feel entitled to chastise her, a practice which is common in the study area. *'I experienced all forms of domestic abuse, verbally, sexually and financially. He doesn't give me money. He has forced me into sex on many occasions when I am even sick, slapped me and shown me no form of respect. You can even see this..... (pointing to a scar on her right cheek). This happened because after all, he has paid for me with 3 cows as bride-price' (Woman, IDI).* Although in casual relationships men usually have some level of authority, it is not as exerting as when they have paid bride-price. This finding lends support to the findings of other studies. For instance, Chireshe and Chireshe, 2010; Davies, 1999; and Bawah et al., 1999 who all found that bride price payment has a consequent effect on domestic violence. Elderly male participants expressed that they felt compelled to exercise their authority in the home with the justification that they paid bride-price, a view common among young men, too. Where men sensed any threat to their masculine authority and status quo, they were said to resort to violence. The practice of bride-price therefore cements and enhances gender power imbalances and women's inequality in society.

#### 4. Discussion and conclusion

The study sought to examine the association and impact of bride-price on domestic violence in north western region of Ghana focusing on the Nandom district. Throughout this study, the researcher remained conscious and aware of the historical relevance of bride-price in Nandom. Findings from this qualitative enquiry revealed that the practice is deeply entrenched in time tested history and was widely accepted by both men and women's participants. Although bride-price was reported to have many beneficial consequences hence the need to preserve it, there was also acknowledgement of its negative consequences on men, women and children in the Nandom district. This finding lends credence to other studies (Kaye et al., 2005; Wakabi, 2002; Fuseini, 2013). However, it was strange to find that bride-price amount does not vary according to the lady's level of education as reported in other studies elsewhere. For example Ashraf et al. (2014).

A major finding of the study was that participants thought there is a strong connection between bride-price payment and domestic violence and this was a recurring theme from both male and female participants. However, this connection was said to be complex and not straight forward. While findings from this enquiry do not suggest that payment of bride-price is the root of gender inequality and domestic violence, they indicate its importance as a key contextual factor for gender inequality and domestic violence in the study area. Analysis of this study on bride-price as a contextual factor for domestic violence supports Levinson (1989) study on male dominance, use of violence in conflict resolution, and gender economic inequalities in familiar relationship.

Discussions with participants established that the practice of bride-price is complex and problematic hence could not be seen as straightforward. It was perceived by majority of participants as a valued

traditional cultural practice of enormous importance. Findings from this paper call for the need to preserve Ghanaian cultural practices such as bride-price in present day. However, modernization, globalization and lust for material items including money has brought both negative and positive changes on some traditional practices. For instance, bride-price. As such, the historical relevance of bride-price has been less clear in the present day generation hence a vacuum is created to rigorously evaluate the practice in line with the recent commercialization the 21st Century; a situation which was largely suggested by all participants to be necessary. Discussants noted that all cultural practices everywhere in the world are often double-edged—they have both beneficial and harmful consequences. What makes bride-price quite worrying and a key factor linked to domestic violence emanates from its recent commercialization. Combating domestic violence, therefore, requires a multi-faceted struggle, of which reform of bride-price could be eminent.

Findings from this study indicate that bride-price will take long to change from the current trends of commercialization because majority of people see it acquisitive and part of their lives since they earn from the practice. Participants in the study overwhelmingly recommended that the practice of bride-price be changed. Community awareness raising and sensitization campaigns should be carried out to education people on the importance of bride-price and its negative impacts on women's wellbeing and community development at large.

In conclusion, the study has demonstrated a strong link between bride-price payment and domestic violence in the study area. The paper recommends that in future, further research on the cultural norms associated with bride-price payment, women's empowerment and domestic violence could be explored using different methodological approaches and using nationally representative samples across all 10 administrative regions of Ghana.

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