

# Positive and Negative Effects of Bride-Price on the Institution of Marriage among the Mambwe People of Zambia's Mbala District

Francis Musonda, Farrelli Hambulo, Kalisto Kalimaposo, Inonge Milupi, Kaiko Mubita, Francis Simui

Department of Education Administration & Policy Studies,

The University of Zambia

DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2024.803101>

Received: 26 February 2024; Accepted: 07 March 2024; Published: 09 April 2024

## ABSTRACT

The traditional, cultural or civic practice of 'marriage' is found in all human societies. Its origin can be traced back to the very beginning of human existence on earth. The importance accorded to this institution is confirmed by the common understanding that every society needs marriage and that any community that lacks marriage is bound to have its families fail (Chewe, 2013). Moreover, on the importance of this institution, Chilufya (2008), opines that the civic practice of marriage is the foundation and substance of every family and social unit in every society. Usually, marriage is embedded in various issues but of particular importance to this article is its embeddedness in cultural issues, specifically the custom of bride-price or bride payment. Drawing qualitative data from Musonda's (2021) study entitled "the nature and scope of bride-price among the Mambwe people of Mbala District", the article specifically focuses on both the positive and negative effects of bride payment on the institution of marriage specifically among the Mambwe people. Most scholarly studies and discourse in academia mainly engage with the aspects of how bride payment is done and its cultural significance in various ethnic groups globally. Utilizing research findings from Musonda's (2021) study, this article departs from the aforementioned and brings to the fore a unique blend of both the positive and negative effects of bride payment to the institution of marriage particularly among the Mambwe people. Of particular heightened significance in this article, is the aspect of the negative effects of bride payment on the institution of marriage among the Mambwe because it provides a very unique or rare exposition of the dark side or unpleasant face of this common customary practice to both men and women among the Mambwe people. The article specifically perceives 'bride payment' from a civic perspective.

**Keywords:** Bride-price, civic, effect, marriage, negative, positive

## INTRODUCTION

Marriage is a civic practice that is found in all human societies, and it is usually embedded in gender and cultural issues. Marriage is an institution whose origin can be traced as far back as the beginning of human existence on planet earth, and it exists in all human societies. Falana (2019:133), defines marriage as "a legally recognized relationship, established by a civil or religious ceremony, between two people who intend to live together as sexual and domestic partners". It is a common understanding that every society needs marriages and that any community that lacks marriage is bound to have its families fail (Chewe, 2013). Moreover, the civic practice of marriage is the foundation and substance of every family and social unit in every society (Chilufya, 2008). In most African countries, Zambia included, marriage has been characterized with a number of cultural practices and traditions that are done from courtship to the time of

wedding and even continue throughout marriage life. One such practice is bride-price.

Bride-price also known as bride-wealth or *Lobola* is one of the civic and oldest traditional practices that has had an influence and is still influencing the institution of marriage. Bride-price is a custom that has been in existence for a long time as far back as 3000 BCE. The custom of bride-price was practiced by the ancient civilizations of the Egyptians, the Mesopotamians, Hebrews, Aztecs and Incas (Anderson, 2007:132). Anderson (2007:134), further opines that historically, it is on record that the Germanic tribes dated from 2000 BCE who ruled Western Europe from the 600 to 1000 CE used bride-price as a way of legalizing marriages. Without bride-price, it is purported that marriages were not recognized from both the men's and women's families (Hughes, 1985).

The Ethnographic Atlas indicates that, on the African continent about 83 per cent of the African societies have been practicing bride-price and the Zambian society is not an exception to this aspect. However, it is important to note that the practice of bride-price is not universal and not all societies practice the payment of bride-price. Other societies like Indians follow a diametric opposite of bride-price in form of dowry (Matembe, 2004). Moreover, in the United States of America (USA) there is neither practice of bride-price nor dowry. Americans simply marry and establish families (Sara and Nathan, 2017). Bride-price in Zambian tradition is typically a payment that the bridegroom's family pays to the bride's family in order to validate the marriage. In line with this, Chondoka (1998), argues that one of the steps for a marriage to be valid is if the man has paid some form of dowry (*lobola*) to the family of the woman.

Bride-price among other cultural practices in Zambian traditional societies has been civically considered to be one of the most important factors that solidifies the marriage bond, and it is considered to be a progressive cultural practice. Nevertheless, in modern Zambia, some traditions such as women cleansing, genital mutilation and child marriages have been considered to be barbaric and are associated with among the factors, the promotion of gender-based violence or domestic violence, inferiority complexes, divorces, and other vices that are tantamount to marital instability (Nava, 2015). Women have been affected the most by such acts. This is the reason of late, across Zambian societies, with the coming of gender activists and other human rights activists, people have witnessed the removal or calls for an end to some of the cultural practices that have been considered to be detrimental and retrogressive to the institution of marriage (Anti Gender Based Violence Act, Sec. 2 & 3). The US State Department (2016), observed in the human rights country report that the harmful practices against widows such as sexual cleansing is prohibited, and the practice of sexual cleansing has significantly declined in Zambia. However, the tradition of bride-price has continued to gain momentum as a civic practice in contemporary Zambia.

