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Bride Price (Lobola) and Gender-based Violence among Married Women in Lusaka

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Authors' contributions

This work was carried out in collaboration among all authors. Author PM designed the study, performed the statistical analysis, wrote the protocol and wrote the first draft of the manuscript. Authors KT and GBM managed the analyses of the study. Authors SOCM and Author AM managed the literature searches. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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ABSTRACT

Background: This study investigated the influence of *lobola*, a payment made for marriage, on gender-based violence among married women in Lusaka's Kamanga compound. Specifically, the study sought to establish how married women and men perceived *lobola* in relation to gender-based violence in marriage.
Method: The study used the qualitative research method. Participants in the study included eighteen married women and men. In addition, in-depth interviews using a semi-structured interview guide were conducted with five key informants.
Results: The findings from the study suggest that paying *lobola* translated into buying a wife and as such, a wife became a husband's property. *Lobola* gave the man or husband powers to treat his wife as he wished, including subjecting her to sexual and other forms of abuse. This seems to take away a wife's rights to make decisions on matters that affected her own life such as being restricted in her movements, in choosing what to wear, and depriving her of a claim over her children among others.

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Conclusion: The study recommends that the Ministries of Justice and Gender and the Local Government should look deeply into the issue of paying *lobola* and correct the practice by deterring or reprimanding those who do adhere to its significance. Civil society should also lobby government to enact appropriate laws and policies to deal with patriarchy and help married women to enjoy their rights as human beings.

Keywords: Gender; gender based violence and lobola; violence.

1. INTRODUCTION

In Zambia, like many other parts of Africa, when people marry, a payment is made for marriage [1]. This payment is known as dowry, bride price or *lobola* in Southern Africa. Paying *lobola* is a customary practice in marriage where a groom's family and kins transfer a certain amount of money and goods to the bride's family as commitment to marriage. *Lobola* marks the beginning of marriage which is one of the rites of passage marking acceptance of the groom and the bride by both families and society at large as a couple [2]. *Lobola* creates a relationship of life-long commitment of mutual support between both families of the bride and groom [3]. In many African societies including Zambia, *lobola* is paid by the groom's family to the bride's family [3, 4]. However, in some societies, it is the bride's family that pays the groom's family, and this is broadly termed as dowry [5].

In pre-colonial societies, the practice did not require the payment of money. Alternatively, it was paid in form of cattle or other animals and items such as some jewelleries, cans of local brew or bags of maize. The items given symbolised a token of appreciation. Paying *lobola* was a way of thanking the in-laws for bearing and rearing a wife for man [5,6,7]. It was also a way to compensate the loss of productivity that the bride was providing to her family and for economic costs incurred in bringing her up [7]. The practice of paying *lobola* seemed to have operated beneficially for both the groom and the bride in the past. It provided formal recognition for marital relationships including protecting the wives against abuse. When *lobola* is paid, a man attached value to a woman he pays for [8]. *Lobola* makes a woman an 'official wife' and seals a woman's status as a worthy woman in the eyes of all. It legitimatises marriage as it confirms the cultural symbolism of accepting the groom and the bride into each other's family. *Lobola* is a unifying factor in binding and cementing the relationship between the couple and the two families joining together [6]. It is fundamental in validating marriage in that it shows the seriousness and commitment of a man. Without bride price the man would take it as a simple thing to marry and to divorce [9].

With the commercialisation of the bride price, its cultural relevance is becoming less clear in present times [6]. Kambarami findings reveal that *lobola* now has a paradoxical role in the lives of women [10]. On one hand, it places value on women while on the other hand it degrades them by fostering male dominance in the home and relegating them to the position of appendages. It is perceived that *lobola* gives a man all rights whilst the woman loses freedom and rights. The woman is even further reduced to the level of acquired property especially in cases where *lobola* was set at a high price. As part of the patriarchal nature of society, it breeds inequality and widens the social power gap between men and women, thereby placing women in a subordinate position [8, 9].

A study by Hague & Thiara in Uganda, identified some adverse effects of *lobola* such as husband abused their wives through rape as well as viewing wives as their properties, among other things [11]. Furthermore, Asiimwa in Uganda observed that the payment of bride price reinforces masculinities and femininities that do not only create, but also reinforce male dominance and female subordination and sometimes results in wife abuse [12]. Through the commercialisation of *lobola,* the practice has lost much of its traditional value in more recent times as it has assumed some new features [13,14]. *Lobola* seems to generate a lot of debate to an extent where some call for its abolition on account that it reinforces gender inequality and contributes to gender based violence [6,9,15].

