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UNIVERSITY FOR DEVELOPMENT STUDIES, TAMALE

**BRIDE PRICE SYSTEM IN GHANA: IMPLICATIONS FOR WOMEN'S
ACCESS AND OWNERSHIP OF LAND IN THE WA WEST DISTRICT**

UNIVERSITY FOR DEVELOPMENT STUDIES

DAVID WUOLLAH-DIRE



NOVEMBER 2020

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ACCESS AND OWNERSHIP OF LAND IN THE WA WEST DISTRICT**

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(UDS/MDM/0016/18)

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DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT, FACULTY OF PLANNING AND
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STUDIES IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE AWARD OF MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY DEGREE
IN DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT



NOVEMBER 2020

DECLARATION

Student's

I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of my original work and that no part of it has been presented for another degree in this University or elsewhere.

Candidate's Signature.....

Date.....

Candidate's Name: DAVID WUOLLAH-DIRE

Supervisors'

I hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of the thesis was supervised in accordance with the guidelines on supervision of dissertation/thesis laid down by the University for Development Studies.

Supervisor's Signature:

Date:

Supervisor's Name: DR SAMUEL Z. BONYE



ABSTRACT

This thesis investigated the implications of bride price institution for women's access to and ownership of land [agricultural land] in the Wa West District, Ghana. Data was collected using Focus Group Discussions and In-depth Interviews. Participants involving divorcees, widows, *tendamba* (landlords), chiefs, extension officers, married men and women of 40 years and above were contacted for interviews. The age criterion was to ensure that participants are abreast with bride price matters and land-related discourse. The results show that bride price payment is a normative requirement that every marriage must fulfil to meet societal demands in the study communities. Secondly, the study also revealed that the practice of bride price payment has both social and economic benefits. Thirdly, it was also revealed that bride price payment strengthens women's access to land by improving their tenancy security as compared to those not married. However, bride price makes women "labourers" of their husbands, denies women the right to own property as women themselves are commodified by way of bride price payment. Additionally, participants nonetheless, believe that bride price payments must be perpetuated because it is a tradition that has been in existence for long. Lastly, even though participants agreed that bride price commoditizes women, they disagreed there is any direct relationship between bride price payments and women's inability to own land and indicated that the inheritance system is what has subordinated women and created the gender disparities in land ownership discourse. The study recommends that: local authorities like chiefs, the district assembly and women's rights organizations should consciously transform bride price and the inheritance system to make them progressive and development-oriented by educating particularly men to understand that women's economic independence is a win for every family member and will improve the living conditions of society in general.



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DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my grandfather, Mr Walter Gbiel, daughter, Lois Velaah Wuollah-Dire and wife, Vivian Tabie. Lois may you grow in the hands of the Lord your creator and rise according to His will. Grandfather your role in my academic upbringing is the rock of my life. God willing you will pluck the fruits of the trees you have planted and watered.



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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CAQDAS: Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software

CEDAW: Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women

CREAW: Center for Rights Education and Awareness

CSPS: Centre for Social Policy Studies

FAO: Food and Agriculture Organization

FGD: Focus Group Discussions

GLSS: Ghana Living Standards Survey

GSS: Ghana statistical service

IDI: In-depth Interview

ISSER: Institute of Statistical, Social and Economic Research

KII: Key Informant Interview

MDG-F: Millennium Development Goals Achievement Fund

NGOs: Non-Governmental Organisations

PNDC: Provisional National Defence Council

SDGs: Sustainable Development Goals

UN: United Nations

USAID: United States Agency for International Development

WVG: World Vision Ghana



CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the study

According to the Center for Rights Education and Awareness (CREAW) and MIFUMI, a human rights organization in Uganda, (2010), cultural practices such as bride price payments have been inimical to the agenda of women empowerment and development. However, the marriage institution coupled with bride price payments all over the world has been revered culturally and biblically (1 Sam 18:25; Gen 34:12 & Exo 22:16-17). The cultural practices associated with it, take various forms and procedures in different countries around the world (Anderson, 2007). This cultural practise is widespread especially in Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa and is currently being criticized in Africa (Lowes & Nunn, 2017). In most parts of Africa and especially Sub -Saharan African, the men are usually responsible for paying the bride price to the bride's family. However, in India, Mangena and Ndlovu (2013) report that the opposite of the bride price payment takes place with the women rather making payments to the husband's family (dowry). Goody and Tambiah, (1973) agreed there are similarities between bride pride and dowry as both are property transactions in marriages but objected to what they described as "oversimplification". In their view, the direction of payments is not enough to differentiate between bride price and dowry.

Marital payments have been variously named or described as "purchase money", "bride price" (Lowes & Nunn, 2017), "wife-purchase", "bridewealth" (Pritchard, 1931, Adams and Mburugu, 1994), marriage gift (Kaye et al., 2006) and bride token. Pritchard (1931) instead proposes the use of the term 'bridewealth' in place of bride 'price' as the term wealth incorporates other nonfinancial but social functions and items inherent in the practice. Pritchard further argued that to tag the payment as bride price would



imply marriage is a market where women could be bought. But Gray (1960) in his analysis of bride price criticizes Pritchard's proposal of the term bridewealth arguing that even the term "wealth" is not better as it represents property which has financial connotations. Thus, this portrays marriage as a commercial transaction. As long as marriage involves exchanges whether money or property like cattle or other items as a prerequisite for it to occur, such exchange of property may be interpreted as wife purchase, and such exchange may imply that even the rights of a wife are "bought" after the exchange. Meekers (1992), argued that bride price which is common in South African marriages, symbolizes the transfer of the right of the girl's sexual and economic services to the husband. CREAM and MIFUMI (2010) report that bride price is paid as a sign of appreciation and also for economic value but this has reduced women into "cash cows and Chattels" with men having authority over them.

Asiimwe (2013) however, argues that bride price solemnizes marriages and also serves as the "certificate" of marriage. Wendo (2004) postulates that bride price makes women become the property of their husbands and limits their ability to control and defend their bodies. Esen (2004) disagreed saying bride price demonstrates the capability of the husband in taking responsibility and providing for the family. Some empirical studies also showed that the bride price system gives pressure on men such that men who fail to meet the demands of their fathers-in-law could lose their status and respect from wives and society because they are not able to pay the bride price (Thira & Hague 2011, Muthegheki, Crispus & Abrahams, 2012). The high cost involved in bride price payments, therefore, keeps many men and women away from marrying (Asiimwe, 2013).



Scholars in literature have outlined some criticisms of the payment of bride price and major among them include violent relationships, early marriages and marital instability (Bloch and Rao 2002; Alupo 2004; Bawa 2015). There have been concerns that large bride price payments are a source of marital violence. However, Lowes and Nunn, 2017 have disagreed that the payment of large bride price leads to early marriages and marital instability.

Mangena and Ndlovu's (2013) reported that parents now demand electronic devices from their in-laws, and daughters' level of education plays a role in determining how much suitors will pay. Bawa, (2015) in reporting on bride price in northern Ghana indicated that, though it is fixed, some parents especially the educated ones have started collecting cash as bride price. Traditionally, the expectation is always to collect exactly what is paid for the bride's mother. But the current concerns indicate that parents now demand more than what is required, prompting negative reportage. Asimwe (2013) suggests that commercialization of pride bride is the reason why women's rights activists detest it because it has negative implications for women negotiating power and relations in marriages resulting in gender inequality. In examining the implications of bride price on domestic violence and reproductive health in Wakiso District, Uganda, Kaye et al., (2006) found that bride price payments make women powerless by creating unequal power relations between men and women as well as take away women's independence and decision-making authority in the household. Wamalwa (2007) report that an increasing amount of violence in marriages occur because there is power on one side, thus the husband. On the contrary Forkuor et al., (2018) in their report on "Bride Price and the State of Marriage in North-West Ghana, claim that norms like payback of bride price in case of divorce have rather ensured stability in marriages among the



Dagaaba. Kaye et al., (2006) postulate that husbands have ownership rights to their children in marriage upon payment of the bride price among the Dagaaba.

The role of bride price in diminishing women's power contradicts goal one target 1.4 of the sustainable developments goals (SDGs) which states that by 2030, all men and women, in particular, the poor and the vulnerable, should have equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to basic services, ownership and control over land and other forms of property, inheritance, natural resources, appropriate new technology and financial services, including microfinance (UN, 2015).

Mangena and Ndlovu, (2013) report that bride price payment which, from the beginning gave women recognition in society has suddenly become a tool of disempowerment. Mangena and Ndlovu further opined that bride price enslaves women and eliminates them from decision-making and resource control. Societal normative practices such as the payment of bride price have been linked to the challenges women go through in accessing land (CREAW & MUFUMI, 2010). These norms subordinate women to men hence, women's access to and ownership of land is normatively through patrilian (NGomane, 2016). Pemunta (2017) posits that customary marriage among other factors is inimical to women ownership and access to land in Cameroon. In Pemunta's view, bride price has made women subservient to men and subjected them to secondary usage of land such that they can have access to land for agricultural purposes but cannot own it or use it for other purposes. Pemunta further argued that a woman is seen as a factor of production though this position is repugnant, she is supposed to contribute to the development of her husband's farm with only usufruct rights available to her.

In Ghana, the bride price has been linked to the economic challenges women encounter (Bawa, 2015). Bride price is common in agrarian and nomadic societies associated with



a strong female role in agriculture (Anderson, 2007). Also, men and women who are financially downtrodden are most affected by the impacts of the bride price (Mbaye & Wagner, 2017). In line with this, Akurugu (2017) reported that, apart from variations of bride price among the Dagaaba, there is also a reduction in the amount that had been required in the past to make it commensurate with current economic challenges.

In the upper west region, bride price exists but items demanded vary from community to community. Dery and Bawa (2019) observe that marriage which requires the payment of bride price is mandatory and a fulfilling phase in the life cycle of the Dagaaba. People who reach marriageable ages but fail to do so come under societal criticism and pressure (ibid). Dery (2015), reiterated the importance of bride price among the people of Nandom and concluded that it legitimizes marriages and gives recognition to the couples. Kpiebaya (1991) and Abdul-Korah, (2014) have observed that bride price is the most relevant element in marriage arrangements among the Dagaaba and must be fulfilled to meet the expectations of people and society.

Despite the socio-cultural and economic importance of bride price payments in marriages, there are concerns about its impact on the freedoms and liberties of women, especially on the issue of property ownership. Kpiebaya, (1991) has suggested that married women's freedom is stifled by bride price payments. In his view, the solution is in abolishing bride price such that women can marry without marital exchanges. Dery (2016) and Akurugu (2017) have indicated that women who are victims of bride price payments have objected to the abolishment of bride price. The traditions surrounding bride price payments are deeply rooted and its appreciation is enormous and diverse.

The basic arrangements in Ghana for people to have access to land are through the customary system and allodia rights (Bonye & Kpieta, 2012a). In northern Ghana, the



chiefs and the “tendamba” are the principal caretakers of land with family heads distributing it to their members for various uses and others getting access through inheritance (Bonye & Kpieta, 2012a). This, however, is different in southern Ghana because of the matrilineal form of inheritance that exist (Quansah, 2012). In southern Ghana, women have the opportunity to own land and can inherit land from their matriclan.

Literature (CEDAW, 2014) shows that the whole idea of women owning property in marriages is culturally challenged. If bride price is about compensating parents for bringing up their daughters and making them worthy of marriage, why are single mothers not allowed to charge and collect bride price from their sons-in-law but rather other male family members? (Mangena & Ndlovu, 2013: 477). There is discrimination to have women take care of their daughters to grow yet men will decide on how much should be paid as bride price and what it should be used for. This is particularly so in the case of single mothers sacrificing without support from the husband or his family as a result of death, divorce or separation. Women are rather viewed as property and married women who are not ready to succumb to the authority of men are seen and described as rude and disrespectful women (Akurugu, 2017; Dery & Bawa, 2019). Huntingford (1953) thinks, on the contrary, bride price has elements of payment but that does not qualify women as property of their husbands.

Cotula, (2007) posit that women access resources, including land through men but elderly women are custodians of history and may always be consulted on issues relating to pastoral land or land boundaries. It is also recorded that women have no control over their farm produce in marriages after the payments of bride price as husbands claim ownership of the “hoe” among the Dagaaba in north-western Ghana (Bonye & Kpieta, 2012; Akurugu, 2017; Dery & Bawa, 2019).



Even though there is a lot of scholarly work on bride price payments in the Upper West Region (Dery, 1987; Kpiebaya, 1991; Bawa, 2015; Abdul-Koarih, 2014; Dery, 2016; Akurugu, 2017) and also on women's access to land and ownership rights, (Kasanga &Kotey, 2001; ISSER, 2005; Bonye & Kpieta, 2012; Kuusaana, Kidido & Halidu-Adam, 2013) there is not much work done on the implications of bride price on women's access and ownership of land.

In the Wa West District, which is not so different from the rest of the region, there is a paucity of research findings on the implications of bride price on women's ownership and access to land hence this study has singled out bride price payments and explored its implications on women's access and ownership of land.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

There is a global debate on women empowerment, gender equality as well as attempts to end all forms of discrimination against women (MDG-F, 2013). But resources such as land which can increase women's productiveness and economic independence have largely been inadequately accessible to women (ibid). This creates insecurity for women in agriculture and further widens the gender gap and increases poverty (Pemunta, 2017). According to the UN (2015), gender equality is crucial in ending poverty and hunger. In Ghana, cultural practices such as bride price payments seem to curtail women ownership, control and access to productive resources particularly land (Dery, 2016). Even though the Intestate Succession Law is balance in terms of gender or applies to both men and women in the same way, some communities in Ghana do not allow women to inherit land which is one of the ways of acquiring land (CEDAW, 2014). "Customary law rules, beliefs, ideologies and practices of marriage discriminate against women" (The Coalition on the Women's Manifesto for Ghana, 2004:42). Bride price is seen as "purchase" of women hence they do not have land-owning rights



because they are culturally seen as helpers of men and all property acquired during marriages should be inherited by the children (Quansah, 2012). Culturally, it is eerie for women to purchase land even if they have money because culture and customs such as bride price have made men perceive women as subordinates hence must depend on husbands for resources like land (Taiwo, 2003 and Cotula, 2007). Society has patriarchal structures embedded in social and cultural practices which make women subordinates and powerless (Walby, 1990; Kaye et al, 2006). This situation widens the gender gaps between men and women, hence the need for feminists to advocate for gender equality in the areas of economic, social and political discourses (Asimwe, 2013; Crossman, 2019 and Walby, 1990). When men describe their wives as their “cows” (CREAW & MUFUMI, 2010) what are the implications of such beliefs for women’s access and ownership of land? In an agrarian Wa West District that has a majority of its women in agriculture, what becomes their fate when access and or ownership of land is a challenge?

1.3 Research questions

The research questions of the study include the following:

1. What is the relationship between bride price and women’s access and ownership of land in the Wa West District?
2. What are the customary norms and practices that govern women’s access to and ownership of land?
3. What are the gendered perceptions about women’s access and ownership of land in the context of property ownership in the Wa West District?



4. What is the socio-economic importance of bride price payment and its implications for women's access and ownership of land in the Wa West District?

1.4 Objectives of the study

The general objective is to examine the implications of bride price system on women's access and ownership of land in the Wa West District of Ghana.

The specific objectives of the study are to:

1. explore the relationship between bride price and women's access and ownership of land in the Wa West District
2. assess the customary norms and practices governing women's access and ownership of land in the Wa West district
3. analyse gendered perceptions of access and ownership of land in the context of property ownership in the Wa West District
4. examine the socio-economic importance of bride price and its implications for women's access and ownership of land in the Wa West District.

1.5 Justification of the study

This study sought to bring to light the implications of bride price payments on women's land access and ownership in the Wa West District and to expose the discriminatory portions of the system especially with regards to inheritance and ownership of property in marriages. The role of women in food security is globally acknowledged but the main resource that is required by women to remain in agriculture has not been easily accessible. Literature shows that women do not have land ownership rights (Bonye & Kpieta, 2012; Duncan & Brants, 2004; Pemunta, 2017). This study explored the cultural experiences of men and women in an attempt to advocate the review of customs and



cultural practices that are hindering women's economic independence. Land litigations are largely due to the customary land tenure system in Ghana (Aasoglenang et al., 2013). This study attempted to draw some understandings from such conclusions. The study underscored the need for women to be socio-economically supported hence any efforts in granting them access to land is non-negotiable. It also contributed to knowledge and literature on cultural practices hindering the economic empowerment of women in Ghana. There is the need to advocate for women's autonomy and one of such ways is through research as this study made policy recommendations for implementation in a bid to reforming the practices that are associated with the payments of bride price. The living conditions of the citizens will improve if such recommendations are truly implemented.