The practice of bride-price exists among the Mambwe people of Mbala District, just as it is in other ethnic groups in other parts of Zambia. Musonda (2021), conducted a study in which he sought to investigate the nature and scope of bride-price among the Mambwe people of Mbala District from a civic perspective. This was done by investigating the significance, changing trends and implications of bride-price on the institution of marriage among the Mambwe people of Zambia's Mbala District in the Northern Province. This article particularly focuses on the positive and negative effects of bride-price on the institution of marriage among the Mambwe people of Zambia's Mbala District.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

A lot of scholars and writers have propounded and conceptualized the practice of bride-price as a custom that is followed in most societies. Oumo (2004), considers bride-price to be a contract where material items (often cattle or other animals) or money are paid by the groom to the bride's family in exchange for the bride, her labour and her capacity to produce children. Anyebe (1985) cited in Sembe *et al.* (2013), analyses the concept of bride-price and states that it makes marriage legal and establishes the legitimacy of children.

It is compensation for loss to the woman's family of one of its members, a potential child bearer. Bride-price is described in some Asian societies as compensation for the expense, care and trouble spent on the bride's upbringing (Goody and Stanley, 1973).

The history of bride-price is a long one and can be traced back to the Egyptian civilization of around 3000 BCE. Other societies such as the Hebrews, Aztecs and the Incas also are attached to the long history of bride-price. From around 2000 BCE, the Germanic society ruled Western Europe from 600 to 1000 BCE and used bride-price as a way of validating or legalizing marriage (Quale, 1988). Historically, Islamic law required a form of bride-price for the marriage to be validated (Hague and Thiara, 2009). Bride payment transactions were also associated with the Maghreb of the early Middle Ages, Bedouin tribes of the Middle East, and countries previously under the Ottoman Empire such as Iraq, Syria, Turkey, Iran, Albania, and Afghanistan (Kaye et al., 2005).

Despite contemporary Zambian societies being characterized by a number of inter-marriages or cross-cultural marriages, the tradition of bride-price has continued to take its course. The practice of bride-price has taken a new twist in the sense that the communal nature of the payment of bride-price existed before our society transformed into a capitalist one (Women and Law in Southern Africa Research Trust, 2002). When the communities became capitalist, an individualistic outlook slowly replaced the communal aspect. Eventually, this meant that the family was no longer obliged in any way to pay the bride-price on behalf of the marrying man. Meaning that the one marrying had to incur the payment of bride-price thereby making bride-price a burden on the part of the groom (Alice, 2014).

Chilufya (2008) conducted a study on 'consent and bride-price' as two elements that help in determining the validity of a customary marriage and custodian of children among the Bemba people of Northern Zambia. Moreover, he establishes that bride-price is helpful in uniting the bride's and groom's families including their extended families. Furthermore, he points out that without any payment to the bride's family, a customary marriage is not valid or considered legitimate. Mtonga's (2007), study brings out some negative aspects of bride-price. He asserts that traditional practices like bride-price lead to men mistreating their wives because they feel that they own them. He attaches maltreatment of brides to the traditional practice of bride-price and specifically stresses the issue of wife battering as a result of it. This is because the traditional practice of bride-price compels men to always expect women to be submissive to them in marriage life and their failure to do so leads to their maltreatment in the manner mentioned above.

In line with the aforementioned, Martignoni (2002), states that the fact that many women are married under customary law in Zambia, point to the other fact that marriages are not valid unless bride-price is paid to the wife's family. In his study Martignoni further acknowledges a tremendous increase in the payment of bride-price in recent years in Zambia because the custom has also been adopted even in those tribal groups where it was not traditionally a custom. This implies that there is a spillover effect of this practice to tribal groupings where it was not practiced in many contemporary Zambian societies. Among the key findings of the Martignoni's (2002) study is an emphasis that one of the common implications or outcomes of bride-price is that it leads to women being treated as commodities and further exposes them to psychological and physical violence by both the husband and in-laws.

In a study focused on how cultural practices and beliefs influence the spread of HIV and AIDS, Kamuwanga (2000), locates bride-price as a value for a female among Zambian tribal groupings such as the Bemba, Lozi, Luvale, and Tonga. That in these tribal groupings, the emphasis is much more on the payment of bride-price and not on having children at the time of the actual marriage. Moreover, Kamuwanga's (2000) study further reveals that in other Zambian tribal groupings such as the Kaonde, Luvale and Ngoni, bride-price is also viewed as a man's legal right over a woman. In most Zambian social settings, every parent looks forward to earning something from their daughter when she grows up and marries in the form of bride-price. It is for this reason that in instances where bride-price is not paid by the groom or man, the marriage is not

recognized by parents.

Bride-price also brings respect and liberates the woman as she feels accepted by the groom's side. Every woman, whatever the age ought to be paid for when she gets married, though the price varies according to age and if one has had sexual intercourse before. Bride-price tends to be high for a virgin. Kamuwanga (2000), further argues that all cultural practices including sexual cleansing can only be performed if bride-price was paid. Moreover, Kamuwanga's (2000), study further reveals that bride-price gives the male figure an upper hand over a woman's life to an extent that she has very little control over her sexuality and reproductive rights. Furthermore, the study reveals that bride-price tends to place a woman in a position of property not a partner to her husband. A woman has limited power to decide when to have sex or whether to have safe or unsafe sex.

Related to the studies above Ashraff (2015), conducted a comparative study on bride-price and female education in Zambia and Indonesia. Study findings revealed that bride-price potentially leads to ill-treatment of women in the two countries. It was further revealed by the study that men use the commodification of bride-price as justification for the abuse of women, which has an effect of lowering the status of women within marriage. An additional revelation by this study was that where bride price was practiced, increased investments in education by parents on their girl child led to an increase in the amount of bride-price received by parents at the time of marriage.