Zambia, like many countries in the sub-Saharan region, have increased the payment of *lobola* in recent times. Some tribal groupings where *lobola* was not traditionally paid have now taken up the custom [16,17]. Niner also notes that the payment of *lobola* is becoming prevalent in matrilineal communities that did not charge *lobola* previously [3]. In the past, the practice is

said to have operated beneficially and gave formal recognition to marriages and protection to wives against abuse. However, some studies show that through payment of *lobola*, a wife now seems to appear as a commodity of the husband and parent in-laws, and thus they are subjected to abuse and ill-treatment [9,13].

Despite *lobola* playing a vital role in the institution of marriage, in the contemporary era, it has become more commercialised [17,18]. Most studies done examining *lobola* focus on how this practice is conducted and the cultural significance attached to it [13]. Some studies have generalised the escalation of bride price and its effects on marriages. There are also studies done elsewhere which show that making *lobola* expensive has a paradoxical role for women including perpetuating gender inequality [9,19]. Domestic violence is a common occurrence in Zambia [20]. However, there is little information available on the relationship between *lobola* and gender based violence in Zambia. The main objective of this study was to examine the influence of *lobola* on gender based violence among married women in Lusaka's Kamanga compound. It specifically sought to establish the perceptions of married women and men towards the payment of *lobola* in relation to gender based violence in marriage.

2. METHODOLOGY

This study used a qualitative research method. This study was conducted in Lusaka city's Kamanga Township. The study population included married men and women living in Kamanga compound. Participants for the study included eighteen married men and women. In addition, in-depth interviews using a semi-structured interview guide were conducted with five key informants. An FGD is a carefully planned group interview designed to obtain in-depth information on a particular topic with approximately 6–12 persons and each lasted for about an hour. In total four FGDs were conducted sepeartely for males and females. Participants in each group had common characteristics and belonged to the same community, they were able to spur one another's thinking about their lived realities and experiences regarding the influence of *lobola* and gender based violence. They collectively brought out ideas which could not have been produced in one-to-one interviews.Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and in-depth interviews were captured using a digital voice recorder and later transcribed. Qualitative data was analysed thematically which involved a systematic process of identifying, selecting, categorising, comparing and interpreting data to provide explanations linking *lobola* to gender-based violence. The analysis was an iterative process that involved going in cycles to provide explanations. This was followed by transcribing the data verbatim. Using the typed text, the researcher later searched for commonalities in the data and created themes and categories following certain patterns and relationships that emerged from the notes. These were later used as a basis for interpreting and understanding the data in the context of the study objectives.

3. RESULTS

The study findings point to *lobola* having an influence in a number of ways including limiting women's rights to children, women being viewed as husbands' property, limiting women's decision making power, limiting women's control on sexual matters, compelling women to do more housework chores and enabling a husband's relatives to have power on women in marriage, among others.

Focus group discussions with both men and women as well as interviews with key informants revealed that paying *lobola* gave men (husbands) ownership to children. In a focus group discussion, men argued that once *lobola* is paid, a husband had rights over the children born from that marriage. It was said that:

> '*a man cannot easily get the children in case of divorce, if he has not paid lobola*. *But once lobola has been settled, the father has power over the children*.' FGD Participant).

Similarly, in a focus group discussion with women, it was revealed that:

> '*When a man marries, what he pays for in essence are the children*.' FGD Participant).

If the children have not been paid for, they remain with their mother's in case of divorce. The study findings also revealed that women submit to their husbands when *lobola* is paid. A man has power to treat his wife the way he wants when *lobola* is paid but this may not be the case where the payment is not done. One male participant observed that:

'*it is not easy to have full control over your wife if you have not paid lobola. But when lobola is paid, you expect total obedience from her. If you do not receive it, you can use force to get what you want… she is under your authority'* (FGD Participant).

Another participant in a focus group discussion with men added that:

'A wife has to do what her husband tells her especially if the man paid [lobola] for her. When you marry your wife, she should know what you want and do not want and she should obey you. I used to fight a lot with my first wife because I would tell her do this or that but she could not, meaning she did not respect me. This forced me to divorce her and married someone else who follows what I want' (FGD Participant).