Finally, the findings of this study are a reference point for district assemblies especially those that are rural and agrarian that are interested in helping women increase their output as a way of improving living standards of the citizens.

1.6 Organization of work

The work is organized into five chapters. The first chapter examined the background of the study, objectives, research questions, statement of the study problem, and justification of the study. Chapter two looked at literature review touching on the conceptualization of the study and its theoretical underpinnings. Chapter three dealt with the methodology of the study. The fourth chapter deliberated on analysis of the data collected and the final chapter summarized key findings and recommendations of the study as well as the conclusions.



CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The literature review is a synthesis of scholarly works done on a specific topic, matter, issue or event and a demonstration of the knowledge level of the researcher in the area of study on major concepts, thoughts, philosophies and terminologies (Grant & Osanloo, 2014). Its focus is often on secondary data and what is already researched hence it excludes the business of discovering new knowledge (ibid). The exercise of literature review helps the researcher identify the gaps that exist in existing knowledge and forms the basis for the study (Grant & Osanloo, 2014). This chapter of the study covered the theoretical underpinning, conceptual debates, conceptual framework and end with a summary of the chapter discussions.

2.2 Theoretical underpinnings of the study

This section took a look at feminism and patriarchy as theories underlying the study. Their tenets, relevance to the study and weaknesses are explored.

2.2.1 Feminist theoretical perspectives on gendered inequalities

Generally, discrimination against women or gender-based inequalities and domination in society have been discussed drawing on diverse theories such as the Marxist Feminism, Liberal Feminism, Radical Feminism and Socialist Feminism (Samkange, 2015). The agenda of feminists incorporate numerous key expanses such as the economic status of women, women's poverty, property inheritance laws, marital or divorce laws, the sexuality of women and all forms of discrimination against women (Asen, 2017). Feminism is a broad concept that seeks to liberate women from the patriarchal circumstances of society and major among the concerns is harmful socio-



cultural practices against women, in that male rationalization of domineering gender relations is found in traditions and customs of the people (ibid). Feminism is a controversial concept but “opposes” women's subservience to men at both family and society levels (Offen, 1988). Feminism as a theoretical perspective does not seek to make women superior to men but stands for economic, social and political equality with men (Walby, 1990 & Crossman, 2019).

After the slave trade crisis, feminist movements and activism became rampant, vivacious and multi-directional with conditions of women oppression, discrimination, structural and economic inequality and lack of power for women coupled with male domination in society (Crossman 2019; Lay & Daley, 2007). For this work, radical, liberal and Marxist or socialist feminist perspectives are utilized.

Radical feminists believe women are dominated in society by men because society is male-dominated and men are always the beneficiaries of the domineering (Walby, 1990; & Samkange, 2015). Radical feminism does not believe that inequality is caused by social systems like capitalism. In the view of radical feminists, men have dominated women beyond the public space such that in the daily activities of women, male dominance is experienced (Bryson, 1992). The notion here is that cultural impediments have stifled women's freedom and will require radical measures to overcome the challenges. In short, radical feminists suggest that women's subordination is due to patriarchal arrangements that exist in society. Radical feminists do not consider legal regimes to be transformative enough to deal with the ills of society visited on women as a result of male dominations. Rather, they suggest radicalism or drastic measures that will eliminate socio-cultural limitations in the lives of women.





Marxist feminists claim that inequality in society is created by the capital market (Walby, 1990). In the view of the Marxist feminists, there is economic exploitation by one class (men) over another (women). Though there is no consensus among Marxist feminists, the family is seen as a source of labour (ibid). “For many centuries women were considered the property of men and a key cog in the capitalist machine from a commodities perspective” (Pasque & Wimmer, 2011:18). Marxists think that individual ownership of property and in this case land results in the exploitation of women. Land discourse is male-dominated especially in patrilineal societies as women are hardly involved in major land decision-making processes. Even when women are included in such gatherings, they become passive participants and barely have a say. Marxist feminism, however, has been criticized for overly concentrating on capitalism as the cause of gender inequality in society (Walby, 1990).

The socialist feminists claim their thoughts seek to correct the weaknesses of both radical and Marxist feminisms. “Marxist feminism has been criticized for its inability to explain women's oppression outside of the logic of capitalism; radical feminism for producing a universalistic, biologically based account of women's oppression, which pays insufficient attention to patterned differences between women” (Wiley, 2007). Therefore, socialist feminists claim the way out is to concentrate on both capitalism and patriarchy in revolving the challenges of men subordinating women in society (ibid).

Additionally, liberal feminists aver that gender inequality is caused by ignorance of the individual, culture and the manner men and women are socialized (Samkange, 2015). Believers of this theory opine that the situation can be reverted by making laws to reform society without challenging the status quo (ibid). They do not believe in radicalism which makes them the exact opposite of radical feminists. Liberal feminism is part of the first wave of feminism that began in the nineteenth century with its main

argument or principle that “society has a false belief that women are by nature less intellectually and physically capable than men” (Tong, 2009 p.2 cited in Pasque & Wimmer, 2011).

Rao (2018) posits that gender relations are not necessarily dependent on autonomous male domination, but how women respond to and deal with challenges between constitutional and customary tenure arrangements in society. The radical, liberal and socialist feminist perspectives are suitable for the study at hand because they address the issues of inequalities in society, male dominance or capitalist tendencies that deny women ownership rights to property. These perspectives underscore women’s subordination, property inheritance challenges women encounter and access hindrances women face in getting economic resources of which land is included. The debate on ownership and access to land has a positive correlation with the kinship system of the people in question. In that, it determines the inheritance system thus matrilineal or patrilineal (Duncan & Brants, 2004). Wa West is predominantly patrilineal which signals male domination. The feminists’ perspectives of inequalities were therefore employed to provide nuanced insight in this study as a guide.



2.2.2 Patriarchy

The concept of patriarchy simply refers to leadership by fathers or “patriarch” but is currently being used to describe male dominance at the family level and in society (Sultana, 2011). Walby (1990: p. 20) posits “patriarchy as a system of social structures and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women”. Traditionally, it is believed that men are born to be superior to women and authority is vested in the hands of men such that as men dominate, women play the role of subordinates (Sultana, 2011). Aristotle described women as maimed men. This notion of “seeing women as less



humans” has relegated women and has led to the exploitation of women. Engels, (1940) averred that the advent of capitalism or individual ownership of property necessitated patriarchy consequential of women’s subordination which advanced traditionally. But other scholars such as Lerner, (1989) have resisted this position by arguing to the contrary that patriarchy predated private ownership of property. Sultana, (2011) claims that feminists have used patriarchy to describe the power relations that exist between men and women with Rawat, (2014) concluding that patriarchy is a social and ideologically constructed concept that has placed men grander over women. Walby, (1990) postulated that with patriarchy, men have authority over children, women and property. The theory of patriarchy is central in discussing gender inequality and is relevant in netting the profundity, universality and interrelatedness of diverse phases of women’s subservience. The theory of patriarchy accounts for the different gender inequalities that exist over time among different ages and ethnic groupings (ibid).

However, critics of the theory of patriarchy often argue that it is essentialist and depends on ahistorical enquiry that misses experiences of women in diverse ethnic backgrounds, classes and cultures regarding subordination (Barrett, 1980; Rowbotham et al., 1981). Women from different geographical locations and cultural orientations do not have the same experiences. The happenings of patrilineal societies and that of matrilineal settings certainly differ. These differences have led to African scholars and feminists offering “diverse proposals in a bid to address the concerns and experiences of women in various African contexts that appeared to be neglected in mainstream, Western-centric discourses” (Akurugu, 2019). But Walby, (1990) disagreed, stressing that such views are out of place and only applicable to the early rudimentary accounts.

Patriarchy as a theory is relevant to this study because it underscores the foundation of male dominance and female subordination. Bride price and land discourses are

predominantly male-dominated which underpin patriarchy. Its tenets encompass property ownership and access hence the need to use it.

2.3 Conceptual debates

This section of the work reviewed the literature on the various concepts that are related to the study. This bothered on studies that are affirming concepts of marriage and bride price payments at the same time those disagreeing with other scholars.

2.3.1 Bride price system

Marital exchanges between families have been in existence globally in history and are currently ubiquitous in the global south with serious financial commitments that have a debilitating impact on women wellbeing and general wealth distributions in society (Anderson, 2007; Ngutor, Yandev & Arumun, 2013). Bride price is the payment a father gets for giving out his daughter for marriage (Muzhary, 2016). These payments vary in terms of time and items required which is orchestrated by cultural differences (Ndira, 2004). These exchanges or payments are in two different forms: payments from the groom to the bride's family known as bride price and it is pervasive in Sub-Saharan Africa or payments from the bride's family to the groom's family termed as dowry which is rampant in Europe and Asia (ibid). This study, however, is focussed on bride price payments. Bride price is differently labelled as bridal wealth, a token of appreciation, gifts amongst others and refers to the exchange of animals and other commodities for wives (Ndira, 2004). Bride price is therefore paramount in customary marriages and without its payment, the marriage becomes invalid (ibid).

In Africa, bride price payments are often done to legitimize customary marriages, give respect to the couple and the families involved as well as protect the wife from abuse or violence from the husband (Ngutor, Yandev & Arumun, 2013). The most common



social functions of bride price include the stability of marriages, establishment of an “alliance” between the kinship of the couple and also authenticating the marriages (Gray, 1960). The payment of bride price also recompenses the woman’s family and symbolizes the transmission of sensual and domestic rights to the husband. The woman is therefore expected to perform household chores such as cooking, sweeping, washing and satisfying her husband sexually (Dodoo et al., 2014). Exorbitant bride price ensures the superiority and stability of marriages (Lowes & Nunn, 2017).

The payment of bride price is fast changing in terms of the items required in its payments particularly in urban centres. Though this change is slow in rural societies, the cumulative effect is that bride price has become commercialized and monetized (Ngutor, Yandev & Arumun, 2013). Bride price has caused cohabitation in society and hardship among newly married couples (Ndoma, 2018). Aside from being commercialized, socioeconomic factors such as education and status of a woman in society now contribute to determining the value of the woman (ibid).

It is customary to pay bride price during a marriage, nonetheless, it is anomalous and unscrupulous to have it outrageously high, and use it as the foundation for appreciating a woman (Ndoma, 2018). It also delays the marriages of partners if the man is not financially sound. For instance, Gray (1960), reported that bride price is non-refundable among the Sonjo, a Bantu ethnic group in Tanzania and a father is at liberty to welcome a suitor for his daughter if the first husband fails to complete payment within the schedule and in which case even his (first husband) part payments will not be returned. Bride price is equally blamed for early and forced marriages. Corno and Voena, (2016), posit that girls or female children become treasured assets to parents who are experiencing financial tremors and are often given out for marriage to get bride price.



Households “sell” their girls to liberate themselves financially in the form of bride price and also reduce pressure on household resources (ibid).

Anderson (2007) claims there is a relationship between bride price payments and men marrying more than one wife with high propensities of divorce while monogamy exists in societies noted for dowry payment. In Ancient days, the bride price was a payment for virginity. He further avers that in societies where bride price payments exist, the people are averagely homogenous, women are actively involved in agriculture and there is high polygyny (ibid). The whole system of bride price is patriarchal in that men are always the beneficiaries and if women will benefit at all from it is very minimal (Ndoma, 2018). Children that come out of marriage are “property” of the father (man) and likened the payments of the bride price to prostitution transaction noting that the only exception is bride price is paid once while prostitutes charge every time, they satisfy men (Ndoma, 2018, Dodoo et al., 2014). By principle, bride price is viewed as an exchange in recognition for the productive and reproductive value of the woman going into marriage but in reality, it denies women the control over their bodies (Anderson, 2007).

It is further claimed by scholars that bride price forces women to stay in abusive marriages either to avoid stigmatization or in the name of elusive marital stability (Forkuor et al., 2018). Bride price is an element of a bargain for power in society which women often lose. Dodoo et al., (2014), asserted that women lose their independence once their bride price is paid such that they have no control over their bodies sexually and the children the couple may give birth to. This position is equally supported by Pemunta (2017), when he reported that women are “property” of their husbands and “property cannot own property” as ruled by a court in Cameroon in the case of Achu vs Achu. In summary, the bride price is a double edge sword. Though its original purpose



seems to be lost, cultural dogmas are hard to change and this is not an exception. Dery (2015) working on bride price and domestic violence in Nandom, postulated that with all the negatives associated with bride price respondents including women rejected all suggestions regarding its abolishment.

2.3.2 Bride price in Ghana

Diverse marriage practices exist in Ghana (Centre for Social Policy Studies (CSPS) & World Vision Ghana (WVG), 2017) and 43% of the population 12 years above is married (GSS, 2012). In Ghana, the Akan ethnic group which includes the Asante, Fante, Bono, Ahafo, Akyem, Sewfi among others are matrilineal while the rest of the country (Ga, Ewe, Gonja, Frafra, Dagaaba etc) practices the patrilineal system of inheritance. The Akan, just like all the other ethnic groups, requires bride price in marriages. Kyei (1984) posit that marriage is only legal and accepted in society among the Asante when some conditions are met. He stated that there are seven formalities carried out in the following order

1. “Knocking” of the door of the bride family by the bridegroom (*ahu-de*)
2. Delivery of formal marriage gifts by the bridegroom (*ayo-de*)
3. A formal request for the hand of the bride in marriage by a senior relative of the bridegroom (*ko-sre*)
4. Payments of “drink money” by senior relatives of the bridegroom to the bride (*tiri-nsa*)
5. Preparation and presentation of a big meal by the bride to the bridegroom (*Aduan-Kesee*)
6. Presentation of a sheep to the bride family by the bridegroom (*Any Ame-*



Dwan)

7. Payment of head money if demanded (*Tiri-Sika*).

Kyei (1984) strongly objected to the description of the “*Tiri-Sika*” as bride price and stated categorically that:

“...some misinformed foreigners erroneously refer to (*Tiri-Sika*) as 'bride- price', or money paid to buy a wife. The exposition made under *Tiri-Nsa* should, it is hoped, have made clear one point which, expressed tersely, is that in Asante society a wife is married, a wife is never bought. Any notion held to the effect that the Asante pay a 'price' for a bride must therefore be rightly condemned as fallacious”.

He further averred that “*Tiri Sika*” is not demanded in all marriages and even when it is required there are circumstances that make the bride’s family make such demands. Among the circumstances include liability in the bride's parental home that requires urgent payment; a close maternal relation fell ill and money was sought instantaneously for treatment; a wife's mother seriously desired a rooftop above her head; a bride's brother's school bills must be punctually settled; someone in the 'house' died and cash is badly required to perform or to take care of the initial funeral expenses immediately.

What is however intriguing is Kyei (1984) conclusion that such payments (*Tiri sika*) are often refunded when there is a divorce and sometimes with interest. Kyei’s position that the *Tiri-Sika* should not be seen as payment of bride price but must be paid back when the marriage fails is fascinating.

Additionally, there is a practice of bride exchange which is done ostensibly to keep wealth within the families involved in arranged marriages. This practice is so common among the Konkomba in both northern Ghana and in the Volta Region of Ghana (CSPS &WVG, 2017). Rather than a family collecting bride price from their in-laws, they



demand a wife in return for their son and the exception is that girls are sometimes forced to marry so their bride price could be used to pay that of their mothers (ibid).

Bride price also exists in the Upper West Region though with variations or differences in the items demanded. Forkuor et al., 2018, claim that much as there are differences in bride price among the Dagaaba people in the Upper West Region, bride price summarily includes, farm labour, cowries and cattle presentations. Dery, (2016) posits that women's land access and control is gendered and influenced by discriminations that are culturally reinforced. Marriage and for that matter bride price establishes social relations and women's access to land is predicated on the very social relations that women have with men in their marital homes. The marital status of a woman has a role to play in whether she will get land for agricultural purposes or not and the security of the access is equally contingent on the life span of such relationships (Bonye & Kpieta, 2012; Dery, 2016; Pemunta, 2017; Rao, 2018). Even when the woman is married, the issue of the sex of children in the marriage (male or female) equally plays a significant role in determining how safe her accessed land or the land the woman would have access to in the future would be.