A study by Mulenga *et al.* (2007), on human rights violations in Zambia Part II on women's rights shows bride-price as a pervasive and enduring feature which has been universalized by society and local courts. The study also reveals that customary marriages are not valid unless bride-price payment is made to the wife's family. The study also further revealed that where bride price was paid, women were treated as purchased commodities. This frequently exposes women to an increased risk of physical and psychological violence at the hands of their husbands and their families. This practice further transfers a woman's productive labour or protective capacity to her husband and his family. It is due to this that bride-price has to be returned to the husband's family in the event of a divorce. This issue of refunding the bride-price in an event of a divorce also causes difficulties to the woman as she is often forced to stay in marriage just because her family is unable to return the bride-price or fear of being castigated by her own family. In other instances, the payment of bride-price ties the woman to her husband's family even after the husband's death. The fact that the man or his family has parted with resources in order to acquire a wife, a woman has no power even beyond her husband's death (Mulenga *et al.*, 2007).

Moono (2019) also conducted a study on bride-price in the Zambian setting. The study focused on bride-price and gender-based violence. The study investigated the influence of bride-price on gender-based violence among married women in Lusaka's Kamanga compound. Moono's (2019), study specifically sought to: examine how the price of bride-price is determined when negotiating for marriage; to establish how married women and men perceive bride-price in relation to gender-based violence; and determine the types of gender-based violence associated with the payment of bride-price in marriage. On the determinants of the pricing of bride-price payment, the study revealed a number of aspects including the ethnic background of both the bride and the groom, the bride's level of education, the need to meet costs associated to the girl's upbringing, the groom's status, and the virginity of the bride among others. The findings also showed the pricing of bride-price drifting to involve fundraising for kitchen parties for the bride as well as raising money to pay marriage counsellors (Moono, 2019). In terms of how married women and men perceived bride-price in relation to gender-based violence, the study revealed that paying bride-price translated into buying a wife and as such, she becomes her husband's property. Bride-price gives the man powers to treat his wife as he wishes including subjecting her to sexual and other forms of abuse. The paying of bride-price takes away a wife's rights to make decisions on matters affecting her own life including restricting her movements, what to wear and depriving her a claim over her children among

others. In terms of the common types of gender-based violence that married women are subjected to as a result of bride-price, it was revealed by the study that they experience emotional, economic, sexual as well as physical violence (Moono, 2019).

Kapambwe (2004), conducted a study to investigate the transition of the custom of bride-price from a traditional custom to a modern custom. The study specifically focused on the transition of this matter in terms of payment systems particularly from payment through animals and other goods to payments in monetary form. This tendency is common in most urban and peri-urban areas in Zambia. It is evident from this study that presently Bemba marriage payments are in the form of cash but historically they comprised valuables and necessities (Kapambwe, 2004). However, in some tribes and more especially in rural and remote areas of Zambia, the groom's family are charged to pay in terms of cattle or goats then the amount is converted to money (Women and Law in Southern Africa Research Trust, 2002). The nature and amount of resources exchanged has also changed in modern Zambia. This has come with an increase in bride-pricing to exorbitant levels. The study also reveals that in modern Zambia, some people have completely abolished bride payments due to changes in marriage and familial arrangements. This is in line with May (1984:48), who from his Zimbabwean study on bride-price states that "such a system is, of course, liable to abuse in an increasingly commercial society. Fathers demand unduly high amounts for educated daughters as compensation for the money they have invested in educating their girls". An educated girl attracts more money for two reasons; first, it is compensation for the money invested in her education and secondly, it is believed that she would be of more value to the husband than an uneducated one (Mangena and Ndlovu, 2013).

Still on bride payments, Forkuor *et al.*, (2018), notes that they have led to an increase in domestic violence against women that include, physical, sexual and psychological violence occurring in the family, including battering and sexual abuse of female children in the household. Moreover, Dery (2015), argues that bride-price is widely considered to be both a cause and a consequence of son preference. From her studies on bride-price conducted in Nigeria Falana (2019:133), opines that "in our modern society, bride-price payment has become a very serious gender issue with implications on gender relations in different socio-cultural contexts and as such, it has brought about syndromes and dominance as the culprit to gender equality and equity in marriages."

According to the findings of Mumbaiwa's (2019), study on the dynamics of bride-price in Zimbabwe and the diaspora, bride-price, also known as *Roora (bride-pride)* in Shona or *Lobola* in Ndebele, has undergone a radical transformation in Zimbabwe. He laments the fact that a number of studies have been done in Zimbabwe on *lobola*, but they have mainly focused on how this practice is conducted and the cultural significance attached to it. He gives examples of studies such as Mujungu (2013), Mizinga (2000), Kambarami (2006), and Chireshe and Chireshe (2010). He points out that all these studies focus on how the practice is conducted, its cultural significance and its effects in general without exploring its effects in its contemporary commercialized form. Mumbaiwa's (2019) study stresses the aspect that bride-price has assumed some new characteristics over recent years that need to be analyzed to appreciate how the practice affects women today.

The approved bride-price is commonly calculated to mirror the distinguished worth of the girl or young woman. In line with the aforementioned, Alupo (2004) points out what bride-price is when he states that the amount comprises payment in cash or property by husband and his family to the bride's family. He goes further to state that the payment of bride-price epitomizes friendship but in actual fact it is the transfer of productive and reproductive service to the man's family. In the South African setting, bride-price is a common practice in South African marriages (Meekers, 1992). In his attempt to define what bride-price is, Meekers (1992) states that bride-price epitomizes the transfer of the right of the girl's sexual and economic services to the husband". Matembe (2004), theorized bride-price in line with the perspective earlier provided

by Meekers (1992).

