

**COMMERCIALIZATION OF BRIDE WEALTH AMONG THE KIPSIGIS OF
BURETI CONSTITUENCY, SOUTHERN RIFT VALLEY, KENYA**

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DECLARATION

This project paper is my original work and has not been presented for a degree in any other university.

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This project paper has been submitted for examination with my approval as the University supervisor.

Prof. Simiyu Wandibba.....Date.....

DEDICATION

To all women in Bureti Constituency more so my mother, Alice and my sisters, Juliet, Gloria and Valentine Komingoi.

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ABSTRACT

This study was carried out in Bureti Constituency, Kericho County, Kenya. The study examined the commercialization of bride wealth among the Kipsigis community. More precisely, the study looked at the forms of bride wealth among the Kipsigis, the factors that have led to its commercialization and the potential influence of the commercialization of bride wealth on the status of women. Data were collected using semi-structured interviews, case narratives, focus group discussions and key informants interviews. The study reveals that the custom of bride wealth has transformed from being a mere cultural practice to a highly commercialized venture. It was established that certain socio-economic variables, for instance, the bride's level of education, employment and the status of the groom or his family, determine the amount of bride wealth expected to be paid. This way uniformity in payment that existed traditionally has been eroded. The findings indicate that the main factors responsible for the commercialization of bride wealth in this area are modernization, economic forces, scarcity of land and capitalism. Moreover, it was established that the commercialization of bride wealth promotes gender-based violence among married couples. This emanates from the hefty bride wealth which causes husbands to ill-treat their wives. Additionally, once bride wealth has been paid most men feel they have bought their wives and so have the right to use and misuse them. This custom also has implications for women's reproductive health rights and their access to and control over resources. The study concludes that the commercialization of bride wealth perpetuates oppressive gender relations where women are pushed to the subservient positions to their male counterparts. This study, therefore, recommends that advocacy campaigns should be conducted in order to sensitize the public on the importance of gender equality in marriage irrespective of how much is paid as bride wealth. These campaigns should aim at educating the public on how bride wealth is a breeding ground for gender discrimination in regard to access and control over resources and reproductive health matters

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

AIDS Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome

CBO Community-Based Organization

CREAW Center for Rights, Education and Awareness for Women

HIV Human Immunodeficiency Virus

NGO Non-Governmental Organization

CHAPTER ONE

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

Marriage is a social institution that cuts across all societies in the world. Among many African communities, marriage is accompanied by marital transactions that may take the form of bride wealth, token bride wealth, gift exchange and sister exchange (Jones, 2011:98). These marriage payments are payable in full amount or in installments. Bride wealth, which is the most common, refers to the payment that a man or his family makes to the family of his wife in order to formalize the marriage (Bawa, 2015:78).

Irrespective of context, bride wealth serves a variety of purposes within African societies. It validates marriages, and so once paid the union is recognized as formal. It cushions the wife against abuse as she is acknowledged as a member of the family. The intermarrying families and clans are also joined together thus enhancing alliances. Children are legitimized since bride wealth gives the husband the right to reap the fruits of his wife's womb. Marital union is safe-guarded against divorce as a result of the entire clan establishing the union. Moreover, bride wealth serves as compensation to the girl's family for the loss of her services (Hague and Thiara, 2009:4; Jones, 2011:98; Mawere and Mawere, 2010:226).

Bride wealth is an age old practice dating back to Biblical times. In the Bible most notable being in the book of Genesis chapter 29: verse 14, it is reported that Jacob worked for fourteen years to get the hand of Rachel in marriage. Also in the book of Hosea chapter 3 verse 2 it is reported that Hosea bought a woman for fourteen shekels of silver, a homer and a lethech. The practice of bride wealth payment can also be traced in the ancient civilization of Egyptians, Mesopotamians, Hebrews and Aztecs. Among the Germanic tribes, who ruled western Europe from 600 to 1000 CE, bride wealth was considered mandatory for a marriage to be legal (Anderson, 2007:152).

In Southern Africa the cultural practice involving marriage transactions in the form of cattle or cash, from the groom's family to that of the bride, is widely practised. This practice is acknowledged as an important part of marriage negotiations and the

wedding itself. It is also appreciated as a custom which enhances the duration of a marriage (Posel and Rudwick, 2011:1). Among the Shona and the Ndebele of Zimbabwe, material property paid by the groom to the bride's family is meant to be a token of appreciation. It also serves as a sign of commitment to the marital union. In addition, it is meant for compensation to the bride's family for the loss of their productive daughter and also acts as an insurance against divorce. Nevertheless, among the Ndebele *lobola* (bride wealth) has both spiritual and emotional significance, as it reinforces the ties between the children and their maternal ancestors. This is manifested through the payment of *inkomo yohlanga*, the cow given to the mother of the wife (Mangena and Ndlovu, 2013:473).

Rorasyo is the name given to bride wealth negotiations and payment among the Agikuyu. The whole marriage process involves giving different kinds of gifts at each stage, that is, from the proposal, to the engagement and, finally, marriage. Paying bride wealth in installments is considered instrumental in nurturing strong kinship ties between the two families. The Agikuyu present both livestock and other material goods as bride wealth. Traditionally, sheep and goats played a significant role in religious, economic and social life. Consequently, a man could not get a wife if he failed to give them as bride wealth. Bride wealth was considered vital in stabilizing marriages. It also served as an outward manifestation of the groom's intentions to make marriage stable (Nganga, 2015:10).

The Kipsigis, a group of agro-pastoralists living in the Rift Valley Region of Kenya, represent communities that still uphold the payment of bride wealth. Traditionally, bride wealth payment involved solely livestock as goods for exchange. The livestock were presented by the groom or his kin to the kin of the bride to ratify marriage, a process referred to as *koito* (Kiprop, 2015:15; Rutto and Maritim, 2016:59; Peristiany, 1964:59). The marriage ceremony itself could not take place without a number of members of the extended family being present (Fish and Fish, 1996). In addition, the entire bride wealth would not be the sole property of the bride's father but part of it shared with other relatives (Nanda and Warms, 2013:202).

However, after the onset of European occupation and the introduction of the cash economy, in Africa and Kenya in particular, bride wealth became progressively commoditized. Cattle gained in productive value as the ox-drawn plough became widely used hence increasing their significance around the 1930s. Moreover, young men entered wage employment, as fathers began to demand dramatically inflated bride wealth payments composed mainly of cattle and cash. Therefore, bride wealth continued to degenerate into a fundamentally commercial transaction between generations of males as women became bartered goods. As the cash economy became increasingly important to the survival of households, and village elders started to manipulate the bride wealth system (Tarugarira and Mazambani, 2014:66).

Today the practice of bride wealth payment has assumed the form of a business enterprise hence being commercialised. Dalton (1966, cited by Jones, 2011:98) describes bride wealth in economic terms by stating that it as a payment at marriage where there is a market. Therefore, marriage entails the commercial purchase of rights or services whereby, in this case, the bride is the commodity, groom and his family are the buyer and the bride's family becomes the seller.

Commercialization of bride wealth is used here to refer to a system where the payment of bride wealth has been transformed from being a mere cultural practice to a business venture. The bride has a clear monetary value attached to her (Tarugarira and Mazambani, 2014:64). This is characterized by bargaining and haggling, thus appearing as the buying of a woman (Chabata, 2011; CREAM, n.d: 1).

Moreover, socio-economic variables such as the level of education of the bride and status of the groom's family are factored in. These are some of the determining factors of how much is expected to be paid. In instances where the bride has attained higher education or is in employment, the bride wealth tends to be escalated. Consequently, the groom's family must pay well for the compensation to the bride's family (Soi, 2014:19; Ngutor *et al.*, 2013:65).

Matters arising from the commercialization of bride wealth have been subject to debates and awareness has been increasing in various countries in Africa. Criticism not only stems from the transaction nature of the practice, which equates women to

commodities but also on economic consequences it has on men. In Ghana, discussions have been triggered in the media, political discourse and civil society. The argument is that the commercialization of bride wealth has been linked to incidences of violence which lead to increase in women's vulnerability (Bawa, 2015:78). In 2001, MIFUMI, a non-governmental organization and a women's rights agency operating in Eastern Uganda, held a local referendum in Tororo District. The organization lobbied for votes against bride wealth as a refundable gift, at the dissolution of a marriage. In February 2004, MIFUMI went ahead to hold the first International Conference on bride wealth in Kampala, attended by representatives of other African countries, including Kenya, Tanzania, Nigeria, Ghana, Senegal, Rwanda and South Africa. The implications of bride wealth on women among other gender issues were discussed (Hague and Thiara, 2009:5).

The 2005 Uganda Poverty Eradication Action Plan highlighted bride wealth as the most crucial factor undermining women's empowerment (Hague and Thiara, 2009:5). Moreover, in 2007 MIFUMI (U) Ltd challenged the constitutionality of the custom of paying bride wealth as a precondition to contracting a valid customary marriage. The practice was challenged in a constitutional court on grounds that it violates the principle of equality of men and women in marriage. However, this is contrary to Article 31(3) of the Uganda Constitution. The constitutionality of bride wealth as an essential pre-requisite for a valid dissolution of a customary marriage was also challenged. MIFUMI argued that the demand and refund of bride wealth as a precondition to divorce traps women in abusive marriages (Asiimwe, 2013:8; Uganda Legal Information Centre).

Feminists and women activist groups in Uganda have also criticized the commercial nature of the practice. They condemn it as an outdated custom that promotes male domination and gender inequality, thereby reducing women's decision-making powers. This significantly contributes to women's general disempowerment by lowering their status relative to their male counterparts. It also contributes to women's degradation and violation of their rights since once bride wealth is paid, they are rendered a commodity of the husband (Asiimwe, 2013:2).

Moreover, CREAM (n.d) conducted research among communities living in North Meru and Kisii to determine the relationship between bride wealth and incidences of violence. The study came to the conclusion that the commercialization of bride wealth makes the spouse think he has bought the wife, thus making her his property. CREAM advocates against this practice stating it as a violation of women's human rights and the degradation of their dignity.

1.2 Statement of the problem

Although bride wealth serves a definite role of legalizing marriages, it has transformed from being a mere cultural practice to a highly commercialized venture. This practice is now a business enterprise whose main aim is to drive for profits other than uniting the intermarrying families and merry-making. For that reason, every woman has a monetary value attached to her. The aspect of uniformity in payment has thus been eroded by its commercial nature as certain socio-economic variables are the determinants of what is to be paid. In addition, it is no longer a matter of compensation for the loss of a daughter's labour. Instead, it is an opportunity to enrich one-self through exorbitant amounts charged in form of cash and expensive modern items like cars, land titles and electronics.

This has driven the overall payment to almost being equivalent to two-thirds of a household asset, thus creating affordability problems for young men who desire to marry. The huge amounts demanded as bride wealth put a lot of pressure on men who may incur severe debts due to inadequate resources at their disposal. Nonetheless, some communities view bride wealth as a source of protection for women within marriages. However, when commercialized it practically translates to a woman being bought just like other tradable goods and so a commodity to the husband. Power is, therefore, bestowed onto the men to dominate over the women within households, in matters of sex and reproduction, access to and control over resources, decision-making and even community participation.

CREAM (n.d: 1) blames the practice for the continued abuse of wives by their husbands. These husbands justify their actions by claiming that they have property rights over their wives, and so the right to use, misuse and abuse them. This practice has had high correlation with incidences of gender-based violence among married

couples. Thus, with a little domestic misunderstanding, men who have paid hefty bride wealth normally capitalize on the situation by using violence.

While recent studies in Kenya have examined the overall concept of bride wealth and marriage, none of them have specifically explored commercialization of bride wealth in Bureti Constituency. Consequently, this study endeavoured to evaluate the commercialization of bride wealth among the Kipsigis of Bureti Constituency. For that reason, the study sought to answer the following questions:

- I. What are the forms of bride wealth among the Kipsigis of Bureti Constituency?
- II. What factors have led to the commercialization of bride wealth among these people?
- III. Is there any interrelationship between commercialization of bride wealth and the status of women among the Kipsigis of Bureti Constituency?