In the Wa West District, which is predominantly patrilineal, bride price is treasured. According to GSS (2014), Wa West District has a greater fraction (51%) of males in the "never married" group in the 2010 population census and attributed this to be a reflection of the fact that men are expected to delay marriage since traditional practices expect the men to initiate the marriage by organizing the bride price and the responsibility for household upkeep. The district is completely rural and agrarian (91.6%) with polygamous indices such as 9.9% female widows as compared to 1.5% male widows, 23% of Moslem population, 48% female and 7.7% male widows for 65 years and above population (ibid). These statistics confirm the position of Anderson



(2007) as he posits that bride price is rampant in rural agrarian societies. As a district that is predominantly patrilineal and patriarchal, it is the considered view of this study that land is also in the hands of the Tendamba but is allocated to family members for farming by the clan and household heads.

2.4 Land as a source of identity

Internationally, the land is a fundamental component in the individualities of native people and majority fight for acknowledgement with land, which is more than a physical resource but a *“metaphor for their culture, language, social and community norms, and indeed, their very identity”* (Rao, 2018). This identity struggle is a matter of subservience and power which creates inequality. Land is a source of authority and power and women who have land are empowered (Cotula, 2007; Rao, 2018). But Rao (2018) in a study *“Good women do not inherit land”* in India on politics of land and gender averted that domination and subordination relationships in land identity struggles only survive because there are affinity and compromise. Rao (2018) further advocated that social acceptance is crucial in empowering women in that women can have the right to own land yet would not be able to achieve their ambitions because such rights will not be practical. Land is equally described as a symbol of power. Rao (2018) however stated that the power embedded in land ownership does not exist in vacuity but entrenched in social practices and emblematic reproduction of societies.

2.4.1 Land tenure system in Ghana

Land ownership generally is put in three categories in Ghana and approximately share these percentages; customary land (78%), State land (20%) and vested land (2%) with ownership largely on a communal basis in the customary sector and tenure practices also based on customary arrangements (Fobih, 2004). Customary land tenure system in





Africa especially Ghana, is based on local practices which are oral by nature, malleable, accessible and setting explicit (Kpieta & Bonye, 2012). Customary ownership in Ghana is often through one or more of four factors (Fobih, 2004) thus finding and long continuous settlement; the defeat of enemies through war and later settlement; a gift from other landowners or traditional overlord and buying from other landowners. This position is supported by Duncan and Brants (2004) who posited that land is often gained in the Ghanaian context through inheritance, gift, rent and purchase. Duncan and Brants (2004) working on access to and control over land from a gender perspective in the Volta Region of Ghana concluded that land ownership is based on lineage and lineage heads are responsible for the distribution of land. They further intimated that all major decisions (including those concerning land) are taken at lineage heads meetings where women are rarely invited. Even when women are invited to such meetings, they do not take part in decision-making but only listen to the men. In southern Ghana particularly with respect to the Akans, chiefs are the custodians of the land but this is different amongst the other ethnic groupings that are non-Akan because lineage heads control and manage land (Giller, Adjei-Nsiah, Leeuwis & Kuyper, 2008). Families get entitlements to land base on their dwellings and political commitment to the “stools”. Also, individuals get access to land simply because of their belongingness to families or lineages (ibid).

In northern Ghana, customary inheritance systems like agnatic succession bars or limits women from land succession rights (Kuusaana, Kidido & Halidu-Adam, 2013). Beneath this system, property transfers are done through male lines thus from fathers to sons and fathers to brothers nevertheless wives or daughters do not have inheritance rights to land (ibid). On the other hand, matrilineal inheritance is often done via the mother’s descent and property (land) is inherited only by members of the mother’s line

(from mother's brother to sister's son) with self-acquired property (land) is given to someone the deceased wishes (ibid). Kusaana, Kidido and Halidu-Adam (2013) further postulated that the matrilineal system of inheritance has customary compulsions forced on the inheritor to the living widow and children but such duties are often disregarded in reality. They were, however, quick to add that women in enatic societies have comparatively superior access to land, control over land or its ownership as compared to women in patrilineal societies (ibid). For example, among the Tallensi who is patrilineal in the Upper East Region of Ghana, patrimony is inherited by senior sons or based on seniority. Marriage is another important institution through which married spouses gain secure access to land.

2.4.2 Land tenure system in northern Ghana

Land tenure system in northern Ghana vests allodial titles in the earth priest and chiefs and land is often inherited by male children characteristic of patrilineal societies with clan and family heads controlling and managing or allocating land (Ayamga, Yeboah, & Dzanku, 2015; Bonye & Kpeita; 2012). Bonye and Kpieta (2012), working on women, ownership and access to land in the Upper East Region of Ghana reported that women have no ownership rights to land simply because they are thought not to be spiritually worthy to perform sacrifices to the earth gods or spirits. They, however, indicated that women who belong to the Tendamba family are entitled to land or ownership rights, women with enough animals have the chance to exchange for land tenancy and concluded that male family heads whose children are all women may have women owning land as they assume the roles of men (ibid).

Generally, two customary land tenure traditions exist in northern Ghana which is the allodia designation of land conferred in the entire communities under the stewardship



of the overlords in the centralized federations such as the case of the Nanumba, Gonja, Dagbon and Mamprugu. Secondly, there is another tradition that is less central administratively and in such places, the land is vested in the hands of the Tendamba. This is the case amongst the Lobi-Dagaaba and Sissala, in the upper west region and Tallensi as well as Kusasi in the upper east region. The control and management of the lands equally rest with the clans and Tendamba but allocation to individuals is done by family heads who gain their authority via inheritance based on their age (Kpieta & Bonye, 2012).

Much as the cost of obtaining land for settlement for strangers or visitors is not exorbitant traditionally, it is also not given out for free. Sacrificial items such as fowls, sheep and goats, kola, drinks among others are often demanded to pacify the gods before the land is released to “visitors”. The animals that are often demanded vary from community to community because of the cultural differentiation (Kpieta & Bonye, 2012). The transmission of land to people in northern Ghana which is predominantly patrilineal is through gifts, heirloom and accustomed tenancy (ibid).



2.5 Customary land tenure and traditional land management systems in Ghana

Kasanga & Kotey, (2001) intimated that about 90% of the Ghanaian land was undeveloped with different land management and tenure systems between the northern and southern parts of the country. This percentage certainly would have reduced in the face of rapid urbanization and the emergence of real estate development agencies. From 2008, the world has witnessed land grabbing and massive land acquisition by industrialized countries and well-established organizations in the global south (Doss, et al., 2014). Landholders have been categorized into individual and families, Tendamba or clans and community lands thus the stools occupied by the chiefs (Kasanga & Kotey,

2001). Tendamba and chiefs are members of families hence individuals and families symbolize customary importance or ownership of land. Lands management and control are customarily in the hands of families, clans' heads and chiefs. Women barely have a say in land management decisions (Dery, 2016; Duncan & Brants, 2004).

2.5.1 Perceptions of women's access and ownership of land

Property rights to land are just but one of the utmost influential apparatuses through which people particularly women can surge and increase their assets outside land and labour to the complete assortment required for bearable incomes and paucity decline (Fobih, 2004). Kpieta and Bonye (2012) posit that land is considered "a god" among the Dagaaba and is only owned by those who have the right to sacrifice to the ancestors. This belief system has therefore taken out women in the ownership brackets of land once they are considered to be spiritually impure. Kpieta and Bonye (2012), working on the gender dimensions of land and its wealth creation among the Dagaaba reported extensively and comprehensively on how women are seen as marriageable materials at birth. Even in their husbands' home what women acquire in the form of property belong to the husbands once the marriage is legal by way of bride price payments.

Women from birth are considered strangers or visitors who eventually will depart to their husbands' home to offer both productive and reproductive labour. The notion that all these seek to establish is that married women are "acquired assets" by themselves (Kpieta & Bonye 2012; Pemunta, 2017). Pemunta (2017) however posit that in Cameroon where a court ruled (*Achu Vs Achu*) that women are property of their husbands hence "property cannot own property" but single women and divorcees have the right to own land. This exception points to the fact that but for marriage and the payment of bride price women could work to acquire land or equally inherit land just



as male children do. In the case of northern Ghana, as reported by Kpeita and Bonye (2012), women generally are considered to be impure to sacrifice to the gods which is a prerequisite in the debate of land ownership. It, therefore, implies that in northern Ghana the element of land pacification by itself is a barrier to women's land ownership and not necessarily the marriage and payment of bride price as reported by Pemunta (2017) in the case of Cameroon.

Duncan and Brants (2004) posit that there are substantial changes between women and men's access to and control over land. And attributed the gender disparities to men's supremacy in policymaking processes, headship positions in society and households, the compensations conferred to men by indigenous tradition, custom and the patrilineal heirloom system, men's superior prospects to acquire land, men improved the pecuniary situation and the grander prestige attributed to men by humanity. In Ghana, women are often duty-bound to work on the farms of their husbands and their independent farms as well. This tradition reduces the time available for women to work on their farms (Duncan & Brants, 2004).



2.5.2 Bride price, gender and property rights

In many societies, bride price exists though it is currently being criticized. Literature (Lowe & Nunn, 2017) show that bride price has not only affected women in terms of decision-making but has commoditized women. MIFUMI, a women's right organization in Uganda in 2010 reported that men describe their wives as "chattels". Even men see nothing wrong with wife abuse. Some in beating their wives claim they are beating their "cows". Women are considered strangers in their husbands' homes and therefore have no right to own property from birth (Kpeita & Bonye, 2012; Dery,

2016) and are seen or treated as the property of their husbands hence “property cannot own property” (Pemunta, 2017).

Many researchers (Anderson, 2007; CREAM & MUFUMI, 2010) have defined bride price as payment for wives. This has led to a negative conceptualization of bride price with many thinking once payments have been made the wives become their bona fide property and can be treated anyhow once such treatments serve the interest of men. Besides the patrilineal and patriarchal tendencies of society that discriminate against women’s ownership of property and its inheritance, bride price payments equally serve as justification though not legally instituted for women abuse and denial of self-esteem, economic independence and social status. Kpieta and Bonye (2012) reported that women acquire property in marriage for the ancestors of their husbands. Before the bride price items are handed over to the bride’s family those items are first presented to the gods. This makes the wife a “property” of the ancestors who must guide her and, in the event, that she sells the husband’s farm produce or commits adultery the ancestors must deal with her either by letting her suffer illness or sudden death.

In some societies, the women who confess their “sin” (of selling their own or husband’s property or adultery) will be spiritually cleansed to make them worthy for them to then share food or bed with their husbands. Dery, (2015) working on bride price in the north west of Ghana reported the bull which is collected as part of the bride price in Nandom, is sacrificed to the gods so they can serve as witnesses to the marriage while the cowries play the role of checking the wife on adultery. These rituals make the woman a preserve for her husband alone sexually. Economically, the bride’s father or family benefits from organized labour from the groom or his family on their farm (ibid).



2.6 The legal arrangements and women land rights in Ghana

Globally human rights debates have largely been centred on the vulnerable groups. Cotula, Toulmin and Quan, (2006) intimated that persons who are often victims of land rights deprivation are the poor, native people, women, peri-urban dwellers, common resource (land) dependent people and persons residing in conflict-prone localities. Globally, the UN (1948) via the Universal Declaration of Human Rights averred in articles 2 and 7 that persons must not be discriminated against based on gender, sex, race, language, nationality amongst others. Also, article 17 of the same document guaranteed individuals the right to own property independently or jointly with others and such property (land) must not be illegally confiscated.

Land rights transverse Sub-Saharan Africa and are consequential of informal measures and safeguarded by an amalgamation of customary and statutory measures, which majority believe that denationalized constitutional engagements are further effectual in guarding people's securities in the land (Ayamga et al., 2015). Lately, there have been pragmatic steps to overcome land acquisition challenges in Ghana and to rationalize land administration as Civil Society Organizations are eagerly participating in drumming this home to ensure that women are not left behind (Bonye & Kpieta, 2012b). The 1992 constitution of Ghana, particularly articles 17, 18, 20 and 22(3), have guaranteed every individual an equal opportunity to be treated equally and have the right to own property legally. Article 17 states in part that:

All persons shall be equal before the law. A person shall not be discriminated against on grounds of gender, race, colour, ethnic origin, religion, creed or social or economic status. ...this article, "discriminate" means to give different treatment to different persons attributable only or mainly to their respective descriptions by law, place of origin, political opinions, colour, gender,



occupation, religion or creed, whereby persons of one description are subjected to disabilities or restrictions to which persons of another description are not made subject or are granted privileges or advantages which are not granted to persons of another description.

And article 18 stipulates in full as follows:

Every person has the right to own property either alone or in association with others. No person shall be subjected to interference with the privacy of his home, property, correspondence or communication except in accordance with law and as may be necessary in a free and democratic society for public safety or the economic well-being of the country, for the protection of health or morals, for the prevention of disorder or crime or for the protection of the rights or freedoms of others.

The law by itself has been beautifully crafted but women, in particular, are customarily and financially challenged when it comes to seeking legal redress in the courts. How many rural women would be bold to take their families to the law courts to seek redress if they even know that the constitution of Ghana has guaranteed their rights? The Ghanaian constitution has equally created room for customary laws and which very often than not favour men. Therefore, just having a good constitutional arrangement is not a panacea to the challenges women go through in accessing land. Interestingly article 22(3) of the 1992 constitution of Ghana has given room for a spouse to benefit from the proceeds jointly acquired of their labour when their partner(s) become deceased. Fynn (2016), however, argued that the courts have not universally agreed on what jointly owned property are and plaintiffs must equally demonstrate in court how they have contributed to the acquisition of the estate or property to get fifty per cent of



their deceased partner property (land). Therefore, the courts have discretion and depending on the legal argument a woman will put in court she could be denied land. Very often the labour of women at home is not quantifiable once is often not in monetary value.

Additionally, Ghana upon several disagreements emerged regarding property inheritance introduced the intestate succession law, 1985 (PNDC, Law 111) as amended 1991 (Act, 264) to allow people (women) to inherit their deceased partners. This law is gender-neutral and favours both men and women. However, there is a fundamental flaw in this law for two reasons. One, it doesn't cater for issues related to skin, stool and family property (land) as indicated in Section I clause two of the same law. And two, it acknowledges in Section 10 that where customary law exists and provides that inheritance of property (land) be done by families, such arrangements must be upheld. Land in Ghana is owned by the state, communities protected by the skin or stool and the Tendamba or clans in the case of Northern Ghana (Bonye & Kpieta, 2012b; Kasanga & Kotey, 2001) and the customary lands hold the greatest percentage (78%) of land in Ghana (Fobih, 2004). Article 157(3) of the 1992 constitution of Ghana asserted that lands of Northern Ghana which currently comprise the Northern, North East, Savanna, Upper East and Upper West Regions are not public land but stool or skin land and must be managed according to the customary laws. It is therefore repugnant to suggest that the Intestate Succession law can address the issues of land. Women hardly if ever become family heads hence where customary laws provide for families to inherit property and in this case, land women certainly will become observers and rarely have a say in such matters. So, much as this law may be relevant in other sections of property inheritance, it is challenged from birth regarding land issues. This has prompted the drafting of the spouse property by Parliament which



is yet to be passed. Summarily women in Ghana have a constitutional right to own and defend their land rights but these rights customarily are seriously challenged.

Notwithstanding all the legal arrangements that have been put in place Dalley and Pallas (2014), posit that women are susceptible to a negative experience in acquiring land. They attributed this to the various socio-economic dynamics that women go through and concluded that women suffer more than men. Women's susceptibilities come in four ways (Dalley & Pallas, 2014) which are: (1) Women have restricted access to land and control of land whether using the customary or constitutional laws, with teething problems when changing events demand enforcement of the laws. (2) universal gender inequalities in societies and governmental associations, especially women's participation in bread and butter matters arise which relegate women to the background in land acquisition decisions; (3) women have limited financial muscles as compared to men as a result of women being employed in less paid jobs induced by massive land grabbing (4) women susceptibilities in the form of sexual abuse, home violence, levirate and sensual emetic are debilitating. Pemunta (2017) claimed that in many parts of Cameroon, land allocation is done by the lineage system to the household heads who are men and women only have crop growing rights on the land induced by gender discriminated rights lopsided in favour of men. Women are considered as visitors or strangers in their husbands' home hence can only have access to land to farm but not to sell or control (ibid).