## RESEARCH DESIGN

The study adopted a qualitative approach to research. This is because the study wanted to get the actual views and perceptions of the Mambwe people of Zambia's Mbala District on the cultural practice of bride-price in order to fully understand it and also to develop valid theories on it. This is in line with what Hamersley and Atkinson (1983:20) cited in Hambulo (2017:13) stress when they argue that "mostly the overall goal of qualitative research is extensive narrative understanding or development of theories". The other justification for the use of qualitative research in the study is that it is particularly concerned with the way in which people understand and give meaning to their social world. Moreover, in qualitative research the researcher interacts or collaborates with respondents fully, a situation which helps the researcher to collect information in a natural environment (Creswell, 1994).

In terms of design, the study utilized a descriptive case study design. A descriptive case study is one that is focused and detailed, in which propositions and questions about a phenomenon are carefully scrutinized and articulated at the outset. The main goal of the descriptive case study is to assess a sample in detail and in depth, based on an articulation of a descriptive theory (Kothari, 2004). Hence, a descriptive case study design was employed because there was need for a detailed and comprehensive understanding of the study on the implications of bride-price among the Mambwe people of Zambia's Mbala District.

The target population of the study included: marriage counsellors, village headmen and married men and women. Research participants were purposively sampled in the study. According to Bell (2005:17), cited in Hambulo (2016:44), sampling involves the selection of items or individuals from a large universe or population. In the case of this study the individuals/research participants were selected on the basis of accessibility and necessity or relevance with regards to provision of the information which was sought by the study. Research participants were selected or sampled through both probability and non-probability sampling procedures.

The research instruments utilized in the study were interviews (semi-structured interviews) and Focus Group Discussions (FDGs). Triangulation of these qualitative data collections methods/instruments was meant to enhance the collection of detailed data to aid proper understanding and formulation of theories related to the overall purpose of the study.

The data generated from the study was analyzed thematically with major themes drawn from interviews and FDGs. Proper descriptions of the themes was done.

## PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

The major intention of Musonda's study (2021), was to investigate the nature and scope of bride-price among the Mambwe people of Zambia's Mbala District from a civic perspective. As such, inevitably, the study focused on the aspect of describing the effects of bride-price on the institution of marriage among the Mambwe people of Zambia's Mbala District. It was evident from the study findings that among the Mambwe people, bride payment was not just a common cultural practice but also has both positive and negative effects on the institution of marriage. The following are the actual study findings related to the above:

### 1. Positive effects of Bride-Price on Marriages among the Mambwe People

1. Promotion of Respect and Honour in Marriage
2. Bride-Price as a Sign of Love Between the Bride and Groom

### 3. Bride-Price as a form of Unification and Solidification of Marriages and Families

## 2. Negative effects of Bride-Price among the Mambwe People

1. Bride-Price as a Basis of Male Dominance and Exploitation of Women in Marriage
2. Bride-Price as a Basis for 'Sexual Abused' of Women in marriage
3. Bride-Price as an 'Economic Burden' on Men
4. Bride-Price as a Basis for 'Loss of Respect for Women' Among Men
5. Bride-Price and the Limitation of Women's Decisions in Marriage

## DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

### The effects of Bride-Price on Marriage among the Mambwe People

It was revealed by study findings that among the Mambwe people, generally, bride-price had both positive and negative effects on the institution of marriage. Below is a detailed categorical discussion of the aforementioned.

#### Positive Effects of Bride-Price on Marriage Among the Mambwe People

##### a. Promotion of respect and honour in marriage

After analysis of research findings, it was revealed that among the Mambwe people, bride-price promotes respect and honor specifically for women in marriage. This is because from both the semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions which were conducted with research participants, it was revealed that the payment of bride-price was an expression of respect and honor by the man and his family to the woman and her family. Research participants were of the view that among the Mambwe people, a man can only pay bride-price for a woman he truly respects and acknowledges as a valuable person. Research participants further stated that a person is honored when they do something exceptionally well and when they are perceived as the best at a particular thing. Therefore, among the Mambwe when a man pays bride-price for a woman, it is an act of honor directed particularly at the bride's parents for the care and love they showed in the upbringing of the woman. This research finding is in agreement with Gwiza's (2015), research findings which also revealed that, for the bride's family, bride-price symbolizes respect, reward and honour.

Moreover, it was further revealed by study findings that, the payment of bride-price by the man (groom) was not only an act of honor to the bride's parents but also a clear indication of respect and honor for the woman (bride) herself particularly for her good behavior and also for being the best woman worthy of consideration for a life partner (wife). It was further revealed through study findings that, men were also highly respected by a woman's family for respecting them and their daughter through the payment of bride-price.

##### b. Bride-price as a sign of love between the bride and groom

It was also revealed through study findings that another major effect of the payment of bride-price was 'Love'. This aspect was evident in both the semi-structured interviews and FGDs conducted with research participants. A majority of research participants stressed that even though love is relative in conceptualizing, there are parameters in which love can be termed. In a relationship between a man and a woman, love is shown through various ways and one of them is through marriage. During marriage rites, one of the ways in which a man is perceived to love a woman is by paying bride-price for her. It was revealed mostly from

male research participants that the act of loving one another is a primary responsibility of both men and women. Moreover, it was also evident from research findings that in marriage ‘responsibility’ is seen through obligations and that as a way of showing it a man is obliged to pay bride-price to the woman’s family. This research finding conforms to Lowes and Nunn’s (2017), research finding that bride-price is an official custom that expresses the love a husband has for his wife. In line with the above, the study further established that, women feel loved and valued when they are paid for. It is therefore, evident from this study finding that, one of the rationales for paying bride-price is the ‘expression of love’ that men have towards women.