Interestingly, the focus group discussion with women also yielded similar findings. Women attributed the payment of *lobola* to the abuses that they were subjected to by their husbands. For instance, one woman had this to say:

'This lobola thing is not really helping us as women. Some men say, you need to follow my rules because I paid for you. Everything, whatever I say you have to follow because your parents sold you to me. If you cannot follow my instructions, you are free to go but you have to return what I paid' (FGD Participant).

Another woman in a focus group revealed how her sister was forced by her own husband to commit adultery with a rich man and a relative. Once 'caught' the husband would demand to be paid cattle for committing adultery with his wife. According to that narrative, before her sister agreed to the husband's demands, there used to be no peace in their home. She used to be beaten up a lot by her husband. Another participant in the focus group discussion with women revealed that sometimes a man would start practicing witchcraft and may want to involve his wife by force to join him in the practice.

'*Some men want to involve their wives in witchcraft. Simply because you are his wife and you were paid for, you are expected to follow. As a wife you will be tattooed all over your body with a razor blade with the understanding that it will bring wealth to the family and you will be one of the direct beneficiaries. This lobola brings a lot of problems to married women in homes. He forces you to do things you do not believe in because he paid lobola. Sometimes things do not work at all but your body will be physically damaged'* (FGD Participant).

The issue of *lobola* limiting women's decision making powers came out strongly from the qualitative study findings. Women in particular felt that lobola that husbands pay meant that women had limited say or no say at all on major decisions in their homes. It was reported by women that failure to comply to the husbands' wishes stood out among the major causes of conflict and misunderstandings among couples. One participant said:

'*As a husband, I tell my wife what I want and she has no right to go against my decision. I paid for her and that is how it should be. She should support my decisions and not going against them'* (FGD Participant).

In focus group discussion with women, one participant lamented:

'*Lobola ties us to a point where we have no freedom to make our own decisions. Before marriage, he would consult me. Now he just makes decisions on his own; even making decisions on my behalf. If something happens and he is not home, I have to wait for him to come and make a decision'* (FGD Participant)

Another finding that emerged from the study is that lobola limits women's control on sexual matters. It was revealed that as a result of *lobola*, some men view their wives as their personal property and that they are entitled to having sex any time they felt like. One female participant in a focus group discussion said that denying a husband sex was one of the reasons why some men beat their wives. She said that:

'*Some men get offended when a wife for whatever reason denies the husband sex. The husband would force himself on you. If she refuses, she can end up being beaten. It is like lobola gives men power and control over wives on sexual matter'* (FGD Participant).

There was consensus among women in the focus group discussion that it was *lobola* that tied

them to sexual violence by their husbands. One participant added that:

> '*The moment he says I paid a lot [lobola] for you, you have no choice but to give in. Sometimes when you deny him sex, he would threaten to look for other women. For the sake of peace, you just allow him to do what he wants even when you are not ready or even sick sometimes'* (FGD Participant).

From the findings, most women were powerless on sexual matters when a husband had paid *lobola*. It was revealed that when a man pays *lobola*, sex is not at all supposed to be denied. This view was re-echoed by almost all women. Another female participant emphasized that:

> *'It is like when a man pays lobola, he feels he has bought everything. Some men would even look for medicine (mutototo) to enjoy sex and would say I want the money that I paid to work'* (FGD Participant).

Another participant added that cases of sexual abuse perpetrated by husbands in a home are rarely reported as revealing perceived private matters was considered to be a taboo. In her own words, she said:

> *'…Women who are sexually abused by their husband sometimes opt to remain silent as they are taught not to reveal bedroom secrets. Doing so is considered taboo and for fear of being reprimanded by their own relatives, they would rather suffer silently and not tell anybody'* (FGD Participant).

Interestingly, in a focus group discussion with men, it also came out that there were men who felt that because they paid *lobola,* they were entitled to having sex with their wives anytime they wished. One participant went on to say that some men even beat up their wives when they refuse to give sex to them. In his own words, he said:

> *'[Paying] lobola to some men is a passport to have sex any time they want with their wives. A man would say, because I have paid lobola, anytime I want sex I should have it. Even when a woman is not ready, they force them to do it. Even when a woman has a period, some men still demand to have sex*' If the wife refused, the husband feels he has the right to beat (FGD Participant).