Many works in northern Ghana such as (Bonye & Kpieta, 2012; Kusaana, Kidido & Halidu-Adam, 2013; Alidu, 2015) have concluded that women have access rights and not ownership rights to land. Women in Ghana particularly northern Ghana have usufruct rights to land but not allodia rights (Bonye & Kpieta, 2012; Alidu, 2015).



2.6.1 Women and Customary land rights

Agriculture is the mainstay in rural parts of the world especially in less developed continents like Africa. It is therefore paramount to talk about land rights when property rights are up for discussions. Because all investments in rural settings are crucially dependent on land (Doss, Meinzen-Dick, et al., 2014). In Africa and by extension Ghana, women customarily have no land ownership rights but have access to land with limited tenure security (Bonye& Kpeita, 2012; Doss, Meinzen-Dick, & Bomuhangi, 2014). This conclusion has serious implications for women in rural communities because the majority are into agriculture and without secured land investments become turbulent. Doss et al (2014) working on who owns the land from a rural perspective in Uganda reported women are not considered as “real farmers”. These perceptions are not healthy for the economic independence of women. Pemunta (2017) reported that women with usufruct or use rights to their husbands’ land consider that as a privilege and not a right.

This further supports the argument that women’s social status in society (whether married or single) and behaviour or relationships with family members will determine their access security. Rural women in China lose land rights when they marry, get divorced or are widowed though women land rights are constitutionally guaranteed (Liaw, 2008). Bacho (2004) examined and explained that women in northern Ghana have less control over land and other resources because the norm is that men must serve as household heads and therefore, men should control the resources. This control mechanism results in women low productivity and poverty (ibid). According to Schlager and Ostrom (1992), land rights could be in the form of access, withdrawal, management, exclusion and alienation. In the case of Ghana, access and withdrawal rights may be applicable in the discourse of women land rights. Duncan and Brants,



(2004) reported that both men and women have access to land in Ghana but women's access is not secured. They further explained that even men have acknowledged that granting women secured access and ownership to land could bring prosperity in society but that the situation is different because land is currently held by families, lineage heads and clans. These findings cut across patrilineal societies that Upper West Region and Wa West precisely are not exempted.

Notwithstanding these customary hurdles, women can own land through purchase, lease and tenancy arrangements which are more secured. Unfortunately, women are pecuniary weak and hardly have the financial muscle to acquire land via these modes (Kuusaana, Kidido & Halidu-Adam, 2013).

2.7 Women in agriculture

The role of women in agriculture has been tremendously hailed globally. Women have contributed immensely in the areas of ensuring food security, economic independence, and good nutrition (Alidu, 2015). The UN through the sustainable development goals (SDGs) is striving hard to end hunger and poverty in its 17 goals and 169 targets set for the agenda 2030. This agenda is herculean and the role of women certainly cannot be overemphasized. The nonformal sector of the global economy is crucial because it is taking care of 61% of workers with 92% of this group being women and 84.5% come from the global south (OXFAM, 2019).

According to the World Bank (2017), women are the spine of rural economies, particularly in the global south. Women represent 50% of global farmers with women household heads exponentially expanding due to the exodus of men into city centres. With the right resources such as land, extension services or information, training and technology, women's contribution to sustainable growth globally would further



increase (ibid). And the World Economic Forum (2018), claims such increment could range from 20%-30% which will consequently cut hunger by 17%. Statistically, there are varying percentages with regards to global contributions of women in agriculture but what is certain is that women contribute at least forty per cent of agricultural labour. World Bank (2017) puts it at forty-four per cent, Tian et al., (2015) reported 43% but added that in Africa women agricultural labour stands at 50%. The World Economic Forum (2018), claims women produce 70% of food in Africa yet only twenty per cent of agricultural land is owned by women. However, Christiaensen, Kilic, and Palacios-Lopez, (2015) have averred that the figures bandit around has not been empirically proven and should not be swallowed hook and sinker. Tian et al (2015), equally concurred that assigning 60%-80 % as women contribution in agriculture is challenging between the roles of both men and women are intertwined. For instance, if a man clears and cultivates the land for a woman to sow and the man weeds around and the harvesting is finally done by both of them or only the woman how do we separate their contributions? Notwithstanding all the debates on the exact contribution of women in percentage terms, their role is indispensable.

Regrettably, the role of women is thrown down the gauntlet with numerous challenges such as limited land access, inadequate relevant information, pecuniary hindrances, gender discrimination induced by backward cultural practices, post-harvest losses among others. These problems turn to thwart the implementation of global, regional and national goals set by Ghana. Ghana poverty data show that poverty has decreased from 56.2% in 1992 to 24.2 in 2015(GSS, 2015).



2.8 Land and rural women farmers in Ghana

As a result of both legal and cultural restrictions regarding land ownership and access, below 20% of land-users are women globally. It is only 5% in North Africa and West Asia who are agricultural landowners with 15% across Sub-Saharan Africa (FAO, 2011). In Ghana, differences exist when it comes to the quality of land that is allocated to men and women for agriculture purposes as a result of cultural practices and myths bordering on land ownership, access and control (FAO, 2011; Alidu, 2015). There is gender disparity which affects the output of women in agriculture. It is long overdue to consciously take steps that would involve women in agriculture and go beyond subsistence by granting women secured access to land to enable them to go into commercial farming. FAO, (2011) and Patil and Babus, (2018) acknowledge that the agricultural sector is globally performing below expectations and attributed women less ownership and access rights to productive resources like land as a major factor.

SEND-Ghana, (2014), supported this position when they concluded that sociocultural practices (bride price) especially in northern Ghana curtail women ownership and access to land and also reduce the chances of women getting access to credit facilities as well as extension services. Women spend different periods in agriculture and have diverse crops production cycle and age among varied ethnic groupings. Summarily, rural women contribute greatly, more than men by way of agricultural labour though their contributions are often not paid for (Tian et al., 2015). Unfortunately, women in developing countries have less control over productive land and often depend on men in order to cultivate their crops. In developing countries, only 10%-20% of agricultural landholders are women (Patil & Babus 2018). In Ghana, a major gender-based restriction to women in agriculture is access to land. Only 10% of women own land compared to 23% for men with women landholdings being usually three times lower



than that of men (SEND-Ghana, 2014). Just like the national data, upper west region largely depends on agriculture with 72.2% of the population employed by that sector (GSS, 2012). According to the GSS (2014), 1.7% of the economically active female population is unemployed in Wa West as compared to 1.4% for the male population. The district has more men in agriculture as compared to women. Men, form 90.3% and women have 77.3% of persons engaged in agriculture though more females (98.1%) are employed in the informal sector as compared to males (95.9%) (ibid). Wa West has 11,486 as households with 91.6% employed in agriculture. Out of this, 97.2% are into crop production, 69.5% in livestock farming, 1.2% in tree planting and less than one (0.1%) in fishing (ibid). However, this study concentrated on the implications of bride price on women ownership and access to land. The focus is particular crop production and livestock or subsistence farming to be precise. Further questions will be asked on the ownership of the farm produce and the bearings that will have on women economic independence.

2.9 Land, access, ownership and ownership inequality

In rural economies, landforms the foundation of native values, food production, economies, political structures and spiritual live out (Njieassam, 2019). But land purchase and legal arrangements intertwined with customary practices have made women vulnerable in the face of population increment resulting in the privatization of land which denies women access (Cotula, 2007).

Land is a broad concept and is often defined differently. It is the compact section of the earth which is occupied by people and also serve as a factor of production as well as a cultural identity (Aasoglenang et al., 2013). In an economic sense, land encompasses trees, water bodies, minerals, buildings or estates, property amongst others (ibid). In this work land simply refers to agriculture land. Wa West is rural and



91.6% agrarian (GSS, 2014). Land is, therefore, a primary source of livelihood and poverty reduction will be a mirage if land acquisition and access are strongly hindered. Arable land, therefore, is needed for crop production and the rearing of animals to ameliorate the suffering of women from economic shackles. Land is an essential wellspring of riches, economic wellbeing and influence. It is the establishment for nourishment generation, cover arrangement and financial exercises and practically every individual depends legitimately on it to ashore for their employment. Along these lines, each individual should be given equivalent and fair open doors without undue separation (Kuusaana, Kidido, & Halidu-Adam, 2013).

Access refers to the chance or opportunity a woman has to use land subject to the whims and caprices of the landowner. This means the relations women have with the landowners, intended uses of the land that women seek access to and women own marital statuses among others influence their access rights (Bonye and Kpieta, 2012).

Ownership is all about having control and management rights over the land and being in the position to transfer the land if need be. Ownership that this study seeks to establish goes beyond the ability to inherit but to know whether women who can acquire land can have control of such lands as their property since there is a perception that even the women themselves are “property”. Ownership here extends to the right to sell or use according to their will even what is produced on the land.

2.9.1 Land rights and gender-based discrimination

The legal frameworks in Ghana are gender-neutral regarding the rights of citizens on land ownership. Both men and women have legally granted the same rights to access and own land. However, the same laws are male-centred in their practical terms and the customary arrangements have barred women from owning lands by way of the





inheritance systems particularly patrilineal societies such as Wa West, patriarchy and marriage. These have been exacerbated by the payment of bride price. Customary laws do not recognize women worthy enough to own land. This discrimination has pushed women out of land ownership brackets especially in areas where stereotyping is strong such as the study area. Land rights are a bundle of rights available to a person to use, manage, control and transfer to others their land if they so wish (USAID, 2013). People who have land rights are in the position to determine its use and may restrict or resist others who will attempt to take it from them. It could be gained through purchase, inheritance or gift (ibid). In this context, women's land rights are the entitlements women have to land that enable them to use it as they please to liberate them socially and economically. But women in patriarchal societies are often discriminated against as society has virtually excluded them from land decision-making and grant only access rights to them. Even the access rights are often contingent and hinged on their marital statuses. Married women have more access rights as compared to unmarried women.

Also, the behaviour of married women will determine the size and type of land women get. Gender discrimination is simply giving different treatments to persons, based on sex and in this case denying women opportunities and entitlements just because they are women and nothing else. Gender discrimination is broad; economic, political, social and cultural fields all have gender discriminations but areas or aspects of gender discrimination that this study will consider are the objectification of women by men paying bride price, stereotypes and ownership inequalities that exist in society which turn to deny women the opportunity to take part in decision-making on issues that affect them. These acts of discrimination thwart the world's efforts in ensuring gender equality as stated in goal five of the sustainable development goals. Women are seen to be objects or commodities purchased from their parents once their bride price is paid.

As Pemunta, (2017) reported “property do not own property,” women are seen and treated as property and society, therefore, thinks they have no right to own property. Gender and cultural stereotypes have equally held some strong views about women in society which turn to create economic dependency and exclude women from participating in critical decision-making. For example, it is a widely held view that women must be submissive in society and should not challenge or even talk when men are talking. This assumption has mentally made women subordinates in society with men dominating decision-making in society including land management, ownership and control decisions.

Women who challenge men are often described as disrespectful people and are generally labelled troublesome. To avoid this tag, women simply conform to the societal beliefs which deny them land ownership. Bonye and Kpeita (2012) reported landowners sacrifice to the gods and women are seen to be customarily impure in that direction and this has barred them from owning land. These land rights to a large extent determine the uses of the land. Whether tree plants or seasonal crops would be cultivated on land or not will depend on the rights the user has to the land (Neef, 2001). Economic trees on land symbolize ownership hence women are often not allowed to grow such on land that they have only use rights to (Bonye & Kpieta 2012; Neef, 2001).

2.10 Conceptual framework for bride price payment and its implications for women’s access and ownership to land

This Framework is aimed at exploring the implications of bride price payments on women’s access and ownership of land in the Wa West District. Lay and Daley (2007) argued that the theory of feminism is linked to women rights though that notion is just an oversimplification of the argument. The purpose of bride price payment is to legalize



marriages and so to limit it to land rights is challenging. Women rights in owning property are guaranteed under the 1992 constitution of Ghana. In this regards, access and ownership are two areas of interest. How linked is bride price to these two concepts? Women's objectification and stereotype as a result of bride price payment are common Wendo, (2004). Crossman (2019) contended that feminist theory is not about girls and women but the entire social world creation in a manner that economic inequality, injustice, oppression and disparities will be dealt with to ensure that there is equality. But patriarchal practices and social structures like bride price has made women subordinates (Ngomane, 2016).

Engels (1942) equally posits that women benefit from economic resources (land) when there is a matrilineal system of property ownership in society. Crossman (2019), states that feminist theory conceptually focuses on “discrimination and exclusion based on sex and gender, objectification, structural and economic inequality, power and oppression, and gender roles and stereotypes, among others”. The payments of bride price turn to reinforce gender discriminations in the form of women objectification and stereotypes which affect women land rights. In the mix of these discriminations, women have ownership and access rights which are legally guaranteed under the legal frameworks of Ghana and even international laws. But these rights, particularly ownership rights, are greatly influenced by the cost of acquisition, customary tenure system and women socioeconomic conditions in society. Researchers such as Bonye and Kpieta, (2012), Duncan and Brants (2004) among others have reported that women have access to land. However, access security is often conditional. Meaning at any point in time women can lose access rights if such conditions of access cease to exist. For example, marital status changes could also mean the end of access rights. Liberal



feminists posit that women are dominated by men in society because society is patriarchal and undermines the reasoning and capacity or abilities of women (Crossman, 2019). Liberal feminists further claim that marriage is detrimental to the welfare of women because of the sexual division of labour which limits women from contributing to public life activities (ibid).

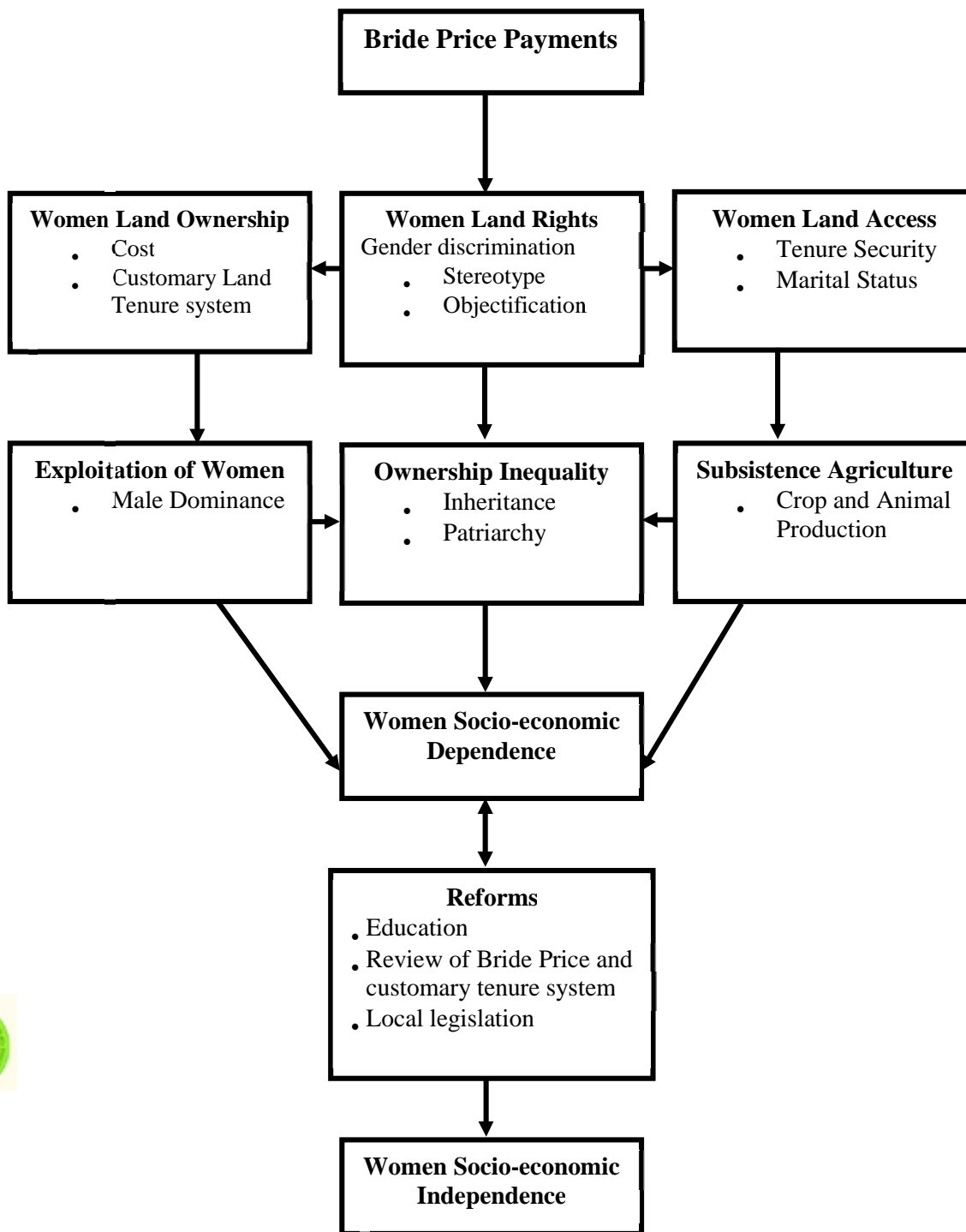
Land ownership is, therefore, a male-dominated arena which results in women exploitation. According to radical feminists, the exploitation of women persists because of the power of men in society (ibid). Literature has indicated that even women who are financially sound and wish to acquire land need the services of men to do so (Bonye & Kpieta, 2012; Pemunta, 2017, Duncan & Brants, 2004; Kusaana, Kidido & Halidu-Adam, 2013). The customary land ownership is predominant in northern Ghana with 97.1% of land in the hands of men (ISSER, 2005). Apart from the inheritance system and patriarchal nature of society that challenge women's land ownership rights, the ownership of produce from the farms of women through the accessible lands used for subsistent agriculture is equally not guaranteed. Women are seen as "chattels or cows" (CREAW & MUFUMI, 2010) and "property" (Pemunta, 2017) so how do they own their farm produce and animals reared? Hence the combined or cumulative effects of these ownership imbalances create or result in socio-economic dependency of women on men at the family and society levels. Walby (1990), states that patriarchy perpetuates women's subordination and this strategically denies women ownership of resources or property.