### **c. Bride-price as a form of unification and solidification of marriages and families**

From analysis of research findings, it was revealed that the unification and solidification of marriages and families was yet another positive effect which the payment of bride-price has among the Mambwe people. The participants stressed the fact that marriage involves two people (a man and a woman), who come from two different families which were not related before their marriage. But the coming together of the two (a man and a woman) unites the two different and separate families into one large family and this is the unification aspect referred to in this situation. Therefore, put in the actual words of one of the research participants, “the payment of bride-price by the man alongside other factors, acts as a rope that is used to tie the two families together in a cultural manner”. A similar aspect is evident from Fanala’s (2019), study where it was also discovered that bride-price is a unifier of marriages and families. This is because it brings families together hence promoting the aspect of acceptance on the part of the uniting families. This finding is further endorsed by Fuseini (2013), and Mujugulu (2013), who’s study findings echo similar issues vis-à-vis the effects of the payment of bride-price. Both scholars argue that from time in memorial the tradition of bride-price has had a number of beneficial consequences as it enhances; formal recognition of marriages, maintains social control, construction of society identity, in some instances protects wives against possible abuse, stabilizes the partnership, promotes social cohesion and joins the two families together.

### **Negative Effects of Bride-Price on Marriage Among the Mambwe People**

As indicated earlier, bride-price has both positive and negative effects on the institution of marriage. Having looked at some positive effects of it on marriage above, attention is now shifted to the provision of a detailed and categorical articulation of the negative effect of bride-price on marriage among the Mambwe people in the subsequent sections of the article.

#### **a. Bride-price as a basis of male dominance and exploitation of women in marriage**

It was evident from a majority of women in the conducted semi-structured interviews and FGDs that men tend to dominate in marriages because of their claim that they are the ones who pay for marrying the women. In line with this study findings revealed that, in recent times, among the Mambwe, the payment of bride-price has become a very serious gender issue with negative effects on gender relations in different socio-cultural contexts. As such, it has brought about male dominance which has been acting as a major hindrance to gender equality and equity in marriages, usually manifesting itself as female exploitation, and reduced rights and freedoms of women in marriages. This unfortunate study revelation is also mirrored by the findings of another study conducted by Mbaya and Wanger (2013), when they argue that paying bride-price partly contributes to the exacerbation of domestic violence as men are said to use the high payment as a justification to oppress, exploit and dominate women.

Keeping the aforementioned in view, it was further evident from the study findings that some men tend to dominate in marriages because they perceive the payment of bride-price as an act of buying the woman. This further implies that some men see their wives as properties which they have bought. In line with this,



one female research participant interviewed stated that her own husband considered her as the most expensive property in their matrimonial home. In the same lines, one young married man interviewed stated their daughters, it also follows that they actually sale their daughters to the men who seek their hand in marriage. It was further revealed by research findings that because of the current general deterioration in social norms and morals, most men especially young ones believe that the payment of bride-price actually reduces the woman to an object of sale and hence it commoditizes her. This particular research finding is similar to what is revealed by Chireshe and Chireshe's (2010), study which showed that the payment of bride-price was making some husbands perceive their wives as property to be used as they pleased, especially where bride-price was highly charged.

### **b. Bride-price as a basis for 'sexual abuse' of women in marriage**

Research findings further indicated that women are sexually abused in marriages. Traditionally, when a man pays bride-price, the implication is that he is legally recognized as a husband. According to traditional Mambwe marriage teachings, a woman has no right to deny her husband sexual intercourse unless when she is sick or on her menstruation period. A majority of female research participants in the study lamented how most men tended to abuse women sexually on the pretext that they had paid bride-price. A similar finding comes from a study by Meekers (1992), who posits that bride-price is common in South African marriages and it symbolizes the transfer of the right of the girl's sexual and economic services to the husband. This is also what this current study found, when a man marries in a right way where even bride-price is paid he becomes in charge of sexual activities over a woman. A woman has to ensure that she satisfies her husband sexually and as a result women are sexually abused. Another Ugandan study by Alupo (2004), notes similar findings when it cites several instances where bride-price is a key factor leading to spousal abuse in marital relationships and posing great threats to the stability of marriages. Still in Uganda a study by Bishai and Grossbard (2006), also reveals similar findings because the two scholars argue that bride-price inclines men to extra-marital sexual relations and decreases such behaviours for women. This is because the payment of bride-price is viewed as a payment for the woman's sexual faithfulness to the man. The interpretation of this situation is that, a man who buys a shirt is the only person entitled to wear that shirt but the fact that a man has bought a particular shirt does not take from him the freedom to wear other shirts. Regarding this matter similar research findings are noted from Ngutor, *et al.*, (2015), who emphasise that the practice of bride-price appears to buy a wife as a product leaving women with limited control over their sexuality.