Further, findings revealed that some men take advantage to abuse their wives sexually because they know what women are taught during marriage counselling sessions. One man in focus group discussion disclosed that:

> '*We know that a wife is taught to give sex to her husband any time he wants. A woman is counselled for marriage only when formalities for paying lobola are agreed between the two families and it is a responsibility of her own relatives to engage a marriage counsellor for her to teach such things'* (FGD Participant).

In a focus group discussion with women, it was also revealed that due to *lobola,* some wives have ended up contracting sexually transmitted diseases including HIV and AIDS from their husbands who refuse to use condoms or any other forms of protection. She emphasised that:

> '*There are instances where one couple usually a husband would test HIV positive and a wife negative and they may be advised to use condoms to control the spread to the partner, but simply because lobola, gives a husband authority over a wife, some husbands refuse. When a wife reports such, she may be scolded at. It becomes an issue that we already talked about of revealing bedroom secrets*' (FGD Participant).

Another finding was that due to *lobola* husbands expects their wives to do more housework. One female participant in a focus group discussion that:

> '*When a man pays lobola he expects his wife to do most household chores regardless of the wife's status or nature of job she has society. He expects things like cooking, washing and so on to be done by a wife. Some men would say I paid for everything, why should I look for another person to do housework….'* FGD Participant).

Another woman added that:

> *'When a man has not paid anything, a wife can openly refuse to do what the husband wants and sometimes she may even have protection from her own family if it ends up in conflict. This is not the case when lobola is settled. If paid, even your own relatives take sides against you when you refuse to do*

certain things as demanded for by your husband'. FGD Participant).

One other female participant in a focus group discussion supported this saying that:

'*the benefits of a man paying [lobola] to my parents is to find food ready when he knocks off from work, washing, and taking care of him when he is sick, sometimes even feeding him like a baby. Anything he wants it is me as a wife to do it for him*.' FGD Participant).

There was general consensus among men in the focus group discussion that some fights among couples are influenced by the payment of *lobola*. It was revealed that some men physically abuse their wives when they do not do as expected by the husband. Men want their wives to do anything they want in the home because they are paid for. Findings further revealed that failure to do certain house chores like cooking by women, leads to divorce because it is interpreted as a sign of not having respect to a husband who has paid *lobola*. One male participant in the focus group discussion categorically said:

'I divorced my first wife because she never used to do what I want. I have married another one who respects me and follows what I want' (FGD Participant).

A court official equally spoke of women's heavy involvement in household chores being attributed to *lobola*. In her own words she said that:

'*Some men would tell their wives that I bought you and I want you to work for that money. This is real. We learn of women experiencing such things when they come to court. Some women even show marks left on the body and face resulting from being beaten by their husbands for not doing certain things as expected by their husbands'* (Interview with a Court Official).

A focus group discussion with men revealed that the payment of *lobola* ties a woman to the relatives of the man. Once *lobola*, is paid, the husband's relatives have power over the daughter in- law.

A focus group discussion with women further revealed that married women experienced a lot of interference from parents to husbands and other relatives, especially mothers and sisters in-law when *lobola* is paid. One woman emphasised that a wife is expected by in-laws to do everything for the relatives when they are around. However, this was quite interesting when it came to men. Men also shared the same view that *lobola* played a role in giving powers to in-laws to interfere their wives. The study findings further revealed that failure by the wife to respect her in-laws often resulted in resentment by the husband's relatives.

4. DISCUSSION

This study revealed different ways through which *lobola* influences gender-based violence in marriage. The findings show that *lobola* has an influence on restricting women on the rights to their children, influences them being viewed as a husband's property, limits their decision-making power and their control over sexual matters in a marriage, compels them to do more housework, and empowers in-laws to have influence among others. It was revealed that some women cannot have rights to their children in the case of a divorce because of *lobola*. Focus group and in-depth interviews with marriage counsellors revealed that women faced a lot of challenges regarding ownership of their children especially when they divorced as *lobola* gave men sole ownership to children born from that marriage. It was further revealed that the naming of children in marriage was a responsibility of the father once the payment of *lobola* was done. These findings are close to the findings by Ngutor in Nigeria which indicated that bride price is paid by the groom to the bride's family in exchange for the bride and the children [5].

The study findings are similar to the Zimbabwean case, where Dura acknowledged that *lobola* payment is associated with the father having rights over children because women are not viewed as equal parents of children [19]. The study further revealed that *lobola* makes some men view their wives as their property making them take a subornation position in marriage.