As suggested by liberal feminists, there must be a transformation of cultural practices and norms to ensure that women have ownership and access rights. To overcome these



barriers to women's economic independence, a deliberate and conscious review of the customary land tenure system led by traditional rulers and not legal luminaries, pragmatic education of people to understand the reasons behind the payment of bride price and the importance of allowing women to own resources such as land as well as enforcement of laws that border on women ownership of property in society must be pursued. The resultant impact of these measures will be women's economic independence. The figure below is the conceptual framework of the study.





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Figure 2.1: Conceptual Framework of the Study

Source: Author's construct, 2020

2.11 Conclusion

From the literature reviewed, there are several studies done on women's land ownership and access (Fobih, 2004; Duncan & Brants, 2004; ISSER, 2005; Bonye & Kpeita, 2012;

Kuusaana, Kidido & Halidu-Adam, 2013; Dery, 2016). Their findings have all concurred that women are customarily challenged in the areas of land ownership as espoused by the theory of patriarchy. Socio-cultural practices have hindered women's economic development and empowerment (Doss, 2013). That makes feminism as a theory in this study very relevant. Feminists have argued that women do not have access to resources [land] as compared to men and have advocated for equality in the spree of social, economic and political discourse (Crossman, 2019; Asen, 2017 and Walby, 1990). This position makes patriarchy as a theory very appropriate in analysing male dominance in society. Patriarchy, as espoused by Walby (1990), explains the subordination of women and the fatherly role of men in society as embedded in social and cultural practices. Bride price has equally been researched and criticized for contributing to women subordination and abuse (MUFUMI, 2013). What is however not known is whether bride price payments have implications for women ownership and access to land. Bride price which is a cultural practice is therefore singled out in this study and its payment implications for women's access and ownership of land examined on how these implications reflected the economic dependency of women in Wa West District which is rural and agrarian (GSS, 2014).



CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The methodology of a study is a guide or a map that shows the direction of a study. It is the lens through which a researcher views the work (Yin, 2009). This part of the work focussed on the study area, research design, sample and sampling techniques, data collection and methods, ethical issues, data management and data analyses.

3.2 The study area

Wa West District is located in the western part of the Upper West Region, precisely between longitudes 9° 40' N and 10° 10' N and also between latitudes 2° 20' W and 2° 50' W (GSS, 2014). It shares borders to the south with Savanna Region, north-west with Nadowli –Kaleo District, east with Wa Municipality and to the west by Burkina Faso. It represents about 10 % of the region's total land area. The district has multiple ethnic groups dominated mainly by Mole-Dagbani group, which comprises the Waala, Dagaba and Sissala (GSS, 2014). The district is rural and agrarian with 91.6% of the economically active population employed in agriculture (GSS, 2014). The main agriculture activity is farming but the majority of farmers do mix cropping and animals rearing. The core crops often cultivated are maize, millet, cowpea and groundnut. The district's comparative advantage is in the production of groundnuts and cowpea. The marketing of farm produce is largely done by women except for the sale of animals which is a preserve for men (ibid).

Agrarian societies with high females' involvement in agriculture are associated with bride price payments (Boserup, 1970 &Andreson, 2007).



In Wa West, about five in ten (50%) of the population aged 12 years and older are married. And more than 80% of females between 25-29 years are married compared with a little above 49 % of males (GSS, 2014). At age 65 and above, widowed females account for as high as 48.0 % while widowed males account for only 7.7 %. Also, 88.2% of married persons have no education (GSS, 2014). Nationally this district is considered the poorest in Ghana with 92.4% of poverty incidence (GSS, 2015). Administratively, the district has two traditional paramountcy that runs concurrently with the decentralized national government system (GSS, 2014). It is further divided into five Area Councils. The above issues or peculiarities accounted for the selection of Wa West district for the study.



AREA COUNCIL MAP OF WA WEST

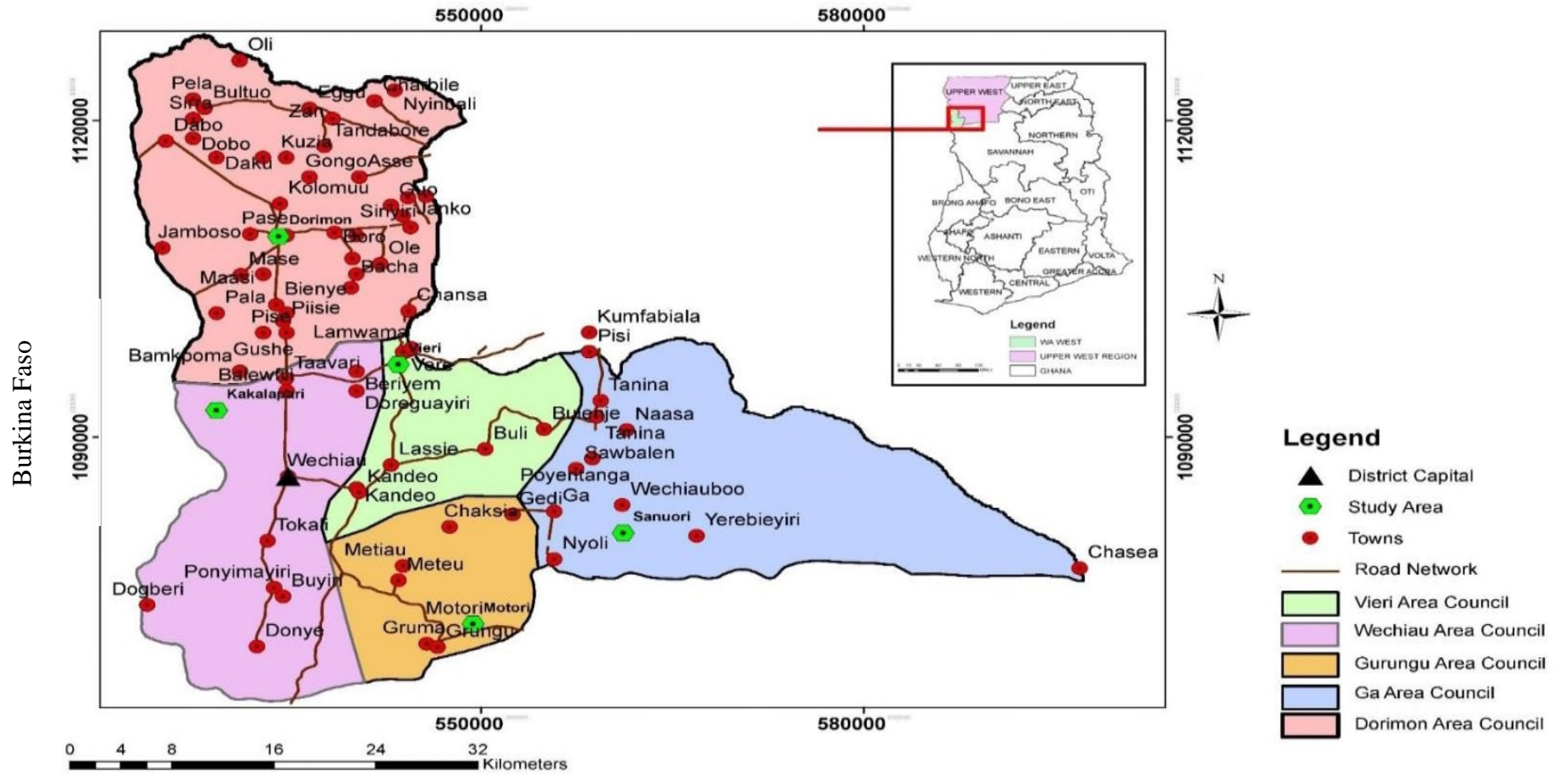


Figure 3.1: Map of the Study Area

Source: Author's construct, 2020

3.3 Philosophical underpinning of the study

Conventionally two philosophical paradigms on knowledge creation existed, these are the positivist and interpretivist paradigms but many more have evolved because of diversity in thinking and understanding of phenomena (Adom et al., 2016). In light of this, constructivism emerged from interpretivism (ibid). The positivists ontologically believe that reality is one and epistemologically independent of researchers and further posit that generalization of findings which are also quantifiable is achievable (Carson, Gilmore, Perry & Gronhaug, 2001). Additionally, Positivists are guided by a formalized way of data collection which is structured, objective, and consistent and methodologically focuses on description and understanding of an external reality under study (ibid).

However, the constructivist paradigm which emerged from interpretivism and is adopted for this study believes that respondents socially construct diverse knowledge. Interpretivism claims that reality is subjective and multifaceted in that there is no true access to the physical world and researchers are interdependent of their respondents hence inquirers share in the experiences of their study participants (Carson et al, 2001; Schwandt, 1994). Summarily the interpretivist believe that the role of the researcher is crucial in interpreting what he or she sees, smells, observes or has access to in the study environs. Interpretivist repudiates the tenets of positivism ontologically, epistemologically and methodologically (Schwandt, 1994). Much as the interpretivist and constructivists share a “logical empiricist methodology,” there still exists a difference between them (ibid). Constructivists believe that ontologically knowledge and truth are constructed (Walby, 1990 & Schwandt, 1994) and is a matter of individual viewpoint (Schwandt, 1994). This study sought to understand the implications of bride price payments on women’s access and ownership of land in the Wa West district. Bride



price is a cultural element in society and its appreciation may differ from person to person. Besides, the implications of bride price payment for women vary from family to family hence the best way out in this study was to let the respondents share their experiences with the inquirer. Walby, (1990) explained that inquiries that seek to empower women are best done when the constructivist worldview of knowledge creation is adapted to help the researcher report the views of women as they are rather than massaging their responses in the name of generalization. The constructivists approach helped the researcher to understand bride price and its implications on women's access and ownership of land. The views of women were reported without attempts to quantify which could lead to misrepresentations.

3.4 Study Design

“A research design is a plan that revolves around the processes that span the judgements of a study from sampling, data collection to data analysis” (Creswell, 2009:3). The research design for this study was a qualitative approach to research. Qualitative designs are often adopted to examine experiences and participants' perspectives of the phenomenon under consideration (Hammarberg et al., 2016). The debate about research approaches thus whether qualitative, mixed methods or quantitative hinges around the ways or methods by which data is collected, analysed and summarized, in that neither the positivists nor constructivists have established that their tools of measurement are more valid or reliable than the other (Daniel, 2016). Daniel, (2016) argued that both qualitative and quantitative approaches rely on different theories and assumptions hence one will always be more appropriate at a time than the other depending on the phenomenon under investigation.

Qualitative data collection mostly employs in-depth interviews and focus group discussions (Gill et al., 2008). Qualitative data collection methods expose researchers



to experiences, holistically nuanced insight into the phenomenon and create the opportunity for the development of themes that will eventually lead to great findings (Barrett & Twycross, 2018). These methods are often chosen to investigate events or matters that are not numerically quantifiable (Creswell, 2009). Unlike quantitative design, the qualitative design uses data which are not statistical or numerical but textual and it uses techniques like focus group discussions with semi-structured interview guides, in-depth interviews with key informants, interviews and analysis of relevant documents to conclude (ibid). These techniques are suitable for investigating cultural practices of which bride price is one of them. To understand the social meaning of events, real-life experiences which are often evolutionary and culturally influenced, are needed hence require the qualitative approach of data collection and analysis (Hammarberg et al., 2016). In measuring beliefs and life experiences, it is herculean if not impossible to quantify participants' responses by asking close-ended questions. Qualitative studies involve learning inductively as the data collection process goes on, so research instruments predesigned will not succinctly survive the entire research process (Richards, 2006). It was therefore imperative to allow participants to define and express themselves in a moderated manner with the investigator probing to gain an in-depth knowledge or information about the event under investigation (Gill et al., 2008). The qualitative approach offered an opportunity to conduct the studies in a natural environment and created room for the investigator to observe the events in their original settings. This made the researcher a key element of the process of the investigation (ibid). The main objective of this study was to qualitatively explore and describe the implications of bride price on women ownership and access to land in the Wa West district and not for generalization of findings. This was within the principles of qualitative studies, often done in a specific location to unearth the reasoning, thoughts



and experiences of participants regarding phenomena under study (Lowhorn, 2014). To ensure data trustworthiness, data triangulation was employed. Data triangulation was achieved by using informant interviews, focus group discussions, and in-depth interviews.

On validity in qualitative research, Leung (2015) posits that, is all about the appositeness of the instruments, choice of methodology, data and whether the research question is suitable for the results the researcher is desirous of getting at the end of the work. Reliability in qualitative studies has equally been challenged but what is important is the consistency of the process or methodology (Carcary, 2014). Hence the researcher used the same questionnaire for respondents and ensured that they were posed similarly to achieve consistency.

3.4.1 Research strategy

The study design requires a strategy. An exploratory case study strategy was employed for this purpose.

3.4.2 The case study approach

Exploratory case study strategy often seeks to get an understanding of a particular entity and to describe the situation in a manner that will represent the views of the participants (Merriam, 2009). “A qualitative case study is an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a bounded phenomenon such as a program, an institution, a person, a process, or a social unit” (Merriam, 2009: PX). Yin (2003) posits that the typical prerequisite for case studies ascends from the need to appreciate intricate social phenomena because it allows researchers to preserve the complete and evocative characteristics of real-life events. Case study strategy involved a great amount of depth, consistency and extensiveness such that conclusions were backed by evidence (Rose,



2015). Case study design can adapt to varied research questions, sources of data and settings (ibid). In doing a holistic study that sought perspectives of individuals, case study became a better option as compared to quantitative methods (Zainal, 2007). Also, qualitative exploratory case study made it possible to explore or describe real-life experience events as well as to elucidate the convolutions of relationships in society that cannot be quantified using surveys (ibid).

However, case studies have been criticized for not being rigorous enough, has biases in reporting findings and textually voluminous (Yin, 1984). It is also criticized for employing small samples and therefore has reliability as well as generalization challenges (Yin, 1984 & Zainal, 2007).

In conclusion, despite the weaknesses of the case study strategy, it was still the most appropriate research strategy in dealing with the implications of bride price in Wa West district on women's access and ownership of land.