1.3 Objectives of the Study

1.3.1 Overall Objective

To explore the commercialization of bride wealth among the Kipsigis of Bureti Constituency.

1.3.2 Specific objectives

- I. To describe the forms of bride wealth among the Kipsigis of Bureti Constituency.
- II. To identify factors that have led to the commercialization of bride wealth among these people.
- III. To determine the relationship between the commercialization of bride wealth and the status of women in Bureti Constituency.

1.4 Assumptions of the Study

- I. The Kipsigis of Bureti Constituency pay bride wealth in various forms.
- II. The rising cost of living is the main factor responsible for commercialization of bride wealth among these people.

- III. Commercialization of bride wealth has a negative impact on women's empowerment among the Kipsigis of Bureti Constituency.

1.5 Justification of the Study

Women empowerment is core to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 5. However, commercialization of bride wealth is one of the hurdles towards achievement of this Goal. Women empowerment has occasionally been undermined by cultural prejudices, which inhibit development advancement and women's realization of their full potential. This has been manifested through discrimination in relation to access to and control over resources, decision-making and education opportunities. As a result, women are pushed into subservient positions which lower their status relative to the male counterparts.

This research was, therefore, a response to these challenges. It sought to help in gaining insights into the commercialization of bride wealth and its potential influence on the status of women. Moreover, it aimed at coming up with strategies that could be used to address the negative implications arising from its commercial nature. Leaders and organizations are set to benefit from the findings in addressing gender concerns arising from this practice.

The research also aimed at generating information that could be used by governments in policy reforms, future programming and legal amendment. In Kenya, the institution of bride wealth is within the customary law and Marriage Act. The two dockets do not spell out the limitations of this custom and so the nature and extent of practice differ with each ethnic group. Rules need to be put in place to regulate the amount paid as bride wealth. Therefore, the findings from this research could be used as a justification for these amendments. In so doing, parents' capacity to charge exorbitant amounts will be limited. This will also be important in addressing other negative implications arising from the commercialization of bride wealth such as gender-based violence among married couples.

The findings from this research can be instrumental in championing activism against commercialization of bride wealth. In Kenya, especially in the rural areas, many women have had their bride wealth commercialized. In most cases, these women are

ignorant of the implications this custom has on their general status and autonomy. On the other hand, men have suffered serious economic blows resulting from huge amounts demanded as bride wealth. Therefore, the findings could be used by CBOs, NGOs, political and local leaders and even human rights activists as a source of information for awareness creation. This can be done by conducting campaigns to educate the public on the vices arising from this practice. Though this may not eradicate the custom, social change could be triggered and the intensity of the consequences reduced. MIFUMI and Poverty Eradication Plan successfully conducted demonstrations in rural Uganda against the negative implications resulting from this custom.

Moreover, a search for literature on commercialization of bride wealth reveals that there has been no major empirical research on this topic in Kenya. Much of the research is from Zimbabwe and Uganda by scholars such as Hague and Thiara (2009), Bawa (2015), Kambarami (2006) and Mawere and Mawere (2010). This study thus aimed at filling this gap in the literature.

1.6 Scope of the Study

This research focused exclusively on the Kipsigis of Bureti Constituency. The study targeted individual adult men and women aged 18 years and above. The research explicitly looked at the forms of bride wealth, factors that have led to its commercialization and its effects on the status of women. Finally, the study was guided by the social exchange theory.

1.7 Limitations of the Study

The researcher employed mainly qualitative research approaches to the study. Therefore, her personal knowledge, judgement and experiences could have influenced the study, resulting in biases. The researcher addressed this limitation through respondent validation. This was done by allowing respondents to read through the data collected so as to authenticate its validity. This ensured that even deviant cases were examined and accounted for. By so doing, the researcher's bias was eliminated.

Another limitation of the study was the fact that the researcher was born and brought up within this culture. As a result some of the respondents were reluctant to share information in line with the research subject. The third limitation was that some respondents were not willing to elicit much information on their own experiences or even on family matters, especially those concerned with reproduction, gender-based violence and family resources. The last limitation was that most women had little time to take part in the study due to their engagement in societal gender roles.

The researcher addressed the second and third limitations through informed consent. She explained to the participants the purpose of the study and the potential benefits of the findings. This provided them with relevant information regarding the study. In addition, the researcher guaranteed anonymity to the respondents. This way confidentiality was reinforced and they became encouraged to participate in the study.

1.8 Definition of Terms

Bride wealth is the material property which may be in form of cash, livestock or any other material good that the groom or his family pays to the bride's family to formalize marriage.

Status of women is the degree of women's access to and control over both material and social resources including income, power and prestige within the family, in the community and in the society at large.

Commercialization of bride wealth is the transformation of bride wealth from a mere cultural practice to a business venture, which is characterized by bargaining and haggling.

Reproductive health rights in this study is the influence of the commercialization of bride wealth on women's access to a responsible, satisfying and safe sex life, and their capacity to choose when to reproduce and when not to. This includes women's freedom to be informed of and to have access to safe, effective, affordable and acceptable methods of birth control and access to appropriate health services.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter highlights and acknowledges the contributions made by different scholars and organizations on the research problem. The literature is reviewed using the following sub-headings: forms of bride wealth, factors that have led to its commercialization as well as the commercialization of bride wealth and the status of women. The chapter ends with a discussion of the theory that guided the study.

2.2 Forms of Bride Wealth

The presentation of gifts and services in the form of bride wealth is not peculiar to Africa, similar practices take place in other parts of the world. For example, during the reign of Ethelbert, King of Kent, potential grooms presented gifts or money as compensation for the loss of a daughter's labour to the family. Among the Hebrews, *mobar* was paid to the bride's father as a way of completing a marriage transaction (Tarugarira and Mazambani, 2014:65).

Classical China required the negotiation of a bride wealth for the validity of marriage and this norm continues to this day (Anderson, 2007:152). Among the Chinese both bride wealth and dowry coexist, whereby bride wealth is the primary transaction in marriage (Anderson, 2007:152; Bell, 2008:17; Jones, 2011:99). Both families meet to discuss the amount of bride wealth to be paid among other goods. The groom and the matchmaker thereafter present gifts like wedding cakes, sweetmeats and jewellery as well as the bride wealth to the bride's family. However, the bride wealth is payable in installments over some period of time (Brown, 2003:6).

In ancient times, pigs were mainly presented as bride wealth along with other goods such as feathers, kina shells and yams in Papua New Guinea. Pigs were solely given as bride wealth since they represented social values, that is, a status symbol (Tarugarira and Mazambani, 2014:66; Miamel, 2016:1). However, today locally traded valuables like shells have been replaced with money and other manufactured goods like vehicles. This has brought alteration to what used to be paid as bride wealth. Extremely high amounts of bride wealth are now being paid in the highlands. This is in the form of pigs and cash value of between \$ 5000 and \$10,000 for an

ordinary lady and for an educated and employed, respectively (Bre, 2006:9). Galbraith (2011) calls this modern day slavery as she witnessed the minimum price to buy a wife being thirty pigs. She explains that an addition of one pig has to be purchased. This is for the mother-in-law to show gratitude for all her efforts of raising a good and hardworking daughter. Moreover, in the Central provinces, some have reportedly paid more than K100,000 excluding the cost of various food and other items exchanged between the bride's and the groom's families (Gerawa, 2015).

Traditionally, among the Shona of Zimbabwe the bride groom pays bride wealth (*lobola*) as a sign of commitment to the marital union. *Lobola* payment was done in the form of two or one cow and a few bags of maize. The bride wealth payment was often done in two portions, *roora* and *rutsambo*. *Rutsambo* was the first payment meant to accord the husband sexual rights over his wife. On the other hand, *roora* was done basically in form of cattle and also associated with rights over the children born to the woman (Mangenda and Ndlovu, 2013:473).

Besides, those who had dogs went hunting and brought game to the in-laws for the payment of bride wealth. Where *lobola* could not be raised, the other option was to offer services to the in-laws. The groom served at the home of the girl while waiting for his wife. There were also circumstances where the woman and man came to terms. The man would proceed to set traps to catch mice. Three to four mice brought to the in-laws was equivalent to the bride (Tarugarira and Mazambani, 2014:64). Nonetheless, today money has become the mode of *lobola* payment, including other modern expensive goods like cell phones and cars. Moreover, a separate charge is placed for a girl who has attained a university degree. This has led to exploitative tendencies as fathers demand huge amounts for their daughters who are viewed as profitable battered goods (Mangena and Ndlovu, 2013).

Traditionally, bride wealth among the Mbaise of Nigeria involved the presentation of either in cash or in kind by the groom's family in exchange for the bride. The bride wealth given by the groom to the bride's family was directly proportional to the number of children (preferably males) the wife is able to bear. Her ability to prepare food for her husband and to minister to his other needs, specifically sexual needs, also determined the amount bride wealth. For that reason, *ewu ukwu* (goat for the

productivity of the waist) ceremony was preserved for women with ten childbirths. *Okuko okwa* (chicken for productivity of the waist) was for women with nine births. For women with twelve births or more a cow (*efi ukwu*) was given, which is a reward for high proficiency in child bearing (Onyeneho, 2006).

Nevertheless, the present-day bride wealth has become a costly affair. As a matter of fact, the higher the educational level of the bride, the higher the cost of marriage. It is reported that for one to marry in the Mbaïse and be applauded, one has to spend N350, 000 and beyond. This implies that bride wealth payment is no longer a reward for proficiency but is instead a commercial as well as a showy class affair (Onuohaadanma, 2016).

Omutwalo gwa taba, the bride wealth by the Baganda of Uganda, is an institution deeply rooted in their customs (Naisiko, n.d:2). During *kwanjula* (traditional introduction ceremony as well as cultural marriage ceremony), the groom's family presented three pots of local *mwenge* (banana wine). One was *ekiguulu* that would break the ice, the *enjogenza* that facilitated the talks and, lastly, was one left for the bride's family to enjoy. Other gifts included *kanzus* and *gomesi* (traditional dress for the father and mother-in-law, respectively), basket of meat, chicken for brother-in-law, vegetables, paraffin, bananas and the actual bride wealth. Tobacco packages were also presented as a way of seeking acceptance by the bride's family (Nabiruma, 2010; Lukwabwe, 2011:13).

On the contrary, nowadays giving the above items is no longer adhered to. Instead the whole process now involves bargaining for very costly financial and material resources including electronics, many cows, furniture and lots of money. This practice has therefore turned out to be too money-oriented, thereby eroding its original purpose of uniting the intermarrying families. Consequently, bride wealth payment ceremonies have transformed into a showy class affair, thus resulting in payment of skyrocketed amounts which, in turn, bring affordability problems among the poor. Some young men even face difficulty raising the amounts demanded and as a result are forced to dispose of family resources (Asiimwe, 2013).

The Kipsigis, a group of agro-pastoralists living in the Rift Valley Region of Kenya, represent communities that in traditional and modern times still uphold the payment of bride wealth. Although bride wealth payment is payable in installments among other communities, the Kipsigis make a single payment historically consisting of livestock but now cash (*mwaita*) is included (Nanda and Warms, 2013:202). Bride wealth gives the groom rights over the fruits of his wife's womb, therefore the children inherit their father's name and totem. It also accords him the right to his wife's work. Furthermore, bride wealth is meant to signify the economic capacity of the groom to take care of his family (Kiprop, 2015:15).

The cattle presented as the bride wealth (*tugaap koito*) include *teta ne abai/chemwai* (cow under lactation). This cow, together with her calf, is considered the kingpin of the marriage ceremony. The two not only signify procreation to the new family but also unite the intermarrying families. *Kimwai* is a bull, and stands for reproduction process since the groom is entitled to reap fruits of his wife's womb (Kiprop, 2015:15; Rutto and Maritim, 2016:60).

