

in laws demanded. For instance I was made to marry my wife from her families. Each had its cost. Doing that meant that I have acquired all of the rights they had over her. She now becomes mine whole and entire, and the family can never take her away because they benefited from the bride price would have to refund what they took. This is usually difficult to do else. The implication of most of the above assertion is that bride price was considered a stabilizing factor in marriage. Once the bride price was paid the couple now felt that they had a home and became settled. Since they had fulfilled societal expectations, they were bound to gain social recognition and respectability.

Some elders of the community also argued that the bride-price should be maintained as cultural norm and abolishing it would destroy the uniqueness of the culture as imposed from outside. They further argue that many people live happily together too old age in spite of the fact that bride-price was paid to the parents of the wife.

Even though there are objections arise due to the perceived commodification of women through a transaction, potentially leading to ill-treatment and feel that they cannot leave a marriage because it would mean their parents would have to return the bride price; still the practice is going on in Africa. Instead of banning the practice, some governments have attempted to legislate its particular aspects, such as banning refunds upon divorce or putting limits on the amount that can be paid for bride price. For example, Kenya's most recent set of marriage laws stipulates that a token bride price must be counted as sufficient to meet the needs of the custom. The zambian government has similarly spoken out to discourage families from requesting exorbitant amounts for their daughters, but this is not written into law and neither country defines what may be counted as token or exorbitant. Even though the Ethiopian government identifies the practice of bride price as harmful cultural practice, yet the government not stipulates a law on its types and amounts and it was seen, overwhelmingly, to have negative impacts on women and thus to require reform.

The effects of bride-price on stabilizing family has also been highlighted by dassanach woredas women and children affair office officer as it is a major contributing factor for stabilizing the family, especially as women cannot leave an abusive relationship if she cannot afford to refund the bride-price. The practice further strengthens the feeling of the husband that he has purchased his wife and therefore expects perpetual obedience and servitude from her.

Bride wealth as sign of prestige

The payment of bride wealth is also considered as a source of esteem for both couples and their parents. It is claimed to heighten status among peers and the community members. An interpretation from the bride's point of view holds that the higher the price, the greater her value is in her husband's house, it being known that she comes from a good family. The degree of surety for safeguarding her status in the future increases with the proportion that is deposited with her. The bride-price is in honor of the bride, to show how dear she is to her father and brothers. Members of local community who have participated in the FGD shared the view that: The bride feels happy when their husband pays a large amount of bride wealth since she thinks that she is valuable and desirable to her husband. Similarly the one who is paying a large amount of bride wealth is perceived as competent

in caring and supporting his wife in the future.

In the same vein, the bride's family which receives bride wealth is considered to have a high social recognition or prestige in the community. It is perceived by the community that the family's value and respect is heightened by having decent and good mannered daughter and the amount of bride wealth received by that family. In contrary, if the parents receive no or little bride wealth usually less than amount locally determined, they would receive low social status that even their daughters are ascribed as valueless. This conception makes the community members or family to claim high amount of bride wealth which usually have negative implication on the wellbeing of the community in general and the women in particular.

For women, having been paid for enhances their social status, especially where they favor the relationship. For some men and the majority of women across all ages, bride price payment was viewed as an indication that those who pay it are more likely to sustain the marital relationship. Rich men and those who could afford a high bride price were perceived as more eligible as marital partners, as one respondent put it: Many women want to go with older partners who provide material benefits. However, many go for young or main boy friends with whom they maintain a more serious relationship with intention of later marriage, if they can afford it.

From the findings of this study, it is clear that dassanach ethnic group attach great value to bride price payment. Many think it is a sign of respect and others say it is a sign of love and commitment from the man. Businge revealed that because women in Africa are generally perceived to be weak and powerless, many Africans believe that it is only through the payment of bride price to their parents that women can be made valuable or respected which agrees with the research finds, most respondents said that bride price is a sign of respect for the woman

The implications of bride price on other harmful cultural practices

The study investigated that most harmful cultural practices are directly and indirectly caused by bride-price. For the sake of clarity and precision the researcher decide to put the HCPs related to bride-price under the following diagram and but discuss them separately. The following are the most common HCPs that revolve around bride-price as the study findings pinpointed as shown in Figure 2.

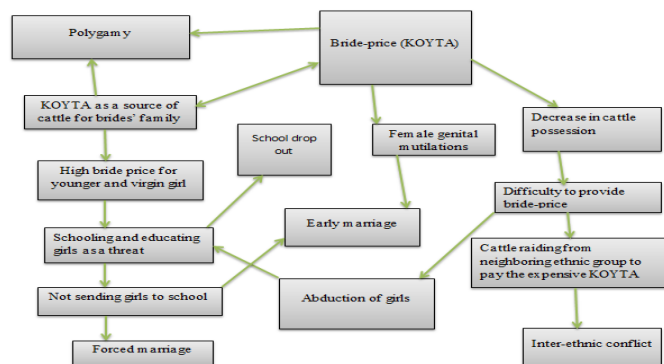


Figure 2. The impacts of KOYTA on other harmful traditional practices.

