

# High Bride Price as Determinant of Marital Stability among Akwa-Ibom People in Surulere Area, Lagos State, Nigeria

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## Abstract

Bride price represents a contract between families where material items and money are paid by the groom to the bride's family for the bride for the purpose of marriage. This study investigated High Bride Price as determinant of Marital stability among Married Akwa-Ibom people in Surulere, Lagos State, Nigeria. The purpose of the study was to: (i) assess whether high bride price is a determinant of domestic violence (ii) examine whether high bride price is a determinant of emotional problem among married Akwa-Ibom people in Surulere, Lagos State. A descriptive research design of survey type was adopted for the study. The population for the study comprised all married Akwa-Ibom people in Surulere, Lagos State. Multi stage sampling technique consisting of purposive, clustered, proportionate and simple random sampling technique was used to sample three hundred and seventy three (373) respondents from two associations in Itire-Ikate Local Council Development Area. Researchers'-designed questionnaire with four point Likert rating scale was used for the study which was validated by experts from the Departments of Health Promotion and Environmental Health Education, Faculty of Education, University of Ilorin, Kwara State. Cronbach alpha statistical tool was used to ascertain the internal consistency of the instrument and a reliability correlation coefficient, 'r' 0.85 was obtained through split-half method. Data collection was conducted by the researchers and trained research assistants. Inferential statistics of Chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) was used to analyse the postulated null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The findings of the study showed that marital stability of married Akwa-Ibom people is affected because; i. High bride price is a significant determinant of domestic violence among married Akwa-Ibom people in Surulere because (cal.  $\chi^2$  value 146.678 is greater than critical  $\chi^2$  value 21.03) at df 12 at 0.05 level of significance and High bride price is a significant determinant of emotional problems among married Akwa-Ibom people in Surulere because (cal.  $\chi^2$  value 143.062 is greater than critical  $\chi^2$  value 21.03) at df 12 at 0.05 level of significance. The study concluded that high bride price led to domestic violence and emotional problems which determines marital stability among Akwa-Ibom people in Surulere, Lagos State. Therefore, the study recommended that high bride price should be reduced in order to avoid domestic violence which determines marital stability among Akwa-Ibom people and high bride price should be well modified in order to mitigate the occurrences of emotional problems which determine marital stability among Akwa-Ibom people in Surulere Area in Lagos State, Nigeria.

**Keywords:** *Bride, Price, Determinant, Marital, Stability and People.*

## Introduction

Bride price is a complex system of material remittances in traditional societies which is used to validate customary marriages especially in many African countries. Bride price payment is a form of protection for women within marriages by providing them respect, status and acknowledgement within the

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society. However, the payment of bride price ensures women's subordination to husbands, which invariably condoned the abuse of wives<sup>5</sup>. The various elements used as bride price include money, gifts, services or labour, a list of mandatory items (raw food stuffs, clothing, fruits, traditional accessories etc) depending on family type, culture and religion<sup>14</sup>.

Marital stability is not only a value term, but also a relative term. It implies firmness and strength to endure under hard as well as easy circumstances. This element of constancy must not be confused with a static condition<sup>7</sup>. The bride's family gives in to violent behaviours because it can only be committed by husbands willing to abandon their wife if their request is not satisfied. Thus, bride price was found to precipitate violence which has high tendency to affect stability of marriages. This model is such that the husband hurts his wife's well-being in order to extract a payment from his in-laws where he feels the bride price was overpriced<sup>2</sup>.

People as social animals who cannot survive alone. From birth to death we are in the company of, and depend upon, significant others for survival. The relationships we partake in, may be life sustaining and nurturing and may promote personal growth and health, or may be abusive, destructive and traumatic<sup>16</sup>. It recorded that research has amply documented that there are short- and long-term mental and physical health benefits when the relationships we partake in throughout life are positive, whereas abusive, restricting and non-nurturing relationships have been found to impair mental and physical health. Sexual, physical or severe emotional abuse (e.g., abandonment, betrayal, malevolent intent, or repeated victimization) often has devastating effects on the recipient<sup>13</sup>. These effects can be long-lasting and broad ranging. Untreated trauma not only has dire effects on the individual (e.g., intense psychological distress, loss of interest among others), but also has broader ranging effect such as social and community disorganization<sup>4</sup>.