Teta ne iywaget/bareiywot (mature cow) is the cow presented by the groom to *kapyugoi* (inlaws), to justify that he is already a grown up and ready to take care of his family without relying on his parents (Orchadson, 1978:71). *Eito* (bull) is presented as a gift solely to the bride's father, which is a source of his pride especially when with friends (Kiprop, 2015:15). *Teta ne tubcher* (cow near to calf) exhibits procreation while *roriat* (heifer) is meant for compensation for upkeep especially when the bride was young. *Kechiriet* (ewe for mother) is for the mother-in-law so as to allow the son-in-law to call her *boger*. A ram for the father is given to correspond with the ewe (Kiprop, 2015:16). A total of nineteen goats and sheep are presented along with the cattle. Alternatively, a cow (*teta ne iyuminego*) may be given in place of the goats and sheep (Peristiany, 1964:59; Rutto and Maritim, 2016:60).

In addition, *chemng'abait* (a sheep or a goat) was traditionally presented to the woman who fed the bride during the seclusion period of her initiation rites (Fish and Fish, 1995:119). Additionally, today *mwaita*, which refers to lumpsum money (currently thousands of shillings), has been included. "A working graduate lady usually fetches between sixty to one hundred thousand Kenya shillings but can be

comparatively less for the less educated” (Soi, 2014:19). This shows how bride wealth has now been commercialized among the Kipsigis.

2.3 Factors that have led to the Commercialization of Bride Wealth

2.3.1 Modernization

Modernization refers to the fact that technical, economic and ecological change have had ramifications through the whole social and cultural fabric. People give up their old ways of doing things to adopt the new ones, or the old ones are modified. The institution of bride wealth is non-static and so it undergoes changes. This is as a result of societies going through radical, social and economic modifications which have been proven to be influenced by the western culture (Asiimwe, 2013:9; Chinonyerem, 2014:27; Jalal, 2009:5).

Consequently, cultural marriage ceremonies, the purpose and the composition of goods exchanged as bride wealth have undergone changes. Livestock (goats, cows and sheep), along with traditional gifts such as bananas, tobacco, maize and the local brew which were presented as bride wealth, have been replaced. Large sums of money and modern expensive items like cars, furniture, land titles and electronics which came with the western culture are now given, illustrating the commercialization of the tradition (Asiimwe, 2013:2; Bre, 2016:9).

Forces of modernization, steered by the actors to fit into a certain social class, have escalated bride wealth amounts, and made the whole event a showy class affair (Asiimwe, 2013:2). This was manifested in China during the Sung era as modernization was accompanied by high rates of bride wealth inflation. This was due to the fact that modernization not only increased the average wealth across the society but also dispersion within status groups. The size of the elite class adversely enlarged as a result. In addition, industrialization brought about abolition of feudalism and adoption of capitalism, leading to decline of aristocracy and inherited status. The wave of modernization consequently created a society where wealth dictated the social status, thereby inflating bride wealth payments (Anderson, 2007:155).

Moreover, expansion of marriage transactions in medieval Europe was as a result of accelerated economic growth along with the introduction of heavier plough technology. Technology resulted from modernization which in turn led to increase in surplus productivity for trade and growth of urban areas. As a result, modernization impacted on marriage payments by lifting the amounts to greater heights (Anderson, 2007:157). This was also the case in Africa, as the introduction of ox-ploughs spearheaded the degeneration of bride wealth into a commercial venture. This attributed to the accumulation of more wealth through increase in commercial activities (Tarugarira and Mazambani, 2014:66). However, this is contrary to modernization theorists who believe that with modernization there will be decline in inflation of bride wealth since more wealth is accumulated. These theorists believe that since people would have accumulated wealth, they would not need to inflate marriage payments (Asiimwe, 2013:20).

2.3.2 Capitalism

According to Marxist ideology capitalism is a mode of production based on private ownership of the means of production, capital accumulation and maximization of profit. The onset of colonial government not only caused the epitome of commercialization of bride wealth in Zimbabwe but also in other countries in Africa, Kenya included. This led to an increase in monetary demands on suitors for bride wealth payment because African men went to work for the white man in the newly created civil service and coal mines (Chinonyerem, 2014:3). Practically, in the colonial political economy, bride wealth was transferred directly from young male workers in the urban centres to the elders in the village. In addition, policies and regulations were put in place by the colonial government on the payment of bride wealth. For instance, in Zimbabwe *lobola* (bride wealth) could not exceed four head of cattle and \$20.00 (Tarugarira and Mazambani, 2014:72).

Marriage contracts involving cash payment altered communal group alliance which involved the extended family to a contract between individuals. In consequence, private ownership of bride wealth was adopted (Mangena and Ndolvu, 2013: 475). Due to motivation for profits from bride wealth payment, parents were driving towards coming up with a 'Daughters Marketing Board'. This was a clear indication

that daughters were now considered as commodities for market exchange (Tarugarira and Mazambani, 2014:71).

As a result, an individual setup gradually replaced the diminishing communal aspect. The forces that were meant to promote cohesiveness and integration in the society were compromised. Therefore, today it is neither the responsibility of the kin nor the families to pay bride wealth on behalf of the marrying man. On the other hand, the father of the bride and not his entire kin receives the payment. This is due to the perception that he solely raised the daughter and so he is entitled to enjoy the fruits of his labour, as per the capitalist ideology. Likewise, bride wealth which was mainly done in cattle form, is now theoretically stated in form of cows while in practice the payment is done in cash, thereby promoting the commercial nature of bride wealth (Mangena and Ndlovu, 2013:476; Bawa, 2015:77).

Capitalism is a product of modernization and has spearheaded the payment of bride wealth in cash form. Capitalism mainly aims at making profits and so cultural practices that seem to be anti-profit are ignored. Capitalism has resulted in financial hunger being put at the forefront during bride wealth negotiations, at the expense of uniting the two families and merry-making (Asiimwe, 2013:19). Furthermore, bride wealth negotiations are now characterized by haggling for higher amounts. Parents tend to improve the surplus value by educating their daughters so as to fit the market demand (Chabata, 2012; CREAW, n.d:1).

Moreover, generally among African societies, women are more engaged in agricultural production. Consequently, bride wealth payment is highly rampant in their economies. These women are seen to make larger contributions to their families and households on that account, the need to be compensated for the loss upon marriage (Jones, 2011:98). The bride's family sells this labour to the groom's family by charging bride wealth. The charging in itself exhibits the capitalist nature of this particular institution (Mangena and Ndlovu, 2013:477).

2.3.3 Economic forces

These consist of factors such as employment, material distribution, rate of inflation, demographic changes and monetary policies which determine the state of competitive environment in which a firm operates. In economic terms, bride wealth simply means that wives in Africa are purchased and auctioned in the manner goods are bought and sold in the European market (Evans-Pritchard, 1931:36, cited by Asiimwe, 2013:9). Therefore, bride wealth is affected by economic forces which in turn result in acceleration of its commercial nature.

Socio-economic variables such as the level of education and employment have resulted in exorbitant amounts charged as bride wealth (Mangena and Ndlovu, 2013:476; Ngutor *et al.*, 2013:65). Being educated means that one is able to enter into the formal employment sector; for that reason, there is potential increment in terms of material distribution. Parents are now seeking huge amounts of bride wealth specifically in form of money, as compensation for their productive assets (daughters) especially when employed or highly educated. The costs of education, clothing, food, medication and other expenses that parents spent on their daughters are factored in. The groom or his family is expected to pay highly under these circumstances since the huge sums of money spent, influence the bride wealth demanded (Chinonyerem, 2014:27; Mangena and Ndlovu, 2013:477).

Class, status and family prestige correspond with material distribution, which in turn influence the bride wealth payment (Asiimwe, 2013:9). In rural areas, where agriculture is the main occupation, land represents wealth. Wealthier families have large tracts of land which exhibit higher social status (Chowdhury, 2010). Besides, they offer larger amounts of bride wealth to attract quality brides and also for maintenance of family prestige. Consequently, such families will demand to be paid very expensive resources to prove their superiority and status in case the bride is theirs (Asiimwe, 2013:9). Nanda and Warms (2013:202) posit that among the Kipsigis, families of higher status are characterized by women who are highly educated. For that reason, higher bride wealth is demanded while low status women may not even have their bride wealth paid as a way of legitimizing their marriage.

The introduction of large-scale cash crop farming in Nigeria led to individual land ownership. Land was therefore concentrated in a few hands, leaving others landless. In addition, population pressure was exerted on the little land available. With no or little land to keep livestock, families started to demand bride wealth in cash (Chinonyerem, 2014:26). Furthermore, high rates of inflation as well as the high cost of living created economic constraints, especially among the poor. Under these situations, parents were coerced to tap money from their daughters through bride wealth, where large sums of money were charged to enable them cope with poverty (Lukwabwe, 2011:13).

This was also evident through the Nandi who traditionally married off their daughters during starvation for exchange of a bag of grain (Onyango, 2016:3). Additionally, among the Kipsigis there existed a form of marriage, *kabwatereret*, where the parents of a small boy and a girl agreed that their two children would get married after initiation. This was basically done when the girl's parents faced economic hardships and so needed to supplement the family's income. In that case, the boy's family paid bride wealth to the girl's family (Fish and Fish, 1996:126). This is an indication that parents viewed their daughters as a means of solving their economic inadequacies through marriage (Asiimwe, 2013:8). In so doing, the commercialization of bride wealth was enhanced.

Moreover, in recent times the average bride wealth amounts to two-thirds of a household asset and can amount to six times the annual wealth of a family, thus reinforcing its commercialization (Chowdhury, 2010). Ruto and Maritim (2016:60), in their book *Kipsigis Heritage and Origin of Clans*, posit that the number of cows paid as bride wealth has risen today from five to eight while sheep and goats have risen from fourteen to twenty-three. This change is attributed to the rising cost of living.

Anderson (2007:171), in his study of the economics of dowry and bride wealth in India, used the demand and supply principle to explain how economic forces have accelerated inflation of the bride wealth. He states that the commercialization of bride wealth is based on the principle of supply and demand in the marriage market. He explains that demand for women escalates when they contribute to productive agricultural labour and production. As a result, a situation where very few women are

actively engaged in production and many grooms desire to get married, the demand goes up while the supply decelerates. This results in inflation of bride wealth due to economic forces as there is imbalance between demand and supply.

Jones (2011:98) reinforces Anderson's view, when she observes that in communities that practise agriculture, marriage transactions are widely practised. This is because women and girls make huge contributions to economic progress in their families and so there is need to compensate their families for the loss of labour when they get married.

2.4 Commercialization of Bride Wealth and the Status of Women

The status of women is the degree to which women have access to and control over both material and social resources, including food, income, power and prestige within the family, in the community and in the society at large (Dixon, 1978, cited by Mason, 1986:286). Bride wealth has occasionally been viewed as a form of protection to women within marriages. However, its commercialization is a big hindrance towards women's realization of their full potentials and advancement as equal members of their societies (Tazuh and Tosam, 2016). Such cultural prejudices have resulted in women's discrimination in relation to access to and control over resources, leadership and managerial positions, education and access to reproductive health services, among others. This section is divided into three main sub-sections.

2.4.1 Bride Wealth and Women's Access to and Control over Resources

Access to resources is the right to use and obtain factors of production such as land, credit, labour, training, technology, information, marketing and public services, while control is the power to influence decisions so that one's own interests are protected. Traditionally, women's direct access to and control over resources is limited though they may have greater management skills (Tazuh and Tosam, 2016:256).

In societies that practise bride wealth, women are occasionally locked out of the crucial economic activities of the entire community. Their work is often viewed from a secondary perception leading to their marginalization. In these communities, bride wealth payment obligates women to actively participate in production while their

male counterparts exercise control over the material resources and benefits from the production (Jones, 2011:98).

Furthermore, women are often cut off from their biological kin through bride wealth payment. Correspondingly, they are not entitled to claim any inheritance from their parents, forcing them to leave it for their male siblings (Jones, 2011:103). Kipsigis customs and traditions acknowledge only sons as immediate heirs of their parents' estates and other properties. Women and girls are not identified anywhere as per the traditions (Soi, 2014:8). According to most African communities, which are patriarchal in nature, daughters are not accorded any property inheritance rights, especially land. It is believed that some day they will get married and so property ought not to be lost to another family and clan. This denies women economic empowerment, which would have been obtained through primary ownership of the productive resources (Tazuh and Tosam, 2016:257).