3.5 Study population and units of analysis

According to Ghana Statistical Service (GSS, 2014), the population of Wa West district is 81, 348 and projected be 98,193 as at 2019. In the 2010 census, the female population stood at 41,121 representing 50.5% while the male population stood at 40, 227 representing 49.5% (GSS, 2014). The District is dominated mainly by the Mole-Dagbani group, which comprises the Waala, Dagaaba (Birifor) and Sissala (GSS, 2014). The population of interest in this study, however, are men and women who have experienced bride price particularly people who are married or have been married before. According to GSS, (2014) 51.1% of the population twelve (12) years and above of Wa West district are married, 5.9% are widowed, 1% are separated and 0.9% are divorced. It is further intimated that more women (56.3%) are married as compared to 45.4% of men (ibid).



The unit of analysis is the foundation of a case study. The units of analysis for this study included married men and women, divorcees, Tendamba, chiefs, widows, clan heads and an agriculture extension officer. Bride price is of interest; however, it is an experience that cannot be detached from the people who are perpetuating the existence of the practice. The work, therefore, involved both men and women who had marital experiences regarding bride price and its implications for women's access and ownership of land in the Wa West District.

3.5.1 Sampling Processes

Wa West district has two paramountcy; the Wechau paramountcy and Dorimon paramountcy and is further divided into five Area Councils. Four of the Area Councils fall under the Wechau paramountcy while Dorimon paramountcy is also an area council. Five communities in all, that is, one from each Area Council was selected for this study. The Area Councils include Ga, Vieri, Dorimon, Wechau and Gurungu and the communities selected from each of the area councils were Sanuori, Vieri, Dorimon, Kakalapari and Motori respectively. Dialectical differences, religious and land ownership issues informed the choice of the selected communities. Three focus group discussions were held; two Women Focus Group Discussions and one Male Focus Group Discussion were held with each group comprising six members. Participants were recruited through the help of community contact persons. However, respondents were not selected evenly in the five communities. In qualitative studies, the aim is not for generalization hence the sample size was determined at the point of saturation. Neuman (2003) states that the key consideration of sampling in qualitative research is "saturation" and not representativeness and the size of the sample is not statistically determined. Richards (2006) posits that in qualitative studies the sample size is futuristic and is often determined as the data gathering process unfolds. Wa West



district is rural and agrarian (GSS, 2014) with a total of 235 communities. In total, seven widows, four divorcees, two chiefs, two clan heads, one Tendana, one Agriculture Extension Service Officer, 12 married women thus two married women Focus Group Discussions (FGD) and one married men Focus Group Discussion were involved with each FGD membership being six (6). In all 35 people participated in the research with 67% (23) being women while 23% (12) of the participants were men. This was done because the study is on women's access and ownership of land, however, the work needed to incorporate the side of the men particularly as the issues of bride price and land are dominated by men. Out of the 35 participants, only three had a formal education, that is, a paramount chief, a clan head and the agriculture extension officer. All participants were at least 40 years of age. Only one respondent was in the age range of 40-45 while all others were above 50 years. This consideration was necessary to ensure that participants had some marital experience and knowledge of bride price as well as land. All participants engage in agriculture as an occupation though at different levels. The focus of this work was on the implications of bride price payments on women's access and ownership of land in Wa West district.



3.5.2 Sampling techniques

Sampling is the process of selecting the participants of a study and the participants form the sample (Martínez-Mesa et al., 2015). The sampling process could be opened to all subjects in the study area or restricted to some persons with specific demographics thus probability sampling and nonprobability sampling respectively. The sampling methods for this study were non-probability random samples. In non-probability random sampling, there is zero randomization of the sample, therefore, among the targeted population, not all participants had an equal opportunity of being selected (Showkat &

Parveen, 2017). Purposive sampling and snowballing were used in recruiting respondents. With purposive sampling, the participants were chosen based on the judgement of inquirer that they were within the study design and could help in achieving the study objectives (Showkat & Parveen, 2017). Respondents in the category of widows and divorcees were recruited through chain referrals or snowballing. Key informants thus chiefs, married men and women, agriculture extension officer, clan heads, and tendamba were purposively selected.

3.6 Data collection methods

3.6.1 Introduction

Research methods are strategies, techniques or approaches that are employed in data collection. This study utilized the qualitative research approach in gathering data. It was appropriate in eliciting participants' experiences (Etikan, 2016).

The study employed diverse data gathering methods to triangulate the data collection process. This enriched the data and improved its reliability and validity. So, to gather primary data, interviews, observations and focus group discussions were conducted.

Key Informant Interviews and In-Depth Interviews. Semi-structured interview guides were used as instruments. Widows and divorcees were interviewed with the same in-depth interview guide, Chiefs and Tendana were interviewed with the same key informant guide, Agriculture extension officer had a different key informant guide and clan heads were interviewed with a different in-depth interview guide. In all these interviews, some of the questions ran through all the sets of guides. Community entry or data collection started on 26th January 2020 and ended in March 2020. In all the communities, contact persons were taken through the relevance of the study and participants that were required and contact persons that could read were each given a



list of the sample frames to help in the recruitment process. Contact persons' phone numbers were taken and this enabled me to reach out to them to take dates for follow up visits and to further explain the recruitment process especially on inclusion and exclusion criteria. Each community had at least four visits. Over 60 people were initially recruited because people were eager to take part in the study but only 35 were engaged at the end of the study as data saturation was reached at that point. The study employed semi-structured interview guides which were used for focus group discussions and key informants' guides for key informants' interviews. Chiefs, household heads and Clan heads formed the key informants for the study. Secondary data, however, came from scholarly articles, books and other relevant documents.

3.6.2 Focus group discussions

Focus group discussions are interactions used to get information on groups' opinions about a matter or phenomenon and the reasons for such opinions (Gill et al., 2008). The best focus group has six to eight members exempting the moderator (Gill et al., 2008). To help the researcher conduct interviews effectively, a research assistant was recruited, trained and oriented on the objectives of the study to aid in data collection. This discussion was a process of a facilitator speaking to participants on the implications of bride price on women's access to and ownership of land which gave the researcher the chance to get rich data in a minute because of group debates (Barrett & Twycross, 2018). These discussants were selected from different corners of the selected communities to ensure diversity and richness of data. Group members were asked the same questions at different times. But focus groups were challenging especially when it came to transcription of the recordings and moderation of the group discussions (Barrett & Twycross, 2018; Gill et al., 2008). The researcher used English, Birifor, Waali and Dagaare as languages to moderate the discussions. This made the discussion



flow well as discussants were at ease to ask for clarity. Marshall & Rossman, (2006) intimated that a conducive environment is required for focus group discussion to take place. Therefore, there was segmentation of the sample to ensure homogeneity in sex to create a conducive environment for respondents to answer or respond to the issues without intimidation during the focus group discussions. At Kakalapari a male FGD was held while female FGDs were held at Sanuori and Motori. Participants were allowed to recommend venues for the discussions to make them comfortable. The focus group discussion guide was semi-structured with predetermined questions to avoid directionless interaction and was flexible to give room for probing rather than rigidity in structured guides (Gill et al., 2008). Though questions were orderly predetermined, respondents who pre-empted questions that were yet to be asked were allowed to go ahead with the researcher simply noting that to avoid repeating such questions.

3.6.3 In-depth interviews

Interviews are direct interactions between a researcher and research participants where the former elicits information from the latter through questioning (Gillis & Jackson 2002). Reinharz (1992), reported that interviewing grants researchers, the chance to participants' memories, ideas and thoughts, in their own words, rather than the words of the researcher. This study utilized Key informant interviews (KII) guide to engaging knowledgeable respondents on bride price implications on women's access and ownership of land in Wa West district.

Key informant interviews are in-depth interviews conducted by researchers any time there is the need to get relevant information from knowledgeable persons in an area of interest (Binnendijk, 1996). These interviews were semi-structured, took the form of a dialogue and therefore allowed the generation of insightful ideas and information as



researcher asked questions impulsively, inquired for more information and recorded for later analysis (ibid). The key informant interviews allowed for probing which enabled the solicitation of more information even though analysing large volumes of information was a herculean task. Interviews were conducted in both local dialects and English. By way of technique, the interviews were conducted face-to-face with informants. The advantage is that the researcher had a good understanding of the local languages and did not rely on interpreters who could fail to translate key terms. This also made participants feel at ease and created healthy rapport for the researcher to get the right information. However, a research assistant was recruited and trained to help in data collection. In both interviews and focus group discussions, audios or voices were recorded with the permission of the respondents as well as notes taken as and when it was possible. The challenge with this method of data collection is that the researcher required some skills to get the respondents talking and issues that are deemed to be less sensitive were used to start interviews to get the attention of informants with sensitive issues like why women are seen as subordinates in society are asked.

Good rapport and probing characterized all the interviews and FGDs and all interviews were audio-recorded with a phone which were always copied onto a laptop after a return from the field to secure the data. A challenge with the phone emerged at Vieri during an interview with a clan head. The phone battery ran out. Luckily that was noticed early hence community contact person's phone was used to continue with the interview. The audio was later transferred via Bluetooth. Additionally, all interviews were conducted in Dagaare, Waali or Birifor except two which were done in English. Each interview ended with "please what do you have to add to our conversation or subtract from our discussion"? This allowed participants to raise issues that were either left out or were



not properly presented. The interviews [IDI and KII] lasted averagely 35 minutes and the FGDs lasted 80 minutes averagely.

3.7 Ethical considerations

This study involved the evaluation of people's marital issues and privacy hence required anonymity. A consent form was designed for participants to sign or thumbprint but oral consent was taken at the field. The venues of all interviews were convenient to assure all respondents that their information is in safe hands. The study adopted the use of pseudonyms for respondents giving very sensitive information before recording and also educated participants on the relevance of the study. Moreover, participants were informed that participation in interviews was completely voluntary and they could opt-out at any point with or without explanations. On the field, one person opted out but early enough during an FGD at Sanuori. She did "beg" to leave before she could contribute with an explanation that she wanted to go and grind flour so she was quickly replaced before the discussion continued. Finally, participants were assured that their information will be properly discarded after use.

3.8 Data Management

Data management encompasses the gathering, handling, storage, and recovery of information that flows from research participants to data analysts (Schoenbach, 2000). And qualitative data is complex, rich in nature, amorphous and phenomenal, particularly where the researcher is provided with information yonder the range of the study hence managing and analysing it could come with frustrating experience, principally for beginner researchers who tend to perceive their data from a solitary viewpoint (Ishak & Bakar, 2012). In this study, primary data was collected from participants, thus key informants and focus group discussants using the focus group discussion guide and key informant interview guide respectively. The information was



audio-recorded, copied and saved on a computer and secured with a password. Then a computer-assisted qualitative data analysis tool thus Nvivo 12 plus was used to manage and aid data analysis. Interviews were transcribed manually (by listening to the audios while writing) and observation notes were equally typed. All typed documents were then imported into Nvivo 12 plus under different folders properly labelled for easy identification. By using Nvivo 12 plus, it was easy to create codes and nodes which reduced time used and cost in the data management and analysis (Ishak & Bakar, 2012).

3.9 Data analyses techniques

Qualitative data analyses involved cleaning, organizing, drawing patterns, themes and making meaning of the result. The data had elements of richness, large text-based information and subjectivity. However qualitative data analysis is always a vague trial, and time-demanding process (Hilal&Alabri, 2013). To overcome these challenges of conventional qualitative data analysis, this study employed an electronic data management approach in data coding in the analyses by using Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS), thus Nvivo 12 plus. All interviews and focus group discussions audios recorded were transcribed verbatim manually into English and notes that were taken during observations were typed. After which the text was then put into themes with the help of Nvivo 12 plus application. Nvivo 12 plus is a qualitative Data Analysis Software developed by QSR international. Even though Nvivo 12 plus is capable of doing transcriptions, it was not possible to use it in this exercise because interviews and focus group discussions were largely held in local languages.

Data analysis started while I was still on the field. A thematic analysis which is flexible and iterative was used in identifying and analysing themes and patterns in accounting for the complexities in the data collected (Braun & Clarke, 2006). As data collection



was ongoing, I started noting down some of the key issues that were repeatedly raised by respondents such as women's inability to own their farm produce. This analysis process continued with the transcription of the audios which also started before the interviews were completed. Transcription was done verbatim. Audios were played as I wrote and notes were given out to a commercial outfit for typing to have time for the transcription. The next thing was proofreading of the typed data to enable me to appreciate the data better and to correct typos (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The typed data was read through again for the second time. After this, data management and thematic analysis of the data was inductively done with the help of Nvivo 12 plus. Files of the transcribed data which totalled 20 were imported into Nvivo 12 Plus and word queries ran to identify cursorily what respondents spoke about. Right after that, the software was used to do auto coding to equally have an idea about possible themes participants discussed during the interviews. These queries and auto coded nodes were useful in giving a gist of what to expect but were discarded later.

Subsequently, each file was manually coded into nodes to cater for all the nuances in the data which auto coding could not take care of. With the help of Nvivo 12 plus, portions of each file documents were tagged and named with different codes depending on the issues that were discovered (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Portions of same text were coded multiple times into different codes and some were later uncoded as the process unfolded (ibid). The entire process was iterative as I moved back and forth in a very recursive manner (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Though a software [Nvivo 12 plus] was used, I still did the categorization, coding or labelling, identification of patterns and drawing or making of meanings out of the data manually (Roberts & Wilson, 2002). The advantages of the software, however, were a reduction of time wastage in; *“marking, cutting, and sorting tasks that qualitative researchers used to do with a pair of scissors,*



paper and note cards” (Wong, 2008). Nivo 12 plus aided the researcher in maximizing efficiency in the process of “grouping data according to categories and retrieving coded themes”. The software simply “made organisation, reduction and storage of data more efficient and manageable” (ibid). The process of using the application was systematic and iterative. NVivo 12 plus made it easy to manage, consolidate data and simplify the examination of data as well as identification of subjects, garnering acumen and emerging suppositions (Sotiriadou, Brouwers, & Le, 2014). Importantly, NVivo 12 plus demanded to code of the data for themes to emerge which made the process (data analysis) predominantly subjective, philosophically constructivist and permitted the researcher to engross greatly and profoundly in the data analysis process (ibid). Many nodes which were “data-driven” were created at the end of the coding process (Braun & Clarke, 2006). As more themes were discovered, it became imperative to use discretion to focus on the research questions in determining what was relevant but consistent (Braun & Clarke, 2006) hence some of the nodes were merged to form themes, others stood alone as subthemes according to the research questions. The last stage of this inductive thematic analysis process was writing of the report that required interpretations of the themes and constructions from participants.



CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.1 Introduction

This work is an exploratory qualitative study on the implications of bride price payments on women's access and ownership of land [agricultural land] in Wa West district. This chapter is organized according to the study objectives as findings and discussions have been done simultaneously. To begin with, findings on the concept of bride price as pertains in the study areas and its associated practices like call back, bride purchase, adultery fees and the changes in bride price have been presented. This objective ends on whether there is a relationship between bride price and women's access and ownership of land. Secondly, traditions governing women's land access and ownership have been explored. Sub-themes within this objective included women's land acquisition process, inheritance and its influence on women's access and ownership of land, land as a spiritual entity, women land tenancy security as well as land management and land disputes resolution. Additionally, the work looked at gendered perceptions regarding women land access and ownership embracing land and women in agriculture, bride price and women ownership of farm produce, discriminations and inequalities between men and women in property ownership. Furthermore, the last objective bordered on the socio-economic importance of bride price and its implications for women's access and ownership of land. The chapter completes with a conclusion.



4.2 Bride price and its relationships with women's access and ownership of land

4.2.1 The concept of bride price payments

Bride price according to male FGD participants at Kakalapari entails various payments of items particularly animals and money which are often given to the bride's family during marriages by the grooms or their families. A female key informant in Sanuori indicated that *"when a woman marries and her parents bill the husband, and he pays to own the woman thus bride price"* (Female participant, IDI). The significance of bride price is to legitimize marriage and make it recognized in society. However, the notion is that once the bride price is paid the woman becomes the bona fide property of the husband which then takes away the woman's "freedoms and liberties" in many decision-making processes. According to Abdul-Korah, (2014:339) "many see the age-old tradition of bride price as a major hindrance to women's emancipation..... [and] secures men's role as guardian and owner of women's homes and lives, even in the millions of households run solely by women while their husbands live elsewhere". The concept of bride price payment is pervasive though its form of execution is not uniform. In different societies, its implications have been reported to include women suppression or subordination and commoditization (CREAW & MUFUMI, 2010; Dery, 2015; Walby, 1990).