According to the study findings, the payment of *lobola* compels some women to follow husband's orders in a home. Some men find it easy to dictate what their wives should do when they had paid *lobola*. In some cases, disappointed husbands even end up sending their wives back to their relatives to be taught more if their wives did not follow their orders. It was further found out that that the payment of *lobola* made some men to go to the extremes by making

unreasonable demands such as dipping a lump of *nshima* (maize flour porridge) on a woman's private part, engaging in sex with a biological daughter to the knowledge of their mother who is threatened not to report, and being involved in witchcraft just because she was paid for.

Findings of this study are quite close to Chireshe & Chireshe's findings which showed the payment of *lobola* leads some husbands viewing their wives as their property to be used as they please, especially where *lobola* was highly charged [9]. Study findings are also similar to those of Khan & Hyati who showed that *lobola* created unequal power relations between men and women thus placing women in a subordinate position [2]. One possible explanation behind the local custom of *lobola* may be the patriarchal roots of inequality between men and women.

The study revealed that most of the respondents felt that the payment of *lobola* had an effect on decision making of women in a marriage. This showed that both men and women believed that the payment of *lobola* did negatively affect women in terms of decision making in marriage. It was widely held that when men pay *lobola*, women have limited say or no say on the major decisions in their homes. The payment of *lobola* exhibited negative attributes such as women not being able to argue with the husband and not being allowed to have any conflicting views from the husband. Even where the husband is not home and something happens, the wife had to wait for their husband to make a ruling. Some women felt that *lobola* did not help them but disadvantages them in many ways. This included healthy matters such as family planning. If a woman went against a husband's decision, then the husband had the right to put her in the right track by abusing her since she is under his authority.

In all her endeavours, she has to be always conscious of the existence of a man and must serve and please the husband. This deprives her personhood in terms of self-determination and status of equality with her husband and be able to exercise any of her rights [21]. This was supported by Fuseini & Dodoo whose findings also revealed that the payment of *lobola* deprives a woman autonomy in all aspects of her life and prevents her from full enjoyment of her rights and gender equality as their decisions are influenced by their husbands [22]. Fuseini & Dodoo further contends that *lobola* reinforces the power that men already have over women [22]. In this case it can be possibly interpreted that some men would violate women's rights in decision making because they feel they are the heads of the family. When a woman begun to challenge a man in decision making in a home, some men felt that a woman was violating the patriarchal norms and hence, some men respond to that violation of patriarchal norms in a way that affect women negatively.

The study revealed that *lobola* limits women's decision power in terms of sexual activity in marriage. Some women are powerless on sexual matters when a husband has paid *lobola* because they perceive that sex should not be denied. The study further revealed that as a result of *lobola*, some men feel they have bought everything including the private part and that they are entitled to having sex in marriage any time they felt like. This is because even in situations where a wife knows she is at risk of contracting a disease from her spouse, it is unlikely she could persuade him to use a condom, and unprotected sex follows. This is in accordance with what Avias et al. and Ngutor who highlighted that the practice [of *lobola*] appears to buy a wife as a product, leaving women with limited control over their sexual preferences [5,14]. Women do not have control over sexual and reproductive health and rights in terms of sexual preferences and negotiating for safe sex. The findings were further supported by a study conducted by Muthegheki who established that women lose dignity by being controlled by their husbands and being used as sexual objects by their husbands [23]. Furthermore, a Zambian study among University students suggested that having multiple sex partners increased with advancement in university years attained with more males likely to report having had more than one sexual partner [24].

Similarly, Ngutor revealed that paying *lobola* gives different marriage rights that men benefit upon [5]. These include having power over the wife's identity, rights to sexuality, access and control of her labour, as well as rights over children born to his wife. Findings by Mangena & Ndlovu seem to have the same sentiments and contend that women do not have control over sexual and reproductive health and rights in terms of sexual preferences and negotiating for safe sex [7]. Use of any form of protection including condom use for safety or to control reproductive health is also an issue where some men have paid *lobola*. Men feel that the women are disturbing what is rightfully theirs [7].