Bride wealth payment triggers reciprocity norms for married women which obligates them to provide reproductive and domestic labour. These norms dictate women's position in society and also command adherence to the household economy (Fuseini and Doodoo, 2012:3; Fuseini, 2013:4637). This puts limitations on women's economic options due to inadequate access to productive resources such as land, training and labour, which require approval by their spouses for access (Bawa, 2015:79). Automatically, hurdles are placed on women who may want to seek employment, attend economic and job workshops, seek leadership positions or undertake entrepreneurship activities outside their homes (Bawa, 2015:79; Tazuh and Tosam, 2016:241).

The big issue emerges not because bride wealth increases dependency on their male counterparts, but because it obligates women to undertake certain responsibilities which correspond to bride wealth payment. Women duly remain indebted and those who do not comply with these norms are socially disapproved and this may result in divorce. Furthermore, the community tends to react negatively towards women who act independently towards their husbands. Subsequently, women's influence over decision-making through mobilization and conscientisation is highly compromised (Bawa, 2015:78; Fuseini, 2013:4637).

Moreover, men play an influential role during bride wealth payment, since they are the ones who do the negotiations, charging and payment. Even under situations where one is a single mother due to spousal death, it is the males in the family who take part and also benefit. As a result, women as mothers, benefit minimally from their daughter's bride wealth, resulting in inadequate access to the resources presented as bride wealth (Mangena and Ndlovu, 2013:478). This also shows how culture can perpetrate discrimination based on gender, which is highly detrimental to women's status.

Among the Gusii community women can only be granted the right to land use and accumulation of wealth if their marriage has been legalized through bride wealth payment. However, the wealth accumulated is controlled by their husbands, though more rights are accorded to them than if they were unmarried (Hakansson, 1988, cited by Jones, 2011:103). This may impose limited progress in terms of positive implication for women's status.

In addition, women seeking divorce can only do so after bride wealth has been repaid to the husband in full (Hague and Thiara, 2009:5). However, such women are less likely to benefit from matrimonial property upon divorce or separation, including what they worked for during the course of marriage. This is because their monetary and non-monetary contributions to the acquisition of property are normally ignored, in accordance with customary law. There is usually an assumption that women do not own property. Therefore, just as they came empty-handed to the husband's home, they will leave empty-handed. This lowers their social and economic status relative to their male counterparts (Kambarami, 2006).

2.4.2 Bride Wealth and Gender-based Violence

Domestic violence is an instrument used by men to enforce social norms and control over women. Through payment of bride wealth men acquire the mandate to use violence to execute obligations and expectations on women (Bawa, 2015:78). When bride wealth is fully paid people are less likely to protest against violence than when it has not been paid. It is believed that a man only uses violence as a way of enforcing obligations to a woman he has paid for. Consequently, bride wealth payment is a justification of violence against women which has resulted in limitation of women's

freedom and deprivation of liberty. For that reason, they are enslavement to their spouses (Fuseini, 2013:4638; Kambarami, 2006; Mangena and Ndolvu, 2013:478). “Once a woman is married, the elders say she must obey her husband because of the cows paid as bride wealth. All decisions are made by men and do not need to listen to women” (Jalal, 2009:10). This has led to instances where a husband would beat his wife and when asked, he would say that he only hit his cow. Women, on the other hand, cannot leave an abusive relationship due to social and economic vulnerabilities (Tazuh and Tosam, 2016:251).

Ngutor *et al.* (2013:68) posit that bride wealth is the main factor responsible for domestic violence in relationships, thereby hindering marriage stability. They add that so many women have had their rights violated because of bride wealth. This emanates from financial stress arising from the high bride wealth demanded by the bride’s family, which drives husbands to ill-treat their wives. The bride’s family, on the other hand, gives in to violence as they believe that it is only executed by husbands whose desires and needs have not been met. For that reason, women are forced to stay in abusive relationships unless they are able to repay the bride wealth.

Violence associated with bride wealth not only devalues women but also has implications for their social as well as economic status. Violence is used by men and society to command subordination among women which puts restriction on their autonomy. Fear of the consequences resulting from violence leaves women glued to the domestic sphere serving their husbands and their families. Women are unable to freely seek medical assistance, access education and training, and neither do they enjoy prestige nor adequately control resources due to attributes and expectations imposed on them by bride wealth (Bawa, 2015:77; Ngutor *et al.*, 2013:68).

Lukwabwe (2011:31), in his study cited a story of Nathan Awoloi, a hunter from Palisa district in Eastern Uganda, who is reported to have coerced his wife Jennifer Alupot to breast feed puppies. Alowoi claimed that he had paid his two cows to the bride’s family as bride wealth, who would have otherwise given milk for his puppies. As a result it was the responsibility of his wife to feed his puppies. This shows the degree to which bride wealth payment can seriously demean women and even predispose them to health hazards.

2.4.3 Bride Wealth and Reproductive Health Rights

Implications of bride wealth on women not only have an impact on their social status but extend to reproductive and sexual health. When it comes to reproduction, women are considered minors who have no capacity to make informed decisions in regard to their own reproductive lives (Tazuh and Tosam, 2016:256). Once bride wealth has been paid, the bride and her family lose all the rights including reproductive rights. On the other hand, the groom and his family secure these rights over the woman more so sexual rights and the rights to child bearing (Fuseini, 2013:1; Fuseini and Dodoo, 2012:3; Ngutor *et al.*, 2013:68). This is due to the fact that bride wealth gives the groom the right to reap the fruits of his wife's womb. Accordingly, it is the obligation of the bride to give as many children as possible to the groom's family as a justification to what has been paid as the bride wealth (Onyeneho, 2006).

Women's rights to a responsible, satisfying, safer sex life and freedom to decide when to reproduce and when not to, have been undermined by bride wealth payment more so when commercialized. This has implications on fertility and child spacing as women are exempted from access to use of contraceptives (Onyeneho, 2005; Tazuh and Tosam, 2006:251). A woman's preference to have fewer children does not permit her to contraceptive use while the husband still wants more children. This not only demonstrates the degree of power over reproduction that bride wealth accords to the men, but also intensifies women's economic and social hardship (Fuseini and Dodoo, 2012:5).

Bawa (2015:77) reinforces the above, as she blames bride wealth for the constraint it places on women's access to health care over their reproductive life and livelihood choices. This means that most women have inadequate autonomy over their reproductive health, as they are obligated to seek permission from their spouses. Practically, women are barred from accessing safe, effective and acceptable birth control methods, and neither do they have access to health education programmes.

In addition, women are neither able to defend nor control their bodies since they become the sole property of their husbands, after bride wealth payment. Correspondingly, it is their obligation to satisfy the sexual desires of their husbands at all costs. Whenever the husband wants sex, she should comply because it is part of the

marriage contract. This has accelerated the spread of HIV and AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases, as women cannot insist on safe sex measures because men are the ones in control. Besides, unfaithful partners cannot be asked to use protection on the grounds that bride wealth has been paid in full (Asiimwe, 2013:10; Kambarami, 2006; Mangenda and Ndlovu, 2014:478). Most women, having little resources at their disposal, are likely to suffer more loss, thereby contributing to their disempowerment.

2.5 Theoretical Framework

2.5.1 Social Exchange Theory

This study employed the social exchange theory as coined by Thibaut and Kelly (1959). Social exchange theorists view exchange as an act that may lead to both economic and social outcomes. These theorists also posit that social exchange does not only take place in market relations but also in social relations like marriage and friendship. As a result, social exchange is a viable theoretical framework which is instrumental in examining relational processes in marital and family relationships. The paradigm of social exchange theory seeks to explain the development, maintenance and decay of exchange relationships. This is in terms of balance between the rewards the marital partners obtain and the costs that they incur by selecting themselves into marital relationships (Nakonezny and Denton, 2008:402).

The costs specifically refer to the factors that inhibit a sequence of behaviours within marriage. On the other hand, rewards are the pleasures, satisfaction and gratification that a person enjoys within a marriage (Thibaut and Kelly, 1959, cited by Nakonezny and Denton, 2008:402). For that reason, social exchange models assume that rewards and costs drive relationship decisions. Therefore, both parties take responsibility for each other. In this case, marital exchange relationship can be conceptualized as the cyclical patterns of transactions, whereby valued resources, both tangible and intangible, are transferred between partners. The usefulness of this theory has previously been demonstrated by Nakonezny and Denton (2008), in explaining marital relationships in terms of marital solidarity and marital power.

2.5.2 Relevance of the Theory to the Study

The relevance of this theory to this study is that it indicates the rewards and costs that accompany material transfer between marital partners. In this case, the material transfer is the bride wealth and partners are the intermarrying families. The materials for exchange include huge amounts of cash, expensive modern gifts and livestock.

The theory acknowledges that there are rewards that accompany exchange unions. Such rewards include validating marriages and cushioning the wives against abuse. Besides, the intermarrying families and clans are also joined together, thus enhancing alliances. Children are legitimized since the husband is given the right to reap the fruits of his wife's womb. Marital union is safe-guarded against divorce as a result of the entire clan establishing the union.

Furthermore, the theory explains the costs as factors that deter certain behaviours in a marital relationship. These costs contribute to the decay of the union as one partner is bestowed with more power, normally the husband. The wife is consequently pushed into a subservient position which lowers her status relative to the male counterpart. Costs could also be encountered when an exorbitant amount of bride wealth is demanded by the bride's family and so causing economic burden to the groom. This may drive the husband to ill-treat his wife due to financial stress. This can be conceptualized as shown in Figure 2.1 below.

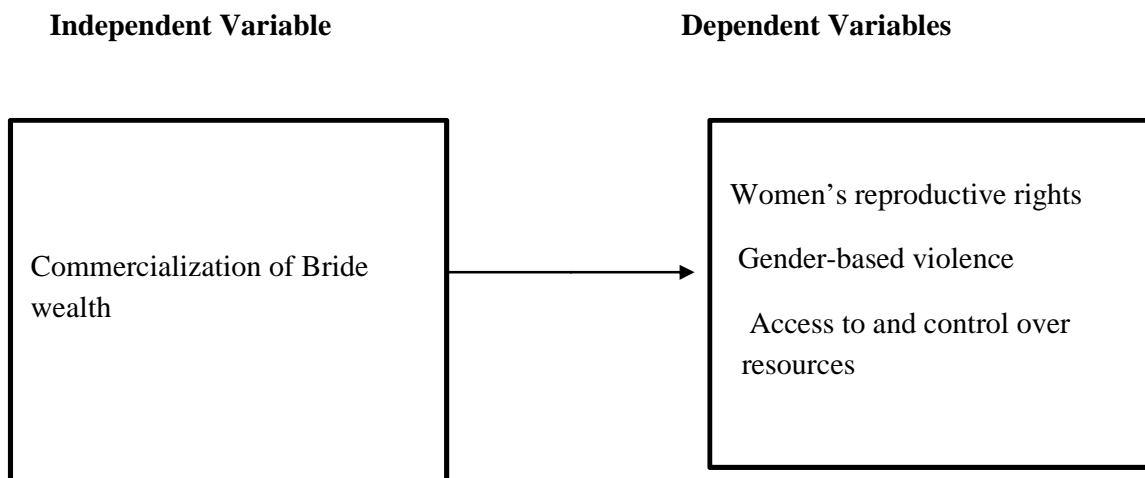


Figure.2.1: Conceptual framework

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter describes the research site, research design, study population, sample and sampling procedures, data collection methods as well as data processing and analysis. The chapter ends with a description of the ethical considerations that guided the study.