There exist variations in bride price payments as were highlighted by both male and female participants at Motori and Kakalapari in this study.

Bride price could be in the form of money, animals or cowries. Bride price is not a fixed amount and depends on the financial muscle of the man. It also depends on whose daughter you are going to marry. There are some people in society and they see themselves as first-class people so they will demand higher bride price (Male participant, IDI).



The variations in bride price are often informed by different factors as a female participant narrated: *“the bride price often reduces or even increases depending on the clan and relationship of the two families getting into the marriage”*. The distance of the man seeking to marry is also a factor in the decision-making as to whether to increase the bride price or not. A female respondent in Vieri indicated that:

“When the husband’s community is geographically far, the bride price is increased because the probability of the bride’s family ever going to marry at the husband’s family or community is very remote”. This position was equally supported by a paramount chief of Dorimon and a key informant as he claimed that:

“If you know that the chances of your children or grandchildren going to Volta region to marry their daughter are so remote you let the bride price be a bit higher but if we are related and we have been marrying each other’s daughters the price is not going to be the same as somebody from far away”.

Even though bride price is a common cultural practice in the study areas, there is dynamism in its existence. It is not static. The variations give room for manipulations to suit the whims and caprices of those that demand it. Anderson (2007) reported that bride price is common in communities that are homogenous with high female participation in agriculture. He further reiterated that bride price payments are done with variations. The Birifor simply described bride price as cattle even though money and farm labour contributions are an integral part of bride price payments among both Birifor and Dagaaba (FGD at Sanuori). A widow in responding to what bride price is simply said: *“that is cattle”*. Additionally, another widow from Sanuori indicated that: *“when you marry someone’s daughter and the person comes to demand the bride price, then you should know he wants his cattle”*. During an FGD at Kakalapari, discussants



concluded that “among us (Birifor) bride price refers to cattle” (FGD, January 31, 2020).

Lacey, (2013) explained that bride price has become an avenue for cattle raiding and conflict in Sudan in her “Women for cows” analysis. Women upon marriage serve as a source of cattle for their families which eventually fuel the already fragile peace situation necessitated by cattle raiding conflicts. Also, Forkuor et al., (2018) posit that bride price among the Zulu and Xhosa involves at least ten cattle and at most sixty cattle. In a news item publication, Naa Dauda Buudikubo

II, the chief of Kakalapari in the Wechiau Traditional Area of the Wa West District made a call on behalf of Naa Imoroh Nandom Gomah II, paramount chief of the Wechiau paramountcy during a durbar to the Birifor to reduce their bride price to facilitate inter-tribal marriages to promote peaceful coexistence.

He intimated that “the outright payment of between 6 and 12 cows as pride price before marrying young Birifor women was scaring a lot of young men from marrying from their traditional setups” (Mornah, 2019). The description of bride price as cattle among the Birifor which was a common theme is not out of place considering the crucial role these animals play in the process of maintaining the old age custom or bride price.

Before the actual price is charged and collected among the Birifor, the “*Dimaale bomo*” (items to pacify the house) are charged first. The man or husband pays the *dimaale bomo* first and when the woman gives birth the cattle will then follow. A male participant buttressed this by saying that, “before you pay bride price we take “*Dimaale bomo*” (a sheep, a goat, 6 fowls and 3000 cowries).

That’s what we use to pacify the gods and ancestors”. Drawing from the participants, the indications are that, the bride price is often paid at stages. From farm labour to



dimaale mobo, to *Kukuri duo* (hoe animal thus two cattle for the bride's father or family) and "Aremine boma" (uncles' property; thus at least three cattle).

In an FGD at Kakalapari, participants explained that a minimum of five cattle is required to marry among the Birifor in addition to cowries/money and farm labour contribution for 10 years or more. In the same FGD, the participants indicated that girls are betrothed to men at age eight and the husband to be will from then start working for the to-be father-in-law. In situations where the husband to be is also a child, then the boy's parents or family will start working for the to-be father-in-laws. This will happen till the girl is 18 years old. This practice of girls' betrothal among the Birifor is similar to that of the Sonjo as reported by Gray, (1960). Gray in his analysis of "Sonjo bride price and African wife purchase" intimated that "Sonjo girls are customarily betrothed in childhood, sometimes even in infancy, so that betrothal often precedes marriage by many years". The betrothals are done at the time that even the husband to be is also young but both families take responsibility of all customary obligations till the boy and girl reach marriageable ages.

In paying the bride price among the Birifor, the cattle are often shared between the bride's family and her maternal uncles. A female participant at Sanuori reported that "*my father took two (2) cattle and Aremine [my uncles] took three (3) cattle*". Parents of brides are often obligated to collect the bride price of their daughters which is always used to, among other things, pay the bride price of their sons (Gaspart & Platteau, 2010). Fathers and uncles are therefore mandated to help the brides' brothers pay their bride price when they marry because they have taken their sisters' bride price. In case they do not have it all, sons who are resourceful can support their fathers and or uncles to pay their bride price. The number of cattle could be as many as ten or even more if a



man took another man's wife. In that case, the bride price is inflated to teach the second husband a lesson especially if the first husband is still interested in the marriage. A male respondent in Sanuori community reported as follows:

"You have gone to marry someone's wife, and he bills you higher, you have to pay; ten cattle and three thousand cowries. You are aware that she is somebody's wife and you have gone for her. So, what should the first husband do"? (Male participant, IDI).

Gray (1960), who cruelly described bride price as a purchase of women in a marriage market influenced by demand and supply of women claimed that in a remarriage,

"a young woman's value as a wife is not generally thought to be depreciated just because she was previously married, and a husband in selling a wife attempts to regain the same bride-price that he paid for her, which was originally based mainly on the social status of her parental family". He further intimated that among the Sonjo, such transfers go to the first husband and this is similar to the case being reported on.

When a woman marries from her father's house, farm labour in addition to the cattle and *dimaale bomo* serve as the bride price among the Birifor. However, when a man goes for another person's wife the bride price is limited to only cattle and cowries but could be inflated on some occasions. A clan head at Sanuori explained the increment argument when a man takes another person's wife. He narrated that:

You see, sometimes the second husband proves stubborn by refusing to pay the bride price to the first husband. In such circumstances, the first husband will report the matter to the chief who will intend summon the second husband and his kinsmen. At this point, the first husband and his people [family] who are already irritated by the actions of the second husband will inflate the bride price for two reasons; (a) to teach the second husband and his kinsmen a lesson



especially if the first husband is still interested in marrying the woman in question and (b) to give part of the bride price to the chiefs and elders for their role in helping them recover their property. If you don't increase it then you will have to give part of your original bride price to the chiefs which is a cheat.

Also, among the non- Birifor within the study areas, bride price payments also include farm labour contributions but for a shorter period of about five years, fowls, goats, sheep, cowries or money. The variations also exist among the non- Birifor regarding the number of animals that are required to pay bride price. A female key informant reported that: *“30 fowls, 4 goats and 3 sheep plus cowries, in fact, three thousand (3000) cowries were paid in my case”*. Another participant who is a widow from Motori said: *“Four (4) sheep, four (4) goats, thirty-five (35) fowls and money were used to pay [my bride price]”*. Additionally, the paramount chief of Dorimon and key informant narrated that; *“in the past, it [bride price] used to be very beneficiary ...it could be about 30,000 cowries, some 50,000 or 80,000 some even paid 100, 000 cowries and in fact if a woman divorces the husband and remarries another man the bride price rises”*.

Dery, (1987) posits that bride price in Nandom and its environs is *“... in the form of money [thus] cowries and fowls [but] the monetary value varies between seven thousand (7000) and ten thousand (10,000) cowries”*. Gray, (1960) reported that bride price among the Sonjo, involves 60 to 300 goats with many people paying averagely 100 goats. Among the non- Birifor as indicated by respondents, the initial payment is known as “kyore” and the last part is called “dore” which is often a cow paid after the woman has given birth to 3 or more children. The farm labour (Dee kuobo) contribution often comes to an end when the groom presents the “kuobo pire” [farming sheep] to his in-laws. The payment of the ‘dore’ [a cow] is often the final payment that seals a marriage. But this last payment is often defaulted in some cases because of the time



frame that it takes to pay [after a wife has given birth to 3 or more children]. There is however another payment in both the Birifor and non- Birifor bride price system that precedes all payments but is done on condition that the bride involved was born after her parents or family had a covenant with a deity as a result of difficulty encountered in giving birth by the couple or death threatening illness that befell the bride at childhood that required divine intervention to save her life. In such cases, the husband pays “Tibe bomo” (property of the deity) to the in-laws before the “kyore” is then paid. This implies that bride price payment is a process and not an event. It has stages and is done progressively. Even those who are rich cannot decide to make a one-off payment but will have to do it according to custom. Akurugu, (2017:132) observes that payments of bride price among the Dagaaba is “a cumulative process” and all activities collectively result in marriage legalization. Except to add that the time frame between these stages is determined by the financial muscles of the brides’ husbands as well as the conduct of wives. When the wives behave well then husbands would be enticed to pay the bride price in time. Bad conduct from a wife could let the husband refuse or delay the payment. The payments go beyond a year to complete as a part is often paid after the woman has given birth to some children. The assumption is that any woman who fails to bear children in marriage is a “liability” hence there is no need to pay her bride price in full. However, Abdul-Korah, (2014) reported that the payments of bride price among the Dagaaba are often within a year because any child born before the performance of bride price payments is considered illegitimate and could also be seized by the bride’s family. So, to avoid such tags, men do everything possible to make some commitments before a child comes from marriages. He also argued that the only exception to this time frame of one year is when the bride is pregnant before the involvement of the families. It is a taboo to carry out the payment of bride price while



the bride is pregnant. Wives who are perceived to have bad human relations may not have the payments of their bride price completed.

4.2.2 Cultural practices associated with the payment of bride price

Many cultural practices characterize the payment of bride price within the traditions of both Birifor and non-Birifor making it a process rather than an event as far as the study areas are concerned. When a woman marries; the bride's family expects the bride price. These expectations sometimes are not met when the husbands decide not to pay at all or delay in making payments. In such instances, the fathers or families of the brides often call their daughters to return home until their husbands make it up. Participants described this as "call back".

When the woman is called home, she leaves the children behind. That makes the man serious in making efforts to pay the bride price. when your in-law wants to call the daughter home because of bride price, he will do it during the farming season. This makes the man hot and serious in paying the pride price" (Female participant, IDI).

According to ANO Institute of Arts and Knowledge, (n.d), call back is a common practice amongst the Lowiili and that "...payments amounting to some 3 cows, 1 goat and 20, 000 cowrie shells should be made during the lifetime of [a] marriage, the last of these at the time the bride joins her husband [and] if they are not forthcoming at the right time, the bride's father (or his kin) will try to persuade her to return home until the husband meets his obligations". The payment of bride price is a controlling tool for men in patriarchal societies where women's subordination is a normal requirement or etiquette in marriages. Abdul-Korah, (2014) postulated that women whose bride price



has not been paid remain the “property” of their families and take instructions from them and in the event of death will be taken care of by their families and not the husbands who have failed to pay the bride price. Additionally, Horne et al., (2013) maintain that women lose their autonomy particularly reproductive rights when their bride prices are paid. The bride price socially enforces the usurpation of women’s independence. It is therefore trite that men only have absolute control of their wives when they fulfil their part of the “contract” and in the absence of making the bride price payment, the men will not get complete services from their wives. Adjei and Mpiani, (2018) add that there is a transfer of authority from parents to husbands upon the payment of bride price.

Apart from the failure to pay a bride price, a man could also call the daughter home if there are repeated disagreements between his daughter and the husband. Additionally, if a husband decides to disregard his in-laws when they are in difficulty such as sickness or when they are bereaved that could also serve as a good ground for his wife to be called back home for him to go and explain his actions before getting his wife again.

Even me when I married and was with my husband in the southern part of Ghana, my mother died and I came home but my husband didn’t come so my father asked me to sit at home till my husband comes to explain his actions. I sat home for six (6) years just because my husband refused to attend my mother’s funeral. When my husband finally came home, my father said he took that decision because he was angry with my husband and wanted his daughter [me] to marry a different person (Female participant, IDI).

Abdul-Korah, (2014), posits that marriage results in the development of new relationships not just between two individuals; husband and wife but clans or lineages and even communities. These relationships are maintained by the social interactions



that occur in happiness and in sorrow. Hence behaviours that are deemed “antisocial” often could terminate a marriage or block any future marriage intention between clans. Funerals in the study areas are held in high esteem as the dead is bid farewell. On such occasions, in-law’s presence is often highly anticipated to demonstrate that the deceased or family of the deceased have people in the society which is fulfilment in life. Also, in-laws always have roles to play during funerals and so it becomes unpardonable to “refuse or turn down” a funeral invitation.

The payment of bride price is often conceived by some people in society as buying of women and as such has resulted in various misconceptions. These misconceptions reflected in the responses that were provided. While some participants believe regardless of how much a man pays for his wife as bride price that cannot be equated to buying of the woman, others believe once a man pays the bride price of the woman or wife, she becomes his bona fide property. Below are some of the responses that opposed the suggestion that paying bride price is synonymous with buying of women:

“.... many think paying bride prices is a purchase of the woman but that is misleading”
(Male participant, KII)

“..... I paid cattle; but if I kill her today, I will be arrested” (FGD, January 31, 2020)

“Exorbitant bride price doesn’t mean he has bought the wife and owns her” (FGD, February 1, 2020).

“We don’t sell our daughters. Looking at the cost involve in bringing up a girl, men will not be able to pay for brides if we decide to sell our daughters” (Male, KII).

“You cannot buy a human being” (Male, KII).



“It is only our tradition so when men marry and pay even very high bride price it doesn’t mean the women have been bought” (Female, IDI).

These quotes are indicative of the fact that bride price payments are but a tradition and certainly not buying of women who go into marriages. These debates about women’s purchase as a result of bride price payments are contentious. While some believe it is a tradition of demonstrating commitment on the part of men to marry and a show of appreciation to the parents of the bride (Esen, 2004), others maintain that it is an opportunity to buy the women or their rights and freedoms (Gray, 1960). Kaye et al., (2006), concluded that bride price makes women powerless. However, though in the minority, some participants also suggested that payment of bride price is enough for men to own the women they marry. Two of such views are: *“Bride price is a purchase of women” (Widow, IDI)* and *“this is our tradition so when you marry and you pay for her, she becomes yours” (Male, IDI).*

Pritchard, (1931), argued strongly that there is the need to change from bride price to bridewealth. In his view, the terminology bride price connotes a situation where women have been turned into commodities and traded in a marriage market and once purchased are commoditized. The payment of bride price may not entirely be responsible for the woes of women in society; however, it reinforces the already patriarchal cultural exigencies that relegate women to the doldrums of economic, social, cultural and political deprivations. Abdul-Korah, (2014) argued that Dagaaba societies are highly patriarchal and women subordination is a “natural” phenomenon that even women do not object to. Women have concerns with the limitations that are put on them in when it comes to property ownership especially their farm produce. During interviews, some women lamented how bride price payment has “caged” and made them “labourers” of their husbands. However, the same respondents rejected any suggestions regarding



reforms or abolishment bride price payments signalling they are content with it form and perpetuation.

Another practice embedded within the bride price system is adultery fees. According to participants, before the cowries of bride price are presented to the bride's family, the groom's family first presents the cowries or money to their ancestors and gods. At this point, the woman or wife is given to the ancestors to take care of and anything untoward that she does will be punished by the ancestors or gods. Adultery and selling of farm produce without permission are forbidden for women whose bride price have been paid. After marriage, men who pay the bride price of their wives are entitled to adultery fees [pa sani] when their wives flirt with other men. These fees which are paid by the adulterous men vary from family to family and community to community. The fees, very often include animals which are used to cleanse the woman before she would be worthy of being a wife to her husband. It is important to add that if a woman commits adultery with many men at ago but it is the responsibility of the first man to provide the animals for her cleansing. In an in-depth interview with a female participant from Motori, she indicated that:

“When your bride price is paid and you flirt with another man then the woman is “spoiled”. When that happens, the man who commits the adultery with the woman will provide the animals for pacification. If the adulterous man is close or related to the family of the husband of the adulterous wife, a fowl each from the adulterous man and the husband's family are enough for the cleansing but if the adulterous man is not related at all then he will provide a dog, goat and six fowls for the cleansing” (Female participant, IDI).