As regards to *lobola* influencing women to do more house chores in a home, majority of the respondents viewed *lobola* having influence on women doing more house chores in a home compared to men. Both men and women held the same view that when a man pays *lobola* in marriage, a woman is expected to take care of house chores. It was felt that, the benefits of a man for paying *lobola* is to find a woman has cooked and washed for him. Further, a woman was supposed to take care of the children. All these chores had to be done regardless of a wife's status or job she has in society. Further, it was felt that if a woman was a boss at work, that status ended at work and she was expected to balance up between her duties at home even when she had a maid. These findings confirm Khan & Hyati's findings who established that in situations where a wife may also be working and earning income inside or outside the home, she does not reduce her household duties [2]. Failure to perform those house chores by some women would lead to men being violent towards their wives.

The findings are also similar to the Kenyan case, where Onyango equally observed that bride price implied thereby making a woman a beast of burden [21]. These results mirror the studies done by Khan & Hyati's whose findings revealed that *lobola* created clear division of labour between a man and a woman because of the status of a woman of being a husband's property [2]. It created rigid gender roles assigned to women within the family and this promoted gender inequalities. Women are seen as nurturers and providers of support to men. Anderson's findings further revealed that women could be punished if they were seen as being of less value in exchange for what has been given or as not executing their traditional role [4]. An example of the Zambian study on urban sexual behaviour survey found that men are considered higher status and women with low socio-economic status are limited in their ability to negotiate safe sexual relationships [25].

The findings of this study established that the payment of *lobola* ties a woman to the relatives of a man, especially where they have also contributed to the payment. The findings of the study in a survey showed that 61 per cent of the respondents agreed that *lobola* empowered the relatives to the husbands over their wives. Some respondents perceive the payment of *lobola* as empowering the in-law to have control in their marriages especially where a woman misbehaves and does not care a relative of a husband well. In such a scenario, the husband's relatives would interfere by controlling the wife in her own home. Some relatives would want the in-law they have paid for to show them respect by doing what they want like sending her to do work such as house chores for the family, especially during the early marriage period.

This study findings are consistent with studies done by Sithole's that revealed that the payment of *lobola* empowered the groom's family, who played a part in that marriage, to have control and say in the marriage. Consequently, it gives the groom's relatives a right to control that marriage 16]. Such relatives, especially the women, expect the bride to do whatever they wanted because they contributed to that marriage [16]. This was further supported by Niner who also revealed that, bride price led to hostile treatment of wives due to expectations linked to the exchange [3]. Some men also felt that their relatives had powers to interfere in their marriages. These men firmly argued that relatives would not only interfere in a marriage where they have contributed something towards *lobola* but had powers over their daughters' in-laws regardless of who paid *lobola.* They viewed their relatives as simply being their own eyes. Therefore, they had the right to control her if she was misbehaving.

Men in focus group discussion complained that what was usually misunderstood to mean mistreating a wife was when a wife was using double standards that is, treating her own relatives differently to the way she treated her husband's relatives. In support of this view, Chuunga's states that in situations where a man is able to pay for dowry by himself, parental involvement is still required [1]. In case of marital difficulties (and even death of a spouse), parents who were involved in establishing that marriage come in to help. Contrary to Sithole's and Niner's findings which revealed that the payment of *lobola* gives powers over the wife to the husband's relatives who contributed something towards payment to that marriage, findings in this study revealed that relatives to the husband had powers over the wife regardless of whether they helped in paying *lobola* or not [3,16].

5. CONCLUSION

From the findings of the study, *lobola* seems to influence gender based violence among married women. However, the connection between the

two is more complex and not direct. More often, in cases of gender-based violence where *lobola* is mentioned, something else should have gone wrong on perceived expectations of the roles of the wife, resulting in conflict. At the back of it, still stands that the wife was paid for, and hence ought to conform to the expectations of the husband within the institution of marriage. From the findings, it seems the more the charge for *lobola*, the higher the chances for that woman being subjected to gender based violence, perpetrated by her husband and in-laws, in an event of misunderstandings in that marriage. *Lobola* thus disadvantages women in marriage to an extent that it worsens their already disadvantaged position in relation to men.

CONSENT

First and foremost, all participants were informed about what the study was about and the aims of the study and informed consent was obtained from all participants. They were told from the very outset that their participation in the study was voluntary and that they were free to answer or not to answer any question. Further, they were told that they were free to withdraw from the study at any time they wished like doing so. Participants were also assured of confidentiality of the information that they were providing. In this study, participant's names have not been mentioned in the study. Permission was sought from participants in both the focus group discussions and in-depth interviews to record the conversations.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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