3.2 Research Site

This study was carried out in Bureti Constituency (Figure 3.1) of Kericho County. The constituency covers an area of approximately 321.10 km², with a population of 167,649. It is located on 0.58⁰ latitude and 35.18⁰ longitude. The constituency is made up of seven County Assembly wards, namely, Kisiara, Tebesonik, Cheboin, Litein, Kapkatet, Chemosot and Techoget (<https://softkenya.com.kenya.buret-constituency>).

The major ethnic group residing in this area is the Kipsigis community, which practises mixed farming by keeping livestock and growing crops. Bride wealth is a practice deeply rooted in the Kipsigis customs and traditions, whose main purpose is to formalize a marriage. The mode of payment is livestock and cash paid by the groom or his family to that of the bride. However, the amount of bride wealth paid is mainly dependent on the educational level of the bride. A working graduate lady fetches an average of seven cattle, a sheep, a ram and a goat, and a hundred thousand to three hundred thousand Kenya shillings. But this is comparatively low for the less educated (Soi, 2014).

3.3 Research Design

This study utilized a cross-sectional exploratory research design using mainly qualitative data collection methods. Data were collected using semi-structured interviews, key informant interviews, case narratives and focus group discussions. The qualitative data generated from semi-structured interviews, case narratives, key informant interviews and focus group discussions were transcribed and coded into themes and categories then analysed using thematic and content analysis. Verbatim quotes are used for the presentation of the findings, in the informants' voices. On the other hand, quantitative data obtained from semi-structured interviews were processed and analysed manually, and the findings represented in tables of frequencies and percentages.

3.4 Study Population and Unit Analysis

The study targeted Kipsigis men and women in Bureti Constituency aged 18 years and above. The unit of analysis was the individual man and woman of that age.

3.5 Sample Population and Sampling Procedure

The sample population comprised 50 respondents, 25 women and 25 men purposively selected to participate in the study. The researcher considered a population of 50 respondents not only representative but also easy to work with and so appropriate for the study.

3.6 Data Collecting Methods

3.6.1 Semi-structured Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 25 men and 25 women using a semi-structured questionnaire (Appendix II). This method was instrumental in digging out individual perceptions on the commercialization of bride wealth, factors that have led to its commercialization and the mode of bride wealth payment by the study population. Additionally, its semi-structured nature was important in probing deep into potential influence of the commercialization of bride wealth on the status of women in the study population.

3.6.2 Case Narratives

The selected people were asked to tell their stories in line with the commercialization of bride wealth. This method enabled the researcher to capture detailed views, opinions and information on the subject of study. These individuals were purposely selected with the aid of index persons.

3.6.3 Key Informant Interviews

The researcher conducted key informant interviews with individuals whom she considered to have specific, specialized knowledge on the commercialization of bride wealth. These particular personnel included 2 clan leaders, 2 chiefs and 2 *Maendeleo ya Wanawake* officers.

The key informants were important in providing information on bride wealth, both traditionally and in modern times, factors that have enhanced these changes and the potential influence of commercialization of bride wealth on women's access to and control of resources, autonomy over reproductive matters and gender-based violence. A key informant interview guide (Appendix III) was used to collect the data.

3.6.4 Focus Group Discussions

Two focus group discussions were conducted, one comprised 6 women and the other 8 men. The segmentation of the groups on the basis of gender was considered important. This was to allow both men and women to freely air their views and opinions, especially on matters of sex and reproduction. Focus group discussions were conducted based on the contentious issues arising from the semi-structured interviews. A focus group discussion guide (Appendix IV) was used to guide the discussions.

3.7 Data Processing and Analysis

Data processing started in the field, with checking for completeness and consistency of the data. The information obtained through audio-recording and videotaping was first transcribed and field notes edited. This enabled the researcher to capture what she considered relevant to the study. Information obtained from key informant interviews, semi-structured interviews, case narratives and focus group discussions was then coded into themes and categories. The researcher did so by closely examining similar words and phrases used by participants so as to identify a fact or a feeling from the

text. Once themes had been identified, the researcher analysed the data using thematic and content analysis. On the other hand, quantitative data were analysed manually. This whole process was conducted in line with the research objectives.

3.8 Ethical Considerations

The researcher first obtained a research permit from the National Council for Science and Technology before embarking on fieldwork. In the field, the researcher sought informed consent from the respondents before administering the questionnaire. This was done by explaining to them the purpose of the research, duration and potential significance of the findings. This provided them with relevant information that could have reasonably influenced their willingness to participate. The consent process also ensured that every respondent participated voluntarily with full knowledge of relevant risks and benefits. The researcher also issued informed consent form to the respondents for signing, as surety of their understanding and acceptance to take part in the study. Confidentiality was ensured by use of pseudonyms for all the respondents who took part in the study. In so doing, respondents' identity was only known to the researcher.

CHAPTER FOUR

COMMERCIALIZATION OF BRIDE WEALTH AMONG THE KIPSIGIS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter begins by presenting the demographic characteristics of the respondents, followed by presentation and interpretation of the findings as per the research objectives.

4.2 Demographics of the Respondents

4.2.1 Age

The findings in Table 4.1 below indicate that 56% of the respondents were aged 36 years and above. Those aged 20-25 years comprised 8% while those aged 26-30 and 31-35 years were 16% and 20%, respectively. Age is an important factor in comparing the views of respondents in various age brackets in line with the commercialization of bride wealth. It is also crucial in determining the transition that has taken place in regard to the same between ages while capturing factors behind these changes. In addition, age was important in recruiting respondents who are able to reasonably talk about bride wealth objectively.

Table. 4.1: Age of the respondents

| Age | Frequency | Percentage |
|--------------|------------------|-------------------|
| 20 – 25 | 4 | 8 |
| 26 – 30 | 8 | 16 |
| 31 – 35 | 10 | 20 |
| 36 and above | 25 | 56 |
| Total | 50 | 100 |

4.2.2 Marital Status

All the respondents were married except two cases of divorce and three cases of single parenthood. The marital status of the respondents was important in soliciting for one's experience in regard to the commercialization of bride wealth. Married men are in a better position to state what exactly is paid as bride wealth among the Kipsigis and the expectations on their wives once bride wealth is paid.

On the other hand, married women who have had their bride wealth paid have an upper hand in explaining the implications it has had on them.

4.2.3 Type of Marital Union

Respondents were categorized into either being in a monogamous or polygynous union. All respondents were in a monogamous union except four who were in a polygynous marriage.

4.2.4 Education level

The findings in Table 4.2 reveal that women with no education were 4 (16%), those with primary education were 14 (56%), those with secondary education were 5 (20%) and those with post-secondary education were 2 (8%). Among men, 2 (8%) had no education, 6 (25%) had primary education, 10 (40%) had secondary education and 7 (28%) had post-secondary education. The literacy level of a community is dependent on the level of education. This is an important characteristic in regard to the commercialization of bride wealth since the education level of the bride and that of the groom influences the amount of bride wealth expected to be paid. An educated bride attracts a better bride wealth as compared to the less educated. Moreover, the findings below indicate that more men than women are educated and so their ability to seek for employment and engage in other activities outside their homes, for instance, businesses and employment. This means that more women are obligated to stay within the private sphere undertaking domestic chores.

Table. 4.2: Education level of the respondents

| | Female | | Male | |
|------------------------|------------------|-------------------|------------------|-------------------|
| Education level | Frequency | Percentage | Frequency | Percentage |
| No Education | 4 | 16 | 2 | 8 |
| Primary | 14 | 56 | 6 | 25 |
| Secondary | 5 | 20 | 10 | 40 |
| Post-secondary | 2 | 8 | 7 | 28 |
| Total | 25 | 100 | 25 | 100 |

4.3 Forms of Bride Wealth

All the respondents acknowledged that bride wealth is a custom deeply rooted in the Kipsigis customs and traditions. They demonstrated good knowledge of this practice and pointed out that its main role is to legitimize a marriage. They also defined bride wealth as livestock, cash, or both, paid by the groom or his kin to that of the bride to get her hand in marriage.

The respondents posited that traditionally, among the Kipsigis, livestock and *mwaita* (oil) given to the parents of the bride were enough to be called bride wealth. Today, however, in addition to the required number of livestock, *mwaita*, which typically means oil, has been transformed into an unfixed amount of money which must be paid to complete a marriage transaction. They pointed out that this has given the institution of bride wealth transaction-like features. Furthermore, the respondents informed the researcher that the amount of *mwaita* (money) expected to be paid is dependent mainly on the bride's level of education with a highly educated bride fetching between KES 100,000 and KES 300,000.

Nevertheless, it was established that this amount is comparatively lower for the less educated brides although its payment is mandatory. Other determining variables that the respondents pointed out include the economic status of the bride like those in employment or are in business and the economic status of the groom himself, or his family. From the above findings it is evident that for one to get married either to an educated or an uneducated bride, an amount of money not less than KES 200,000 is required.

An overwhelming number of respondents, particularly men, expressed their displeasure with the increasing demand for the unfixed amount of money paid along with the livestock as bride wealth. They argued that the fact that bride wealth is now theoretically stated in form of livestock while the actual payment done in cash has given parents an opportunity to enrich themselves by demanding exorbitant amounts of money. They stated that this has created affordability problems among young men and so encouraging them to engage in illicit relationships. In this regard, a respondent in Kibugat ward narrated that:

I have never taken anything to my wife's home although we have been living together for three years. For me to legalize the marriage I need to pay five cattle, a ram and an ewe and also some amount of money. To start with, an amount of money not less than five thousand shilling for *yoetabkaat* (forgiveness) is also required. This is because I have lived with my wife without paying the bride wealth. Considering that I am a mere farmer, meeting all these expenses is quite difficult. However, I must pay since my children's bride wealth will not be paid to me unless I pay their mother's. This is according to our cultural norms (A 35-year-old respondent).

The above findings are in congruent with Duale's (2018) remarks during the Somali Firi-Cultural Expo in Eastleigh, where he strongly condemned the Somali community for the exorbitant bride wealth. He decried the practice of turning marriage into a multi-dollar industry where a price of \$10,000 is demanded as a condition to marry a daughter. Duale (2018) states that parents demand exorbitant amounts for bride wealth as though they are buying a vehicle. He further criticized the community for the skyrocketing of bride wealth which has caused the youth to engage in illegitimate relationships.

Moreover, all the respondents stated that the livestock paid as bride wealth among the Kipsigis include: one bull (*eito*) which signifies a man's authority as the head of the family. Secondly, is a mature cow (*teta ne iywaget*) which is presented by the groom to the in-laws to justify that he is already a grown-up and so economically empowered to take care of his family. A cow near to calf (*tete ne tubcher*) is the third cow presented to signify procreation of the new couple. A heifer (*chepng'apait/roriat*) is also given and is meant for compensation to the bride's family for her up-bringing while a cow with a suckling calf (*teta ne abai*) signifies continuity of the generation. In addition, an ewe is given to the mother-in-law which is meant to legally permit the son-in-law to call her *boger*. An elder added that the ewe is exclusively for the mother-in-law and she can choose to slaughter for her friends or keep it in remembrance of her daughter.

A ram is also given to the father and solely belongs to him. *Tete ne inyuminego* is a cow that is given in place of thirteen sheep or goats depending on a particular clan. Lastly, is *chepletiot*, normally a mature heifer which the son-in-law will later take back a calf. *Chepletiot* is not commonly paid but under a situation where there is domestic disagreement to a point of the bride returning to her home the husband is compelled to pay. *Nyoetabkaat* (forgiveness) is part of bride wealth too and refers to the money normally paid by the groom to his wife's father, when the couple elopes without the consent of their immediate families. This money normally ranges between KES 5000 and KES 20,000.

4.4 Factors that have led to the Commercialization of Bride Wealth

The respondents defined commercialization of bride wealth as the process of converting bride wealth into a fortune instead of being a token of appreciation to the bride's family. The payment is, therefore, characterized by exorbitant amounts of cash, determined by certain economic variables. As a result, the bride becomes a commodity for exchange hence a business transaction taking place. From the respondents and key informants, modernization, capitalism, economic factors and scarcity of land are the main factors responsible for the commercialization of bride wealth among the Kipsigis of Bureti Constituency.