However, bride price is being misused to abuse girls and women. Men tend to think that after paying the bride price women would become their goods, services and personal property to be owned, mistreated and dumped when they have outlived their purpose and use. The conception produces a negative effect as the relationship between men and is affected<sup>15</sup>. The bride price practice is a leading contributor to the spiralling levels of domestic violence which are witnessed because

of the mere perception of the fact that women have been bought and sometimes many of them are forced into marriages. In such marriage, the woman has no sense of worth, respect, pride and accomplishment. This certainly leads to the development of a very negative/low sense of esteem<sup>11</sup>

Domestic violence and poverty are linked to bride price. For instance, a referendum was carried on the need to reform the practice of bride price, which revealed that 60 percent of the respondents insisted that the practice of bride price reduce women and girls to the status of chattel and that their inability to refund the bride price leaves them open to violence and abuse with far reaching social, economic and human rights implications<sup>9</sup>. Bride price is a major factor contributing to domestic violence in the relationships, thereby threatening the stability of marriage<sup>10</sup>.

High degree of explosive anger among men and women is a reaction pattern that is associated with a range of general factors, including past exposure to traumas related to human rights violations, ongoing deprivations and feelings of injustice. The problem of high bride price is a contributor to poverty, a source of conflict with the spouse and family and a possible cause of their anger<sup>17</sup>. Married couples affected with anxiety often avoid doing things such as going out alone or chatting to people. They usually do so because they assume that they will deal with people badly. For example, they will panic or make a fool of themselves. As an alternative to this, they adopt the avoidance strategy as they think it makes them feel better. They are unaware that the longer they avoid the possible problems, the worse they become. This typical case is so because the avoided actions get more and more associated with anxiety and consequently they find it much harder to face up the problems<sup>5</sup>. There are three basic conditions which elicit anxiety: over-stimulation, cognitive incongruity, and response unavailability. Over-stimulation refers to when married people are flooded with information especially about the wrong knowledge. Cognitive incongruity is when married people have difficulty reconciling with some event. Response unavailability refers to when married people do not know how to handle difficult situations<sup>8</sup>.

**Statement of the Problems:** Marriage is a legal and intimate union between a man and woman which is usually consolidated with a token called bride price as it is the practice in Akwa-Ibom State. When there is marital stability, the strength, balance and level of relationship is

intact. The researcher observed that several factors have generated concern, worries and unrest among married and even intending Akwa-Ibom people as regards the exorbitant items on the list and the financial attachment involved in marrying a woman from that environment.

The researcher has seen reports, witnessed and heard of incidences of physical, sexual and majorly verbal abuse especially among married women, trivial marital conflict between spouses, abandonment of spouse, separation without notice, fear of and hatred for opposite sex, anxiety disorder, depression, chronic stress, high blood pressure, heart disease, psychosomatic disorders amongst others. The researcher observed that married people seemed to have lost identity and their position has been weakened by altered gender relations following ancient tradition which has become an opportunistic means of gathering income, resulting into gender antagonism regarding perceived roles as a result of high bride price paid by men over women. In the area of study, the researcher observed that high bride price has affected several marriages, health and wellbeing of the couples negatively. Discussion with married women and men showed that they were experiencing pain, bitterness, lack of affection, attention and support, the accumulation of these negative treatments will in-turn result to the variables discussed in the study.

The researcher witnessed an experience of a close married female relative, who got married to a man that struggled so hard to sort the high bride price because of the love he built for his then intended spouse and did not want to lose her on the ground of bride price. The marriage is three (3) years down the line and whenever they have slight disagreement, the man reminds her of how he went through a lot to pay her bride price in spite of the whole situation surrounding them that period. He taunts her with the bride price everytime and it usually ends with either verbal or physical abuse.

The researcher observed that no study of such has been conducted in the locale of the study, therefore this research seeks to fill this gap of high bride price as determinant of domestic violence, divorce, marital conflict, emotional and psychological problems on marital stability among married Akwa-Ibom people in Surulere, Lagos State.

**Research Questions:** The following research questions were answered in this study:

1. Will high bride price be a determinant of domestic

violence among married Akwa-Ibom people in Surulere, Lagos State?