### **c. Bride-price as an 'economic burden' on men**

The research findings also revealed that in some instances, bride-price is actually an economic burden on men. This is because among the Mambwe people, the payment of bride-price is a mandatory traditional custom for any man that intends to marry a woman. As such, it was further revealed from the study findings that a man is obliged to pay it whether he likes it or not. The man is obliged to find the means of paying bride-price whether poor or rich, in order to be deemed capable of managing a household of his own as failure to achieve this renders one incapable of managing a household of his own. In the same lines, study findings on the custom of bride payment is also associated with so much suffering on the part of men because some men suffer so much for them to fulfil this traditional custom. Moreover, it was also evident from study findings that some Mambwe men get highly indebted in order to pay for a bride. This aspect has negative effects on the stability of families in the initial stages of married-life as families are mostly poverty stricken leading to serious misunderstandings which if not quickly resolved can lead to divorce. A majority of men in the study were of the view that one of the reasons for the common abuse of women by men in marriage is because of the hardships they endure in raising funds to pay as bride payment. In the same lines Silberschmidt's (2016), Kenyan study noted that girls are definitely regarded as sources of wealth. It is for the same reason that the Mambwe people refer to the brides as "maidens who bring in cattle". This insatiable desire by most families to reap as much money or wealth as possible through bride-price is the basis for the

economic burden faced by men whenever they feel the need to marry and start-up their own households.

#### **d. Bride-price as a basis for 'loss of respect' among men**

Loss of respect was one of the negative effects of the payment of bride-price. This is because study findings revealed loss of respect in various aspects of family life among the Mambwe people. Firstly, loss of respect happens when men fail to pay the bride payments charged by the women's families. Secondly, the custom of bride payment is taken so seriously that some parents take their sons' in-law to court when they fail to pay bride-price so that the court can compel them to do so. The act of taking a son in-law to court is disrespectful, leads to gender-based violence in homes, promotes sexual abuse and promotes male dominance in marriages. In the same lines, study findings further revealed that, sons' in-law also tend to disrespect parents in-law for taking them to court. Moreover, it was also evident from study findings that among the Mambwe people, a man who is taken to court by parents for failure to pay bride-price and takes this outcome personal and is angered by it is looked down upon by the community. Such men are perceived as not being man enough and do not deserve to marry anybody's daughter. They are further perceived as social misfits or a menace to society. In tandem with the aforementioned, Nambozo (2014), opines that a man will never be respected if he fails to pay bride-price. This aspect is also depicted in Grey's (2009) 'masculinity concept' were any man who for some reason is incapable of achieving something perceived as being less of a man. Relating Grey's 'masculinity concept' to the aspect of bride-price among the Mambwe is to state that any man who fails to pay bride-price is perceived as not being a real man, as being less of a man, an aspect which unfortunately leads to the loss of public respect for such men.

Furthermore, study findings revealed that among the Mambwe people, parents who marry off their daughters to men who are incapable of paying bride-price or those who marry off their daughters to men before the payment of bride-price are looked down upon and laughed at. Such parents are considered to be desperate for their daughter's marriage. It was therefore evident from study findings that among the Mambwe people, bride-price complicates marriage issues in the line mentioned above whenever men failed to pay it.

#### **e. Bride-price and the limitation of women's decisions in marriage**

The final aspect revealed by the study in terms of the negative effects of bride-price on the institution of marriage among the Mambwe is that bride-price contributes to the limitation of women in decision making. A majority of research participants in the study were of the view that men dominated women vis-à-vis decision making in marriage. In addition to the aforementioned, research participants were also of the view that bride payment was partly the reason for the limitation of women's decisions in marriage, the other reason being the common claim by men that they are traditionally and biblically appointed heads of households. Therefore, regarding this matter, study findings evidently indicated that men and women do not have equal power to decide on key household issues. Men dominated in most household decisions as they made most key household decisions at the expense of the women. Men have overall power in everything including decision making after paying bride-price for the women. As a consequence of this, women can never make their own decisions even in situations where their own lives were at risk. Similar findings can be cited from a study by Fuseini and Doodoo (2012), when they posit that, the payment of bride-price deprives a woman autonomy in all aspects of her life, prevent her from full enjoyment of her rights and gender equality as their decisions are influenced by their husbands. Platteau and Gaspart's (2007), Senegalese study reveals the same thing when they argue that bride-price contributes to alienation of women and transforms them into commodities or into their husband's slaves. This is because the two scholars associate bride-price with expressions that show deep-seated frustrations and intense suffering of women in particular.

## CONCLUSION

Marriage is very important to any society. It is for this reason that Chewe (2013) states that every society needs marriages and that any community that lacks marriage is bound to have its families fail. Marriage is also the foundation and substance of every family and social unit in every society (Chilufya, 2008). The article showed that a number of issues affect marriages and of significant importance to the article were cultural issues, specifically the custom of bride-price or bride payment.

A particular focal aspect in this article was how the traditional custom of bride-price affects the institution of marriage among the Mambwe people of Zambia's Northern Province. The article specifically highlighted and discussed some positive and negative effects of the traditional custom of bride-price on the institution of marriage among the Mambwe people. Among the positive effects of bride-price on the institution of marriage, the article highlighted and discussed; promotion of respect and honour in marriage, bride-price as a sign of love between the bride and groom, and bride-price as a form of unification and solidification of marriages and families. Among the negative effects of bride-price on the institution of marriage, the article highlighted and discussed; bride-price as a basis of male dominance and exploitation of women in marriage, bride-price as a basis for 'sexual abused' of women in marriage, bride-price as an 'economic burden' on men, bride-price as a basis for 'loss of respect for women' among men and bride-price and the limitation of women's decisions in marriage.