4.4.1 Modernization

The respondents acknowledged that western culture has influenced the traditional marriage ceremonies and the nature of bride wealth payment among the Kipsigis. Livestock and butter were traditionally enough to be called bride wealth but with modernization the butter transformed into money. According to one elder, the steps traditionally followed for bride wealth payment and negotiations have been reduced from five to three. He stated that people now focus mainly on the introduction, bride wealth payment and the marriage ceremony itself and so adopting the western way of doing courtship. He added that the traditional sacred plant (*segutiet*) which was used as a sign of engagement of the bride to the groom has now been replaced with modern expensive rings. These particular rings could be in the form of silver, diamond or gold. All these have resulted from the influence of westernization. Furthermore, money which was traditionally absent in bride wealth payment is now the order of the

day as it goes hand-in-hand with the livestock or completely replaces the livestock. For instance, one key informant observed that:

People in our community now consider the payment of bride wealth solely in form of livestock as a backward way of doing it. Presently, people have adopted the payment in form of cash and other modern goods. As a result, bride wealth negotiations have taken the shape of being a showy affair characterized by a master of ceremony, dance crews, classic tends and decorations, modern clothes, food and drinks like champagne. However, traditionally it was a simple affair with traditional food and beer only required for celebration. Therefore, with influence of modernization and the desire for people to fit into certain social classes, the custom of bride wealth continues to be commercialized (A 55-year-old man).

These findings are in congruent with studies conducted by Asiimwe (2013) in Uganda, in which he found that the forces of modernization have influenced the institution of bride wealth. This is because people now strive to fit into certain social classes by demanding huge amounts of bride wealth. In so doing the whole event becomes a showy affair. He observes that the traditional way of paying bride wealth in the form of gifts and livestock has been overtaken by westernization, featuring huge sums of money and modern gifts like vehicles and land titles being demanded.

4.4.2 Scarcity of Land

Scarcity of land in this context refers to land required for keeping the livestock paid as bride wealth being limited. This is due to the fact that population keeps increasing while the land capacity remains constant. Pressure is therefore exerted on the available land for agricultural purposes.

The respondents informed the researcher that a majority of this community's members presently prefer to translate the entire bride wealth into cash form, since land has become so limited. However, they alluded to the fact that this translation of livestock paid as bride wealth into cash is not parallel to each other. They pointed out that some families tend to take advantage by hiking the amount charged per cow and so making the payment comparatively higher. This way an exorbitant amount of cash

is charged which exceeds direct conversion of the required livestock into cash. In line with this, Joseph Bii, a respondent, stated that:

I already have enough livestock in my farm; I do not see the need to add more due to scarcity of land. In fact, I need cash to be paid as bride wealth for my daughters. This way I can directly feel the benefits that I invested in my daughters.

From the above sentiments, it is evident that some parents target enriching themselves from the bride wealth paid for their daughters in addition to the claim that land is scarce. As a matter of fact, this has contributed to the commercialization of bride wealth among the Kipsigis community of Bureti Constituency.

The findings above concur with those of Chinonyerem (2014) in Nigeria where she found that population pressure exerted on the land forced the landless families and those with limited land to start demanding bride wealth in the form of cash. Consequently, it accelerated the marriage payment as communities demanded for huge amounts of cash in exchange for their daughters.

4.4.3 Capitalism

Respondents asserted that capitalism has converted the entire institution of bride wealth which traditionally was meant to unite the intermarrying families to a money-making venture. An elder pointed out that the money-economy came with the colonial government which, in turn, resulted in the transformation of the mere oil presented to the parents as part of bride wealth among the Kipsigis into a lumpsum amount of money. This elder remarked that:

Ours was to give cattle and butter to the bride's family. The butter was a sign of blessings while the cattle were for compensation to the bride's family for the loss of their daughter. All these were meant to establish a union between the two families. Today, however, people are demanding money with the aim of making profits from what they spent on their children and so turning the custom into a money-making industry (A75-year-old clan elder).

Furthermore, respondents informed the researcher that bride wealth is now a price system where the bride has a monetary value attached to her. The whole process is now featured by haggling for higher prices as socio-economic variables, particularly the bride's level of education, employment, also the status of the groom's family being the determining factors. They stated that these variables determine material distribution and so the amount of bride wealth expected to be paid. For that reason, those with higher education and in employment are set to fetch higher prices. The respondents added that the love for money and the need to make more profits has eroded the uniformity in payment that existed traditionally. Therefore, people are now money-oriented rather than seeking a mere compensation for the loss of a daughter.

In addition, a key informant stated that a competitive market has been created for girls in employment and those who are educated where the highest bidder is encouraged. She remarked that the custom of bride wealth is almost appearing like auctioning daughters in an open market. However, she regretted that it was unfortunate for the less educated and those women of lower status who might have their bride wealth payment done much later. It is therefore a matter of what the bride has to offer to the groom's family. On the other hand, it is the duty of the groom to accumulate capital so as to meet the bride wealth demanded. Along this line a respondent stated that:

After a bride wealth negotiation you will always hear people ask how much the girl was sold. A majority of people will fail to inquire even where the visitors came from or how the entire ceremony was. This is because this custom has been dominated with the desire to make money. Furthermore, parents now seemingly educate their daughters with the aim of fetching a better bride wealth. We have seen in the past how girls used to drop out of school for boys to be educated. But with the amount of cash paid as bride wealth today, parents struggle for their girls to complete even the basic education, so as to fetch a better bride wealth (A 45-year-old woman).

The above findings are in line with those of Tarugarira and Mazambani (2014), in their studies in Zimbabwe. They state that profits from bride wealth have motivated parents to almost come up with a Daughters' Marketing Board. They remark that with

the commercialization of bride wealth daughters were now considered as commodities of exchange.

Members of a focus group discussion agreed that capitalism has completely eroded the communal ownership of the property paid as bride wealth among the Kipsigis community. For that reason, bride wealth is a private property meant exclusively for the bride's father. They argued that kinsmen are there only to be seen during bride wealth negotiation ceremonies. This is because negotiations take place only between the groom's father and the bride's father, that is, the seller and the buyer. Along these lines, John Bii, an elder had this to say:

I attended a bride wealth negotiation and payment ceremony in April this year just here in my neighbourhood. The discussions went on well, we started by stating the number of cows that our culture requires one to pay. But when we reached the subject of *mwaita* (money) we were told that it was not subject to discussion as the owners of the marrying children with a mediator would go aside. When I asked the reason for this, it was stated that everyone knows how much his or her cow is worth. Moreover, every individual knows how much he or she has for the purchase of that cow. They further argued that we cannot speak as a group on the amount of money to be paid while in the real sense it is only one person paying (A 65-year-old elder).

From the above key informant, it is the bride's father who decides the final amount to be paid as bride wealth, being the owner of the good. Moreover, the bride wealth paid personally belongs to the bride's father as he individually invested in the productive asset. It is therefore evident from the findings that with the influence of the capitalist ideology the amounts required for bride wealth have sky-rocketed. This is attributed to the fact that today the payment today is done in form of money which goes to individual pockets and so one's desire to make huge profits.

4.4.4 Economic forces

The study established that economic forces are the main factors that have spearheaded the transformation of bride wealth into a business venture among the Kipsigis. A majority of the respondents argued that necessity is the mother of invention and so

people have to device ways to cope with the rising cost of living and the high rates of inflation. For that reason, the rising cost of living has pushed the current amounts of bride wealth charges to almost being equivalent to more than two-thirds of household assets and so reinforcing its commercial nature. Along these lines, an overwhelming number of respondents posited that the amount required to buy a cow today is not the same amount that was used to buy the same cow twenty years ago. Therefore, under these circumstances all families, including poor families, are obliged to meet these demands for their sons to marry.

Additionally, respondents informed the researcher that the rising cost of up-bringing children in terms of meeting their needs, such as food, medication and education, has been increasing. They argued that the heifer that was traditionally paid among the Kipsigis as compensation for the bride's upkeep when she was young is no longer enough to meet the child's present day needs. Consequently, parents are forced to factor in what they have spent on their daughters during bride wealth negotiations. In regard to this, Joseph Kirui, an elder, observed that:

The cost of living has been escalating hence meeting one's daily needs is a real struggle. Children now need to go to school especially these academies like those I took my daughters to, which are quite expensive. From there they go through the self-sponsored programmes at the University which are costly. During bride wealth payment for our daughters we have to factor in the entire cost of education and also their upbringing. This is because once they are married we lose them to the other family. The main reason behind the factoring in is because of the needs arising from the high cost of living and the fact that we need to be compensated. If we go back to the 1970s for an educated girl only six cows and at most ten thousand shillings was paid as bride wealth. However, today, in addition to the six cows, cash demanded ranges from a hundred to three hundred or even above. This is attributed to the current standard of living, economic needs and the cost of living.

From the sentiments above it is evident that parents are indirectly recovering the expenses of bringing up their daughters so as to meet the demands resulting from the high cost of living. In so doing the commercial nature of bride wealth is encouraged.

These findings are congruent with those of Mangena and Ndlovu (2013) who observe that among the Shona, parents seek huge amounts for bride wealth by factoring in the cost of education, clothing, food, medication and other expenses that they spent on their daughters. They do so to meet the demands of the rising cost of living which, in turn, accelerates the transformation of the institution of bride to being more of a business enterprise.

Furthermore, this study established that the high level of poverty in the community has had direct impact on the institution of bride wealth. Parents now capitalize on this practice so as to free themselves from poverty. This is manifested through the demand for huge amounts of bride wealth with the aim of wealth accumulation. In line with this matter, Jane Bii, a respondent, asserted that:

This is, however, not new to us since, traditionally, during starvation a girl was married off for a bag of grain. This is then an advanced way of doing the same thing. Being something started by our fore fathers and mothers there is nothing wrong with marrying off my daughter to get cows and money to meet the day-to-day needs. Or even use the money to educate her siblings.

The sentiments expressed above are in line with those of Lukabwe (2013) who observes that parents view their daughters as monetary reserves. He asserts that parents value their daughters just like other commodities for exchange, such as gold and coffee meant to be traded on in the market. In so doing, daughters become a means of solving parents' economic shortcomings. Parents therefore aim at getting financial gain from bride wealth, thereby spearheading its commercialization.

The researcher also found that the material distribution among families influences the amount of bride wealth expected to be paid. As a result, bride wealth is charged according to the status of a family. Respondents pointed out that the Kipsigis, being mainly an agro-pastoralist community, wealth is manifested through land and the number of livestock. Furthermore, the presence of other assets in the family like businesses, also determines the amount of bride wealth to be charged. Under a situation where a girl is getting married to a groom of higher status, the groom is

expected to pay well to the bride's family. This goes hand-in-hand with the Kipsigis saying, "*kichoresanian*," meaning you extract from the son-in-law.

4.5 Commercialization of Bride Wealth and the Status of Women

The study established that commercialization of bride wealth translates to women being commoditized hence the husband and his family acquiring ownership. For that reason, women's independence and personal autonomy in various aspects of their lives is constrained. This is manifested through gender discrimination in access to and control over resources, participation in decision-making and access to reproductive health services, among others, where women are disadvantaged. This section is divided into three sub-sections, namely, bride wealth and gender-based violence, bride wealth and reproductive health rights and, lastly, bride wealth and women's access to and control over resources.

4.5.1 Bride Wealth and Gender-based Violence

The types of violence in this context are physical, sexual, psychological and economic abuses imposed on women as a result of bride wealth payment. All the respondents affirmed that indeed bride wealth promotes gender-based violence among the married couples especially when it is highly commercialized. They stated that bride wealth among the Kipsigis has been increasing rapidly and thus causing affordability problems among the young men who sometimes are under duress to sell off the little they have. Consequently, this brings hard feelings causing them to ill-treat their wives due to financial shortcomings. The respondents stated that when a hefty bride wealth is paid against the will of the groom, with a little domestic dispute he would tend to capitalize on the situation by use of violence hence resulting in family wrangles. Along these lines, a respondent narrated:

When I got married, I individually shouldered the burden of paying bride wealth. Life became difficult as I disposed of the little I had accumulated to pay-off the bride wealth. This is because today differs from the olden days where kinsmen and the entire family paid bride wealth on behalf of the groom. Nevertheless, Kipsigis culture stipulates that bride wealth ought to be paid at once, so I really had to strain a lot financially. However, I am human and under certain circumstances am forced to remind my wife that I paid a lot to her home (Case narrative of a 35-year-old man).