2. Will high bride price be a determinant of emotional problem among married Akwa-Ibom people in Surulere, Lagos State?

**Research Hypotheses:** The following hypotheses were tested in this study:

1. High bride price will not significantly be a determinant of domestic violence among married Akwa-Ibom people in Surulere, Lagos State.
2. High bride price will not significantly be a determinant of emotional problems among married Akwa-Ibom people in Surulere, Lagos State.

#### Methodology

Descriptive research design of survey type was adopted for this study. The population of the study comprised all Married Akwa-Ibom People in Surulere Area, Lagos State, Nigeria. A multi-stage sampling technique consisting purposive, cluster, proportionate and simple random sampling techniques was used to select three hundred and seventy three (373) respondents from association meetings at Itirelkat Local Council Development Area, Surulere, Lagos State. Researchers' structured questionnaire of four-point Likert rating scale format with options of Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree and Strongly Disagree was used for the study. The instrument contained eight (8) items based on two variables namely domestic violence and emotional problem. In order to ascertain the validity of the instrument, three copies of the questionnaire were given to experts in Departments of Health Promotion and Environmental Health Education, Faculty of Education, University of Ilorin. The Split-half method was used to determine the reliability of the instrument using Cronbach Alpha statistical tool to correlate the data and a correlation of coefficient of 0.85 was obtained. Descriptive statistics of frequency and percentage was used to answer the research questions raised for the study while Inferential statistics of Chi-square was used to analyze the stated null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance, using Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 20.0 software.

#### Results/Discussion of Findings

**Hypothesis One:** stated that the calculated Chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) value is 146.678 and the table ( $\chi^2$ ) value is 21.03 with the degree of freedom 12 at 0.05 alpha level.

Since the calculated ( $\chi^2$ ) value of 146.678 is greater than the table ( $\chi^2$ ) value of 21.03 at 12 degree of freedom. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected. This implies that high bride price is a significant determinant of domestic violence among married Akwa-Ibom people in Surulere, Lagos State, Nigeria. The responses of the married people include domestic violence such as physical, verbal and sexual abuse that could result due to payment of high bride price. This finding is in line with a finding that domestic violence especially against women is an issue which has and should receive increased attention because of its effect on health and its association with payment of high bride price across various cultures in Nigeria, especially in the south-south region. Married people in this area are physically, sexually and verbally disempowered thereby reducing them to commodities. Hence, the result is a battered sense of esteem, emotional imbalance, and it reduces married people to chattels which results to domestic violence<sup>6</sup>.

**Hypothesis Two:** Stated that the calculated Chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) value is 143.062 and the table ( $\chi^2$ ) value is 21.03 with the degree of freedom 12 at 0.05 alpha level. Since the calculated ( $\chi^2$ ) value of 143.062 is greater than the table ( $\chi^2$ ) value of 21.03 at 12 degree of freedom. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected. This implies that high bride price is a significant determinant of emotional problem among married Akwa-Ibom people in Surulere, Lagos State, Nigeria. However, the finding is in line with a statement that anxiety as one emotional problem is a major unpleasant emotional state with qualities such as dread, distress and uneasiness<sup>1</sup>. It was mentioned that fear and anger is a observable emotion associated with high bride price that exist among Akwa-Ibom people at the point of payment of bride price<sup>9</sup>.

**Recommendations:** Based on the conclusion of the study, the researcher made the following recommendations:

- i. High bride price should be reduced in order to avoid domestic violence which determines marital stability among married Akwa-Ibom people.
- ii. High bride price should be well modified in order to mitigate the occurrences of emotional problems which determines marital stability among married Akwa-Ibom people.

**General recommendations:**

- iii. The government should structure a strong and

reliable team to enlighten single and married on domestic violence by inviting key speakers from related agencies such as National Domestic Violence Outreach Organization, National Center for Victims of Crime, National Coalition against Domestic Violence to present at religious or professional organization, civic or volunteer group, workplace, or school from time to time.

- iv. Married Akwa-Ibom people in Surulere should be sensitized and educated by Family life and Reproductive health educators on the topic of the domestic violence and the provision of needful tools in tackling all forms of abused in marriage.
- v. Married Akwa-Ibom people should seek continuous counsel on the subject of personality different and emotional needs of men and women.

**Ethical Clearance:** Taken from Faculty of Education Ethical Review Committee, University of Ilorin. Ilorin, Kwara State, Nigeria.

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**Conflict of Interest:** Nil

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