From the above listed effects of bride-price on the institution of marriage among the Mambwe people, it was evident that apart from the positive effects it has on marriage, it also has negative effects on marriage. Based on the aforementioned, it can therefore be concluded that bride-price has positive effects which can be said to enhance the thriving of marriages and at the time it can be further concluded that it also has negative effects which can be said to be a serious hindrance or indeed a hazard for the promotion of better and stronger marriages among the Mambwe people. This is because the negative face of the customary practice of bride payment can be unpleasant to both men and women and probably the more so vis-à-vis women as evidenced in the words of Platteau and Gaspart's (2007), when they state that it contributes to the alienation of women and transforms them into commodities or into their husband's slaves. This is due to its association with expressions that show deep-seated frustrations and intense suffering of women in particular.

## REFERENCES

1. Alice, E. (2014). Gender, Place & Culture: History Lessons for Gender Equality from the Zambian Copperbelt. *Journal of Feminism*, 24(4): 142-157.
2. Alupo J, (2004). *Bride Price and Gender Violence*, A Paper Presented to the Participants at the International Conference on Bride Price and Development, Makerere University, Kampala Uganda.
3. Anderson, S. (2007). The Economics of Dowry and Bride price. *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 21(4): 151-74.
4. Anyebe, P. A. (1985). *Customary Law: The War Without Arms*. Enugu: Forth Dimension Publishers.
5. Ashraff, N. (2015). *Bride Price and Female Education*. Unpublished PhD Thesis. University of Basam.
6. Anti-Gender Based Violence Act (Zambia), Sec 2 & 3.
7. Bell, J. (2005). *Doing Your Research Project: Guide for First-Time Researchers in Education, Health and Social Sciences 4 Ed*. Berkshire: Open University Press.
8. Bishai, D. and Grossbard, S. (2006). *Far Above Rubies: The Association Between Bride Price and Extramarital Sexual Relations in Uganda*. Kampala: MUP.
9. Chewe, M. M. (2013). *A Comparative Study of Catholic and Bemba Marriage Educational Programmes in Selected Parishes of Lusaka District and Their Impacts on Marriage and Family Life*. Unpublished M.A. Dissertation, University of Zambia.

10. Chilufya, C. M. (2008). Consent and Bride Price as two Elements That Help in Determining The Validity of A Customary Marriage and Custody of Children Among The Bemba People of Northern Province of Zambia. Unpublished M.A. Dissertation: University of Zambia.
11. Chireshe, E. and Chireshe, R. (2010). Lobola: The Perceptions of Great Zimbabwe University Students. *Journal of Pan African Students*, 3 (9):211-221.
12. Creswell, J. W. (2012). *Research Design: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*. London: Sage Publications.
13. Chondoka, A. Y. (1998). *Traditional Marriages in Zambia: A Study in Cultural History*. Ndola: Mission Press.
14. Creswell, J. W. (2012). *Research Design: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*. London: Sage Publications.
15. Dery, I. (2015). Bride Price and Domestic Violence: Empirical Perspectives from Nandom District in the North Western Region of Ghana. *International Journal of Development and Sustainability*, 4(3):258-271.
16. Falana, T. C. (2019). Bride Price Syndrome and Dominance in Marriage: An Expository Analysis. *International Journal of Humanities Social Sciences and Education*, 6(8): 132-139.
17. Forkuor, J.B., Kanuetuu, V. P., Ganure, M. E. and Ndemole, K. I. (2018). Bride-Price and the State of Marriage in North-West Ghana. *International Journal of Social Science Studies*, 6(9): 114-119.
18. Fuseini, K, and Doodoo, I. (2012). *I bought you, I owe you bride wealth and women's autonomy in Ghana*. Legon: University of Uganda. Regional Institute for Population Studies.
19. Fuseini, K. (2013). *Does Our Culture Promote Abuse? Bride wealth and Domestic Violence in Ghana*, Proceedings 59th ISI World Statistics Congress, 25-30 August 2013, Hong Kong.
20. Goody, J. and Stanley, T. (1973). *Bride Wealth and Dowry in Africa and Eurasia*. Cambridge: CUP.
21. Grey, F. R. (2009). *Sonjo Bride Price and the Question of African Wife Purchase*. Oxford: OUP.
22. GRZ (1964). *Chapter 50 of the Laws of Zambia: The Marriage Act*. Lusaka: Government Printers.
23. Gwiza, S. (2015). *Is Lobola losing its Ethics?* [Internet]. Available from: <http://www.kas.de/zimbabwe>. [Accessed on 25 February, 2021].
24. Hague, G; Thiara, R. (2009). *Bride-Price, Poverty and Domestic Violence in Uganda*, Final Report; An International Collaboration between MIFUMI Uganda Violence Against Women Research Group, University of Bristol, UK Centre for the Study of Safety and Well-being, University of Warwick, UK.
25. Hambulo, F. and Higgs, L. (2017). Catholic Secondary Education and Identity Reformation in Zambia's Southern Province: An Outcome of a Conflict Educational Policy Values or not? *KOERS: Bulletin for Christian Scholarship*, 82(1): 43-58.
26. Hambulo, F. (2016). Catholic Secondary Education and Identity Reformation in Zambia's Southern Province. Unpublished PhD Thesis. University of South Africa.
27. Hammersley, M. and Atkinson, P. (1983). *Ethnography, Principles in Practice*. New York: Tavistock.
28. Hughes, D. O. (1985). From Bride price to Dowry in Mediterranean Europe. In: Marion, A.K. (ed.) *The Marriage Bargain: Women and Dowries in European History*. New York: Havorth Press, pp13–58.
29. Kambarami, M. (2006). Femininity, Sexuality and Culture: Patriarchy and Female Subordination in Zimbabwe, Unpublished MA Thesis. University of Fort Hare.
30. Kamuwanga, C. (2002). *A Study to Determine How Cultural Practices and Beliefs Influence the Spread of HIV/AIDS*. Unpublished MA Thesis. University of Zambia.
31. Kapambwe, L. (2004). *The Role of Music in the Traditional Marriage Ceremonies of the Bemba – Speaking People of Northern Zambia*: Unpublished MA Thesis. University of Cape Town.
32. Kaye, K. D., Mirembe F., Ekstom, A. M., Kyomuhend, G. B. and Johansson, B. (2005). Implications of Bride Price on Domestic Violence and Reproductive Health in Wakiso District, Uganda. *Journal of African Health Sciences*, 5(4): 23-32.
33. Kothari, C. R. (2004). *Research and Methodology: Methods and Techniques (2 Ed)*. New Delhi: New Age International (p) Limited, Publishers.
34. Lowes, P. and Nunn, S. (2017). *The Politics of Bride Price*. Oxford: OUP.