Women respondents reported to have suffered various forms of violence not only perpetrated by their husbands but also their families and the community in relation to bride wealth payment. They pointed out that through bride wealth payment men acquire legitimate rights over them and so use violence to assert masculinities and authority. They added that payment of bride wealth among the Kipsigis not only makes a woman a servant of her husband but also that of his family. The forms of violence reported included marital rape, physical abuse by the husband, emotional black mail by the husband and his family, exclusion in access and control of resources and not being entitled to what one has worked for. Concerning this matter, two respondents observed that:

Everything I work for is subject to control not only by my husband but also his family. After I come from the tea buying centre my father-in-law usually demands for the tea slip as in the case with my husband. Practically nothing exclusively belongs to me. I feel bad because it is me who works tirelessly on most occasions and not them. As a woman legally married and has had bride wealth paid I cannot ask for an explanation for the same because the reason is obvious. Furthermore, the Kipsigis culture socializes us women not to question our husbands especially when legally married. Sometimes I request for money-related favours and am reminded that my home took everything (A 28-year-old respondent).

My husband normally demands for sex any time he feels like. I cannot say anything because he is my husband and he has had my bride wealth paid. So sometimes I only have to suffer in silence because discussing such matters with other people is quite shameful. How will you even say your husband raped you? (A 38-year-old respondent)

In addition, the respondents stated that payment of bride wealth in cash makes men think that they have bought their wives and so have property rights over them. Being property to their husbands, women are obligated to respect all the commands from them. For that reason, women are pushed to the subservient position with their husbands being the overall decision-makers. The respondents noted that the Kipsigis culture allows men to beat their wives as a way of executing these obligations and

responsibilities on them. They also pointed out that this is reinforced by the Kipsigis culture which socializes every member to women being perceived as minors while men are adults. In this view, a respondent (45-year-old man) remarked that:

As the head of the family, there is nothing wrong if I give two or three strokes to any of the children in my homestead, including the one I paid for. This is only a way of showing them how much I care about them. All of them must listen to what I say as the head of the family. Everything in my homestead must run according to the head.

The findings support those of Ngutor *et al.* (2013), who observe that bride wealth today appears to be buying a woman like any other commodity in the market. As a result of ownership of women, men have resorted to abusing their wives if they failed to fulfill their mandate. Mangena and Ndlovu (2013), in their studies among the Shona and Ndebele of Zimbabwe also found that women are constantly abused if they failed to do what their husbands paid for, particularly the gender roles.

The above sentiments were supported a key informant in Kapsogut location who stated that: “The translation of bride wealth into more of a business enterprise has led to women being set for standards of performance. Failure to meet the set standards results in the spouses using violence to facilitate the achievement of the same. Moreover, it is believed that it is only a man whose needs are not met who beats his wife”.

The study also established that women are forced to stay in abusive marriages serving their husbands and family. This is reinforced by the Kipsigis culture which requires women to refund all that was paid as bride wealth so as to be granted a divorce. This is not only emotional violence but also economic as a woman is not given what she worked for in the course of her marriage. With scarce resources at women’s disposal, they are left with no other choice but to stay in that marriage. Furthermore, the researcher found that fear of stigma, social and economic vulnerabilities have forced women to be glued to even the most abusive relationships facing all sorts of violence. In this view, a respondent gave an account that:

Once bride wealth has been paid, your family does not have much influence. Practically, it is like when a seller loses all the rights after he or she gets paid for the good. Sometimes life gets to the worst, but there is nothing you can do. You have your marriage to protect and also in a case of divorce and separation people will say you cannot keep a husband. Moreover, the cost of returning the bride wealth too is a factor one has to consider. In addition, return of bride wealth also makes one's parents a laughing stock in the community (A 42-year-old woman respondent).

From these findings, it is evident that the bride wealth among the Kipsigis has further widened the already existing gender gap between men and women and so perpetuating social, economic and political inequalities. This has resulted in the exclusion of women in decision-making process and so enhancing gender inequalities in the families. For that reason women are left marginalized and vulnerable and so lowering their status relative to their male counterparts. Women are subjected to slave-like conditions which inhibits their advancement and full utilization of their abilities due to fear of violence. As a result, women's personal freedom and autonomy is sabotaged, which not only is a hindrance to women earning an income and access to education and training but also limit their social and economic productivity.

4.5.2 Bride Wealth and Reproductive Health Rights

From the respondents and key informants, the study established that the authority of the husband within marriage particularly in matters of sex and reproduction is largely as a result of bride wealth payment. They asserted that one of the reasons that justify the payment of bride wealth among the Kipsigis is to accord the husband legitimate rights to reap the fruits of his wife's womb. This way the primary role of women in a marriage is child-bearing. The respondents asserted that women, therefore, do not have any influence on the fertility choices and the number of children is dependent on the husband and his family. Concerning this matter a key informant recounted that:

According to Kipsigis culture and tradition bride wealth is associated with groom's family lineage and children. As a result, once paid the bride's main role is to give birth to children, preferably males, to ensure continuity of the clan. For that case, through payment of bride wealth the husband acquires all

the sexual and reproductive rights of his wife. The wife must therefore try as much as possible to justify what her husband paid for her by giving birth to the number of children he desires. Failure may lead to marrying a second wife or a divorce (A 65-year-old elder).

The above findings are in line with those of Fuseini (2013) in Ghana who found that once bride wealth has been paid the husband and his family secures all the rights including those of reproductive and sexual matters. This way women's autonomy over their sexuality and childbearing is weakened. This means that women's right to choose when to reproduce and when not to is undermined. As a result, this influences women's child spacing capacity which, on the other hand, undermines women's capacity to participate in activities outside the domestic sphere. Along these lines, women are compelled to carry heavy loads in domestic work and other non-market production which lowers their status compared to their male counterparts.

The study also established that a woman's desire to have few children does not translate to her access to contraceptives when the husband or his family still needs more children. This is because the husband having paid bride wealth is entitled to have the number of children he wishes to have. The respondents informed the researcher that access to contraceptives without the approval of one's husband, could have serious implications on one's marriage. They stated that many women in this area have been beaten for using family planning methods without approval from their spouses. In regard to this a nurse in a health facility had this to say:

You find that most women in this area are so rigid in terms of the use of safe family planning methods. Most of them, when asked, say their spouses would kill them should they know they have used the same. A majority of them state that one of the reasons they are married is for them to have children. So you find that fertility is quite high in this area, with an average of six children per household (A 40-year-old nurse at Cheborge Health Centre).

From the above sentiments, it is evident that bride wealth undermines women's free will in areas of fertility. However, this has consequences on women's development and empowerment. This is because more children translate to women staying at home to take care of them as men engage in activities outside their homes. The majority of

women having few resources at their disposal are likely to be economically vulnerable as their dependence on spouses is enhanced. This may even subject them to violence and abuse.

Additionally, the respondents informed the researcher that the rights secured by husbands as a consequence of bride wealth payment cripples women's self-determination in access to reproductive health services including gynaecological services, antenatal and postnatal services. Correspondingly, women's access to these services is dependent on their husbands' permission. Those women who go against their husbands are regarded as being deviant and disobedient. This is detrimental to maternal health as any arising complications may not be determined on time. Concerning this, Leah Chebii admitted that:

When cows and money have been paid to your home, it means one is legitimately a wife of somebody. Therefore all decisions in regard to reproductive health are made by the husband. Whether one is pregnant or not the husband must be involved. All decisions are made by men and women have no say whatsoever. The Kipsigis culture socializes women to be submissive to our husbands. They are the heads while we are the neck (A 45-year-old woman).

Members of a women's focus group discussion noted that bride wealth constraints women's choices to a responsible and satisfying sex life. They stated that this stems mainly from the fact that through bride wealth a wife becomes the sole property of her husband. In this fashion her primary responsibility is to satisfy her husband's sexual needs at all costs. Additionally, these women stated that as a married woman whose bride wealth has been paid, one lacks the capacity to control her body. This way a woman cannot determine when to have sex. This is reinforced by the fact that the Kipsigis culture socializes women and girls to be sexually passive to their husbands, as men are the initiators of sex. Fear of the consequences arising from the same, for instance, being beaten or sent back to her parents, leaves women with no option but to adhere to the norm. In this view, Jane Sang pointed out that:

It is a taboo among the Kipsigis to discuss sex matters with your husband. Women must wait for the husband to make advances during bed time. Women who do the same are perceived to be loose and so their husbands reserve the right to send them to their parents due to unsatisfactory behaviour (A 55-year-old woman).

The above sentiments are in line with studies conducted by Asimwe (2013) in Uganda where he found that bride wealth payment makes the husband to own the wife and so undermining her capacity to control her body. Once bride wealth has been paid, the woman is reduced to the status of property and so everything she possesses belongs to the husband. This is, however, demeaning to women as their enjoyment of prestige within a marriage is crippled. Furthermore, women's bodily integrity is also violated.

To determine whether there is a relationship between bride wealth and the spread of HIV and AIDS, the researcher asked the respondents whether women had the capacity to negotiate for safe sex in a marriage. All the respondents affirmed that under no circumstances can women negotiate for safe sex, more so when she has had her bride wealth paid. They argued that even if one heard that her husband had several sex partners outside marriage, the only option is walking away but not asking him to use protection. Along these lines, a respondent remarked that:

Negotiating for safe sex can happen elsewhere but not among the Kipsigis. How can one ask the husband who has paid money and cows to use protection? Even if you heard from reliable sources that your husband has other women, asking for the use of protection is so absurd and cannot even be discussed. If one did that, particularly when her bride wealth has been paid, this may call for a serious meeting with extended family (A 36-year-old man).

In line with the sentiments above, studies conducted by Mangena and Ndlovu (2013) in Zimbabwe found that many women have been beaten and abused by their husbands for suggesting the use of protection during sexual intercourse. They explained that these men justify the use of violence by claiming to have paid a lot of money as bride wealth.

From the above findings it is evident that the custom of bride wealth bestows more power on the men in regard to matters of sex and reproduction and so pushing women to a subservient position. For that reason, gender dynamics in marital relationships not only limit women's reproductive independence but also reinforce their marginalization in areas of development. As a result, both women's social and economic vulnerabilities are enhanced, and so lowering their status compared to that of the men.

4.5.3 Bride Wealth and Women's Access to and Control over Resources

Resources in this context include both tangible and the intangible resources. These include land, machinery, capital, credit, labour, business, real estate, social network, time, well-being, creativity and organization. Women's access to and control over both material and non-material resources is critical for their engagement in development and achievement of self-empowerment.

For that reason, this study sought to find out ways in which bride wealth affects women's capacity to independently access and control resources. The respondents informed the researcher that women own nothing as far as the productive resources are concerned. They stated that once bride wealth has been paid the woman becomes the first property of her husband and this demands obedience and subordination. They added that there can never be two heads in the family and so the husband determines how resources are spent and utilized. In addition, the respondents pointed out that women join the husband's family empty-handed and thus have no mandate to control the resources they found. Instead, they should work hard enough to justify what was paid as bride wealth. In regard to this, one key informant remarked that:

When bride wealth is paid women automatically take their position as children and so have no capacity to make independent decisions in regard to utilization of resources. Nevertheless, all the productive resources in most homesteads are in the husband's name. Consequently, husbands are the ones who are final in determining what is to be sold, bought and expanded. Generally, in this community fixed resources like land, cattle and tea plantations belong to the men and only smaller resources like chicken and food crops are left for

women. A good number of women come to us with brilliant investment ideas but due to lack of collaterals to secure loans, they have no capacity to put them in practice. This is one of the reasons women still lack behind in developments not only among the Kipsigis but also everywhere else (A 48-year-old Maendeleo ya Wanawake official).