35. Martignoni, J. B. (2002). *Violence against Women in Zambia*. Geneva: World Organisation against Torture.
36. Matembe, M. (2004). *The Relationship between Domestic Violence and Bride Price*, paper presented at the International Bride Price Conference, Mbarara, M.P. and Pan African Parliamentarian, February, Kampala, Uganda.
37. Mangena, T. and Ndlovu, S. (2013). Implication and Complications of Bride Price Payment among the Shona and Ndebele of Zimbabwe. *International Journal of Asian Social Science*, 3(2): 472-481.
38. Mambaiwa, F. (2019). *The Changing Traditional Dynamics of Bride Price in Selected African Ethnic Groups*. London: Warner Press.
39. May, J. (1984). *Zimbabwean Women in Colonial and Customary Law*. Gweru: Mambo Press.
40. Mbaye, L.M., and Wagner, N. (2013). *Bride Price and Fertility Decisions: Evidence from Rural Senegal*. Discussion Paper 7770. Bonn: IZA.
41. Meekers, D. (1992). The Process of Marriage in African Societies: A Multiple Indicator Approach. *Population and development Review*, 18(1), 61-78.
42. Mizinga, F. M. (2000). Marriage and Bride wealth in a Matrilineal Society: The Case of the Tonga of Southern Zambia: 1900–1996. *African Economic History*, 28 (1): 53–87.
43. Moono, M. P. (2019). *Lobola and Gender Based Violence: A Case of Married Women in Lusaka's Kamanga Compound*. Unpublished MA Thesis. University of Zambia.
44. Mtonga, W. E. (2007). Patterns of Marital Violence and its Effects. Unpublished MA Thesis. University of Zambia.
45. Musonda, F. (2021). A Civic Perspective on the Nature and Scope of Bride-Price among the Mambwe people of Mbala District of Zambia's Northern Province. Unpublished MA dissertation: University of Zambia.
46. Mulenga, J. P., Kamanga, M. and Duarte, C. T. (2007). *Human Right Violation in Zambia Part II: Women's Rights*. Geneva: OMCT.
47. Mujungu, R. M. (2013). *Bride Price a Big Hagggle for Ugandan Women*. Kampala: Rwenzori Women Concern Initiative.
48. Nambozo, B. (2014). *Religious and Cultural Perspectives on Bride Price: "Bride Price Conference, MIFUMI"*, 104.1 Power FM Kampala".
49. Nava, A., Natalie, B., Nathan, N. and Alessndra, V. (2015). *Bride Price and Female Education in Zambia*, paper presented at the International Cultural Symposium, March, Windhoek, Namibia.
50. Ngutor, S., Avenger, A., Yandev, M.A. and Arumun, S. (2015). The Effects of High Bride-Price on Marital Stability. *IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 17(5):76-89.
51. Oumo, O. (2004). *Bride Price and Violence against Women: the Case of Uganda*, paper presented at the International Bride Price Conference, February, Kampala, Uganda.
52. Platteau, J.P. and Gaspart, F. (2007). The Perverse Effects of High Bride prices, *Working Paper, Centre for Research in the Economics of Development (CRED), University of Namur*.
53. Quale, R.G. (1988). *A History of Marriage Systems*. New York: Greenwood Press.
54. Sembe, N., Avanger, M. (2013). The Effects of High Bride-Price on Marital Stability. *IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 7(5):65-75.
55. Silberschmidt, M. (2016). *Rethinking Men and Gender Relations: An Investigation of Men, their Changing Roles within the Household and Implication for Gender Relations in Kisii District, Kenya*. CDR Research Report No. 16.
56. US Department of State (2016). Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2016, Zambia [Internet]. Available from: <https://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/humanrightsreport/index.htm?year=2016&dliid=265316#wrap> per. [Accessed on 15 February, 2021].
57. Women and Law in Southern Africa Research Trust (2002). *Lobola: Its Implications for Women's Reproductive Rights in Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Swaziland, Zambia and Zimbabwe*. Harare: Weaver Press.
58. The paper reads well except that the literature review is too long.

59. See the article format I have proposed in the article.