From the above sentiments, it is evident that bride wealth promotes gender economic inequality between men and women. Unequal access to resources limits women's capacity to take part in productivity and also compromises the security of their livelihoods. Women have few resources at their disposal which may not be sufficient for them to engage in meaningful economic activities. Along this line, most women face greater obstacles in accessing financial services, including insurance, loans and credit due to lack of collaterals, this way their social and economic vulnerabilities are enhanced. Just like that, women continue to be absent in competitive economic activities as men take up more positions.

Furthermore, the respondents informed the researcher that despite women taking an active part in most of the production in their households, they do not benefit directly from what they work for. This is because one of the reasons for bride wealth payment among the Kipsigis is to accord authority to the husband over his wife's labour. Therefore, everything that the wife works for is subject to control by the husband and his family. Typically, women own nothing of their own not because they do not work hard enough but because bride wealth obligates them to. They added that with bride wealth payment a woman is counted as part of the husband's property and everything she owns belongs to the husband and the extended family. In fact, the wife's income when in employment is subject to discussion while that of the husband is kept a secret. In regard to this, a key informant pointed out that:

If you visited a tea buying centre at the time of weighing tea, the majority are women. The same happens in the morning if you wake up early enough, you find that a majority of women take milk to the buying centre. However, at the end of the month an overwhelming number of men are in the queues for payment. All these, are attributed to the custom of bride wealth which obligates women to these responsibilities to the extent of being ignorant. Most Kipsigis women fear to be sent back to their parent's home due to

disobedience as it would mean bride wealth would be refunded to the groom. In fact, most have been socialized that once bride wealth has been paid they ought to take up all responsibilities in the homestead since they have been compensated for (A 55-year-old chief).

From the sentiments above it can be concluded that bride wealth constraints women's economic freedom as it places hurdles on women's potential to engage in economic activities. It does so by promoting gender subordination, whereby more power is bestowed upon men, who use that power on women to get most of the work done as women get fewer of the benefits. Moreover, lack of division of labour places huge constraints on women's time and opportunities and so perpetuating political, social and economic inequality in turn lowering their status relative to their male counterparts.

Moreover, the study established that Kipsigis women are cut off inheritance from their biological home through bride wealth payment. It is perceived that once bride wealth has been paid women acquire belonging to another family and so are completely detached from their homes in terms of access to and control over resources. As a result of preventing loss of land and other resources to another clan, women are practically not entitled to any inheritance. This is supported by the fact that the Kipsigis community is patriarchal in nature; consequently all the productive resources are in the hands of the men. This inhibits women's empowerment which could have been obtained through primary ownership of productive assets.

The study also established that bride wealth obligates women to the private sphere with the primary responsibility of undertaking the triple gender roles. In addition, the custom of bride wealth bestows on men the right to impose limitations on women's freedom of movement and participation. For that reason, women's desire to take part in activities outside their homes is dependent on the husband's approval. Therefore women who act independently towards their husbands are not only subject to disapproval by their in-laws but also the whole society. For that reason, obstacles are placed on women who may want to take part in activities outside their homes, for instance, doing business, as well as taking part in leadership and other community programmes.

Furthermore, members of a focused group discussion noted that throughout marriage, the majority of Kipsigis women are faithful in undertaking their triple gender roles. However, in case of divorce and separation they are sent away empty-handed, with the responsibility of paying back all that was paid as bride wealth which burdens them economically. In so doing, women do not benefit from matrimonial properties, even those acquired in the course of marriage. They stated that culture does not provide any security which would help women to get compensated for what they worked for. The majority of women being less educated, might not even be aware of the Matrimonial Property Act which would otherwise help them in gaining access to the resources acquired in the course of marriage.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This study assessed the commercialization of bride wealth among the Kipsigis of Bureti Constituency. More specifically, the study established the forms of bride wealth in the study population, factors that have led to the commercialization of bride wealth and also its implications on the status of women. This chapter summarizes the findings, draws conclusion and then makes recommendations.

5.2 Summary of the Findings

The first objective of this study was to describe the forms of bride wealth among the Kipsigis of Bureti Constituency. The study established that members of this community pay bride wealth in form of livestock, that is, 6 cattle, an ewe and a ram. In addition to the livestock, an unfixed amount of money must be paid to complete a marriage transaction. The researcher found that the amount of money expected to be paid is mainly dependent on the bride's level of education. A highly educated bride fetches between KES 100,000 and KES 300,000. Other determining variables that the respondents pointed out include the economic status of the bride like those in employment or business and the economic status of the groom himself, or his family. The findings suggest that the custom of bride wealth has transformed from being a mere cultural practice into a business enterprise, where families haggle for huge amounts of cash rather than seeking a mere compensation for the loss of a daughter. For that reason, women are indirectly translated into being bought like any other tradable commodity.

The second objective was to identify factors that have led to the commercialization of bride among the Kipsigis of Bureti Constituency. The study established that with the influence of modernization people now consider the payment of bride wealth payment solely in form of livestock as a backward way of doing it. Members of this community have thus adopted the use of cash to accompany the livestock. However, on certain occasions money completely replaces the livestock. Moreover, it was established that with the rise in population, land continues to be scarce hence compromising its ability to accommodate large numbers of livestock. As a result, this community's members now prefer to translate the entire bride wealth into cash, thus

promoting its commercial nature. Furthermore, the respondents also noted that economic forces have promoted the commercialization of bride wealth. They observed that with the rise in the cost of living, high rates of inflation and poverty, parents charge exorbitant amounts of cash so as to meet their livelihood needs. Lastly, the study found that capitalism has spearheaded the transformation of the custom of bride wealth which traditionally was meant to unite the intermarrying families into a money-making venture. The findings suggest that parents now focus on making profit from this custom rather than seeking for a mere compensation for the loss of a daughter.

The third objective of the study was to determine whether there is potential influence of the commercialization of bride wealth on the status of women. The researcher found that through bride wealth, more so when commercialized, husbands assume unquestionable control over their wives, including their rights to control and access over resources. The findings suggest that women own nothing as far as the productive resources are concerned since all these resources are in the hands of men. Consequently, women are unable to invest family resources even for a common good and what they work for is not only subject to control by the husbands but also their families. This way, women's vulnerability with negative implications on personal, community and national development, is increased since resources are core to empowerment.

According to the respondents, commercialization of bride wealth promotes high incidences of gender-based violence among married couples. It was established that the demand for exorbitant amount of cash paid as bride wealth resulted in husbands ill-treating their wives. This emanates from economic hardships that men are forced to undergo in order to raise the amount demanded. The respondents blamed the practice for continued abuse of wives by their husbands, who use violence to assert masculinities and authority on women. They reported that women have suffered various forms of violence perpetuated not only by their husbands and family but also the community as a whole in relation to bride wealth payment. The respondents further noted that the Kipsigis culture allows men to beat their wives more so whom they have paid for as a way of executing obligations and responsibilities on them.

The study also established that once bride wealth has been paid, the husband and his family secure all rights including those of reproductive and sexual matters. This way women's autonomy over their sexuality and reproduction is compromised. As a result, fertility choices and the number of children to be born is dependent on the husband and his family. This influences women's child spacing capacity which, in turn, undermines women's capacity to participate in activities outside the domestic sphere, so lowering their status compared to their male counterparts.

5.3 Conclusions

The study concludes that commercialization of bride wealth perpetuates oppressive gender relations where women are pushed into the subservient positions relative to their male counterparts. Moreover, women are translated into being commodities of their husbands and so they are stripped off their rights and freedoms. This enslavement not only puts hurdles in women's engagement in self-production activities but also predisposes them to gender-based violence. Furthermore, the power secured by men as a result of bride wealth inhibits women's ability to make independent decisions in regard to their reproductive health matters. For that reason, women are unable to freely access reproductive health services not to mention having control over their fertility which is very crucial to their engagement in productivity.

5.4 Recommendations

On the basis of the above conclusions, the researcher recommends the following:

- There is need for legislation to set limits to bride wealth amounts. This should be done by putting limitations on the Marriage Act and Customary Law so as to clearly spell-out the nature and extent of bride wealth among all communities in Kenya.
- Advocacy campaigns should be conducted in order to sensitize the public on the importance of gender equality in marriage irrespective of how much bride wealth is paid. These campaigns should aim at educating the public on how bride wealth is a breeding ground for gender discrimination in regard to access

to and control over resources, economic freedom and influence over reproductive health matters.

- Women's rights such as reproductive rights, economic freedom and labour rights are constitutional. It is therefore the duty of the state to promote the protection of these rights against infringement by cultural practices such as bride wealth.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Informed consent form

Good day. My name is Chepkoech Sharon Komingoi an MA student in Gender and Development Studies at the University of Nairobi. I am conducting a study on the “Commercialization of bride wealth among the Kipsigis of Bureti Constituency”. This research is for academic purposes although the findings could also be used by other parties for policy development and programming. There is no right or wrong answer; so feel free to give your opinion. I want to assure you that all the answers will be kept confidential. Additionally, you will not need to use your real identity. The interview will last for 30 minutes and I request that you allow me to record the conversation and take notes. Furthermore, your participation is fully voluntary and so you reserve the discretion of declining to undertake the interview. However, your participation could be so resourceful. Do you accept to be interview? Please sign here as evidence of your informed consent

Sign here.....Date.....

Thank you.

Appendix II: Semi-Structured Questionnaire

Part A: Socio-demographic characteristics

1. Name of the Respondent (Optional).....
2. Sex of the respondent.....
3. Age.....
4. Marital status:
 - Single
 - Married
 - Divorced
5. Type of marital union:
 - Monogamous
 - Polygynous
6. Level of education:
 - Primary
 - Secondary
 - Post-secondary
7. Religion.....
8. Occupation.....
9. Location.....

Section B: Forms of bride wealth and factors that have led to its commercialization

1. What is bride wealth?
2. a. How was bride wealth payment done in traditional Kipsigis community?
b. How is it done today?
3. What are some of the determining factors for the amount of bride wealth expected to be paid?
4. What do you understand by commercialization of bride wealth?
5. What factors have led to the commercialization of bride wealth in this area?

Section C: Commercialization of bride wealth and its implications for the status of women

6. Do you think commercialization of bride wealth promotes gender-based violence among married couples? How?

7 a. To what extent does commercialization of bride wealth impact on women's autonomy over sexual and reproductive matters?

b. Do women have capacity to negotiate for safe sex?

8.a How does commercialization of bride wealth impact on women's capacity to independently control and access productive resources in their households?

b. Do women benefit directly from what they have worked for?

c. Do husbands often involve their wives in decision making regarding household income?

9. To what extent does commercialization of bride wealth affect women's community participation and other activities outside their homes?

10. What is your individual perception on the commercialization of bride wealth?

11. What changes do you advocate for regarding the commercialization of bride wealth?

Thank you

Appendix III: Key Informant Interview Guide

1. What comes into your mind when one mentions bride wealth?
2. What was given traditionally among the Kipsigis as bride wealth and what is given today?
3. What do you understand by commercialization of bride wealth?
4. What factors are responsible for the commercialization of bride wealth? Explain.
5. What challenges do you think women encounter in accessing and controlling resources as a result of the commercialization of bride wealth.
6. In your opinion, is commercialization of bride wealth significant enough to affect women's economic empowerment? To what extent?
7. In your view, does commercialization of bride wealth promote gender-based violence among married couples? How?
8. In your opinion, is there any relationship between commercialization of bride wealth and women's autonomy over sexual and reproductive matters? Explain.
9. What do you think about the commercialization of bride wealth?
10. What changes do you advocate for regarding the commercialization of bride wealth?

Thank you

Appendix IV: Focus Group Discussion Guide

1. Factors that have led to the commercialization of bride wealth.
2. Bride wealth and women's access to and control over resources.
3. Bride wealth and women's reproductive health rights.
4. Bride wealth and gender-based violence

Thank you