Gray, (1960) postulated that a man guilty of adultery among the Sonjo is charged to pay six goats to the husband of the woman he has committed the adultery with. Failure to do this will have consequences on the woman. She will either struggle to give birth or her children will be deformed. These restrictions according to Gray, are intended to “protect the exclusive sexual rights” a man has to his wife and to scare other men from infringing on these sexual rights (ibid).

In the study areas, any woman who conceals her ‘sin’ by not confessing her adulterous act has an ultimate punishment of death. Women who commit adultery do not return to their husbands’ homes and even if they do, will not eat or drink water from the house. In some instances, the adulterous women may not die by themselves immediately but their children will die and if steps are not taken to remedy the situation the women will follow. But husbands do not take part in their wives’ funerals if it is discovered that the woman has been killed by the ancestors because of adultery. A female participant at Sanuori narrated that:

“You will dare not eat food in your husband’s house. And once you don’t, he will know. It may not kill you but your child. And when they divine from the soothsayers it will certainly be revealed. So, if I say it and people laugh at me is it not better than death”? (Female participant, IDI).

Also, a widow at Motori narrated succinctly that:

It is a reality that you will die. As the [adulterous] woman moves around if not cleansed her body will whiten up and she will eventually die and once that happens the husband will not wear ganaa, [a rope-like skin of a cow] he will not take part in the funeral and will not throw money at the corpse. As a widow once I have not been given the lezara, [cowries given to a widow signalling a marriage



proposal] I can go into a relationship with a man if I want but that means if the lezara is brought later I will not collect. As a widow, if I decide to marry, my new husband will pay the bride price to my late husband's family (Widow, IDI).

Punishment for adultery is an ancient practice that resulted in the stoning to death of offenders particularly women. In Babylonia, precisely the Code Hammurabi that existed in the 18th century provided death by drowning as a form of punishment for culprits of adultery. Similarly, in prehistoric Greece and Roman law, adulterous women could suffer death while men were never brutally penalized (Augustyn et al, n.d). The uneven treatment of women in marriages which can be explained by the power disparities that exist between men and women and socially enforced by the “cultural webs” in society has perpetuated gender disparities. Situations of this nature make women live in fear with false identities. The repercussions of adultery are not limited to death alone but include denial of befitting burials as women FGD discussants narrated at Sanuori that: *“The women are not allowed to flirt because the men have paid their bride price. As I sit, I am a married woman so if I commit adultery it [cleansing] will have to be done before my burial otherwise I will not be buried”* (FGD, January 30, 2020).

Sarpong, (1974) reported that women are expected to be faithful in their marriages and in the event of unfaithfulness on the part of wives, bride price guarantees husbands' adultery fees. Men who commit adultery with the women in question are obliged to pay fees to the husbands or their families which are partly used to cleanse the adulterous women. But for discrimination why cleanse the women leaving the men out knowing very well, they are equally married to women and shall return home to meet them?

Apart from sexual intercourse, there are still other avenues a woman could be described as adulterous [sorna] without penetrative intercourse. When a man fondles with the



breast of a married woman she is 'spoiled' or if a man deliberately beats the buttocks of a married woman that is a 'crime' and he will certainly pay 'pa sani' [adultery fees] to the woman's husband or his family. And in such cases, cleansing is still required except that the animals needed for such pacification may vary. Women FGD discussants at Motori stated that:

If a man has sexual intercourse with you a woman you are "spoiled; If a child inserts a figure or even toe in a woman's vagina she is spoiled; If a man also puts his fingers into the vagina of a married woman, she is spoiled and if another woman puts her fingers in a woman's vagina, she is spoiled and the victim is expected to retaliate (FGD, February 1 2020).

When a woman puts a figure in the vagina of another woman and she retaliates both of them are "spoiled" and their respective husbands will take care of their cleansing. A man who shares a bed with his wife who has committed adultery puts his life at risk. He could be killed by the ancestors. Even eating the food of an adulterous wife by a husband is a risk and the ultimate punishment is death. The issue of discrimination between men and women equally exists in this regard. While the men can go unpunished for sleeping with other men's wives, the women can hardly get such treatment. Women feel unfairly treated. *"Now me I keep complaining about this because a man will marry you and still sleep with married women around but when a woman does same then she is described as "spoiled" [adulterous]. Can you see that this issue lacks fairness"?* (FGD, February 1, 2020). In the views of female discussants, there is discrimination against women. While customs have given men blank cheques to have multiple sexual partners if they so desire, married women are strongly discouraged and spiritually watched over in that regard. Olaore and Agwu, (2020), contend that bride price makes women voiceless, stops women from infidelity but



exempts men from such restrictions. These findings confirm with that of Forkour et al (2018) when they concluded that though there are variations in the payment of bride price in the upper west region of Ghana, it entails farm labour, cattle and cowries. Additionally, the works of Anderson, (2007), Ngutor, Yandev & Arumun, (2013), Ndira, (2004), Bonye and Kpieta, (2012), CREAM and MUFUMI, (2013) and Pemunta, (2017), support the view that bride price is a payment for wives and consequently makes women property of their husbands.

Despite the variations, the motives of bride price payment within the study areas are uniform with similar rituals and the same implications for women. For instance, with exception of the Islamic marriages [mostly between the Waala], both Birifor and non-Birifor before presenting the bride price to their fathers-in-law first put it before their gods and ancestors. During this exercise, libation is performed and the ancestors informed about the family's intention to bring a 'visitor' to the house and the need for the gods and ancestors to protect, bless and order the steps of the visitor such that she wouldn't step on a scorpion. This ritual puts the woman in the hands of the ancestors as a "family property" who must live an upright life without cheating on the husband or family. The gods with spiritual eyes are therefore authorized to punish accordingly if the visitor so violates rules regarding ownership of property and infidelity. Therefore, women who sell the farm products of their husbands or commit adultery are met with untimely death, struck down with an illness or their children die to serve as a deterrent. The only time the woman cedes being a property of the family is when she or her family returns the bride price. This position is well established in the literature (Dery, 2013; Kpieta & Bonye, 2012).

Kpieta and Bonye, (2012:124) stated that:



The sample cowries are placed on the ancestral altar in the Yikpong and pacified with the sacrifices, thus, invoking their ancestors to accept the visitor (woman) coming into the family or clan as their own and property. They also invoke blessings on the incoming bride making her fruitful in the womb and industrious with her hands and also be protected from any harm from the unseen forces and an 'evil eye' – supposed witches and wizards. The sample cowries are then added to the money (cowries) and sent for the payment of the bridewealth.

Pemunta, (2017) working on “when a property cannot own property” as ruled in a Cameroonian court concluded that married women were subservient to men and are treated as property hence cannot own property except single women and divorcees. There is however a contradiction between these findings and that of Pemunta, (2017) on the exceptions. While divorcees can own property in the case of Cameroon (Pemunta, 2017), the situation is different in the study areas. The findings further contradict the work of CREAM and MUFUMI, (2010:6), in Uganda as they stated that: *“If a marriage is not successful, the Bride Price will be returned...”*.



In the case of the current study, in-laws are not under any obligation to return the bride price. Husbands only get a refund when the divorcees marry different men. Returning of bride price is, therefore, a voluntary act in this case which will hardly happen. In the current study, parents argued that once they are not responsible for break-ups in marriages or have not called their daughters home, husbands cannot demand a refund of bride price but can only pray and hope that their ex-wives will remarry for the second husbands to refund the bride price.

Gray (1960) posits that bride price was paid among the Sonjo is non-refundable. This position contradicts the work of Forkuor et al., (2018) as they reported that payback of bride price during marriage failures ensures marital stability.

In the study areas, a divorcee remains the “property” of the husband hence any property acquired by her during the divorce is owned by the husband. The narrative only changes when the divorcee or her family returns the bride price to the husband or in-laws. These findings are also rooted in the theoretical strands of feminism as Asen, (2017) claim that feminism is a wide concept, embracing women liberation from patriarchal tendencies that are found in negative social and cultural beliefs against women. Dery (2013) reiterated that bride price supports male justifications of dominant gender relations rooted in the traditions of people.

4.2.3 Changes in the conception and practice of bride price payments

Meekers, (1992), reported that bride price is paid by instalments. It is a process and every stage is performed according to custom. Gray, (1960) described bride price among the Sonjo as a commercial venture and concluded that it is paid at once and is non-refundable. According to the customs of Sonjo, a father is at liberty to give his daughter to a different man to marry if a suitor fails to pay all the bride price. In such circumstances, the part payments are not returned to the payer. Abdul-Korah, (2014:338) opined that there is a “shift in the content of the bride price today [thus] from cowries and cattle to cash [which] is also a direct product of colonialism and its intentional manipulations”.

According to participants, in a men’s FGD at Kakalapari women do not collect or benefit from bride price. A Divorcee reported that previously though small, women were entitled to *zibiri libie* [clitoris mutilation monies]. “Well, they don’t give mothers



[part of the bride price]. It is the *kyore* [bride price money] that the mothers are entitled to ₵5.00 or ₵10.00 as *zibiri libiri* (clitoris mutilation money)". In the current dispensation that female genital mutilation has been outlawed, women no longer carry out clitoris mutilation on young girls hence are not entitled *zibiri libie*. This implies that bride price is collected and disbursed by men. Even when a woman is widowed or divorced and has to bring up the children alone, the bride price is determined by the widow's or divorcee's husband's family. Abdul-Korah, (2014) intimated that bride price is often collected by the family head since he is deemed to be the leader of the family and superintend over the affairs of the family. Women do not become family heads even if a woman is the oldest person in that family. Leadership within the family is often inherited based on seniority as reported by Bonye and Kpieta, (2012). This eliminates women in the family leadership equation once the inheritance process to such positions is male-dominated as well as lineage inclined. However, bride price is now individualized. Family heads are no longer ready to bear the responsibility of paying a bride price of young men now and fathers within extended families now collect the bride price of their daughters without involving the entire clan or its leadership.



White, (2016) contends that the long-held view that marriage is a process is beginning to change as well-to-do men in society have made marriage an event. Payments that should be procedural or step-by-step are now done at ago. Women are treated as property which has been acquired once the bride price is paid making it impossible for them to intend to own the bride price of their daughters. Wendo, (2004), observed that bride price makes men construe women as acquired property. The tenets of patriarchy have simply empowered men over women as leadership roles have been reserved for men in society (Walby, 1990). Even welcoming of visitors upon entry into such

communities is a preserve of men. In the presence of elderly women, boys have always deemed leaders and will greet visitors, ask their mission before the women will then interact with the visitors.

Another change worthy of mention is the practice of call back. In the study areas when a man fails to pay the bride price of his wife, the in-laws ask the bride to return home until the payments are carried out or at least there is a commitment. But in an interview with a clan head at Vieri he narrated that, today's women will not obey such directives from their parents to return. He indicated that: *"In the past, we would ask her to sit at home until the husband comes to pay but now it will not work because the women now claim they love the men and will use phones to communicate to do all they want"* (Clan head, KII). The role of socialization is beginning to lose its value as parents no longer have absolute control over their children's decision-making or interest. Secondly, the legal regime that is put in place now has made young women conscious of their rights and are in the position to disagree with their parents more in as compared to the past. The choice of marriage partners is therefore a conflict zone as betrothal is no longer common. Bearing children out of wedlock in the past was totally frowned on. Akerlof and Yellen, (1996) have however indicated societal attitudes have transformed and women no longer face stigma, ostracism among others that were originally associated with giving birth out of wedlock. As such, women are not worried if their bride price is not paid as many are now ready to cohabit with men, especially in the urban centres.

4.2.4 Bride price, women's access to and ownership of land

Additionally, on bride price and land access, participants concluded wholly that women have access to land. In their construction, access is the opportunity to use agricultural



land for a period. Much as access is not a challenge, its security is a different ball game together. A male participant in Dorimon indicated that:

“Land access includes temporary ownership or owning land for temporary use without any claim of permanent ownership of that land” (Male participant, KII)

“When you have the chance to use your husband’s land you have access” (Female participant, IDI)

“Women have access to land once they get it to use” (Female participant, IDI)

Rao, (2006) contends that even when women have enhanced access to land and better control over agricultural activities there are still concerns. Such access is only indicative of the fact that agriculture has been feminized as a result of gender inequalities and limited opportunities for women in the other sectors of the economy. Access to land in a rural settlement is so fundamental to the very existence of the population especially as such places depend on agriculture largely to survive. Access in the study areas is currently not a challenge as participants; both men and women agreed that it is a matter of financial abilities of women to cultivate, in that land is very available. However, it is worth mentioning that commercialization of land has begun in Dorimon as Tendamba have started selling land to the higher bidders though such lands were already occupied by some people several years back. The works of Duncan and Brants, 2004; Fobih, 2004; Bonye & Kpieta, 2012a and Bonye & Kpieta 2012b; Dery, 2015 and 2016; Doss et al, 2014; Kusaana, Kidido & Halidu-Adam, 2013; Kasanga and Kotey, 2001; Alidu, 2015 among others have all agreed that women have access to land. What is however not guaranteed is the security of their access.

This is particularly so because women’s land access is regulated by social norms, customs, traditions and relationships. Women have access to their husbands’ land and



the security of such access is hinged on the sustainability of their marriages. Marital status as a determinant in women's access to land was a unanimous theme as all participants acknowledged that marriage is a way by which women can have access to land hence the existence of a relationship between bride price and women land access. Marriages in the study areas are validated by the payment of bride price. Even when women are widowed, they are still entitled to their husbands' land because the payment of bride price guarantees widows such privileges especially when the widows have male children (Bonye & Kpieta, 2012; Dery, 2016 and Kusaana, Kidido & Halidu-Adam, 2013). It was however revealed that widows who resist levirate are sometimes thrown out and consequentially denied access to land. During a female FGD, discussants at Sanuori pointing to workers at an ongoing building project said:

“You see the way they are struggling together but let the man die if care is not taken the widow will be asked to vacate the building if the widow resists levirate”. In literature, Miles, (2007:4) described it as “dispossession of widows”.

“Widows who do not remarry back into the kin group [thus] either because they are passed the age of childbearing, refuse to marry anyone within the group, or are disliked by the husband's family -- may be forced to leave the marital property” (Miles, 2007:6)

Furthermore, participants explained that there is a difference between access and ownership. And that ownership comes with control and management rights while access is limited to use rights.

“Land ownership refers to either legal or customary arrangement by individuals, groups and organizations have rights to land as a property for several purposes including agriculture [or] building” (Male participant, KII)



Land acquisition, particularly in Ghana, could be in form of purchase, rent, gift, conquest and inheritance (Duncan & Brants, 2004; Fobih, 2004). Unfortunately, women have a limited chance of acquiring land through these avenues. Apart from cost which limits women from purchasing land, cultural hurdles have obstructed women's rights in owning land. National laws such as the 1992 constitution of Ghana exist to guarantee the rights of all citizenry including women's rights and one of such rights is the right to own property legally.

Article 18(1) of the Ghanaian constitution further stipulates that “*Every person has the right to own property either alone or in association with others*”. But debates revolving around women's land ownership in Ghana have been culturally pivotal with little influence from national laws. Rao, (2018) posits that central laws have the potential of ensuring gender equality but land and landed property are practically linked to male dominance. Women who make attempts to overcome these cultural barriers are viewed with scorn and described as insubordinate. Rao, (2018:1) in reporting on land politics and gender in India postulated that “good women do not inherit land” which certainly is inimical to the socioeconomic emancipation of women particularly rural dwellers who largely depend on agriculture for survival.

Moreover, the findings of this study indicated that though bride price curtails women ownership of property, it does not have any relationship with women's inability to own land. Rather, women's inability to own land is blamed on the patrilineal inheritance system and supernatural dimensions of land. A male participant from Dorimon Community said:

But I don't think bride price is the cause, I think the major problem is our form of inheritance; it's just the form of inheritance that is the problem. Otherwise, if



I am a woman and my father dies and they share the land and give me a parcel of it regardless of where I would have gone to marry but I can still have access to that land. I can even lease it, right? Give it to somebody to do farming and the person can still give me something that still goes a long way to cushion me up and make me a better person. But now if you are sharing land and because of inheritance system you don't give to women and wherever she goes to marry she doesn't have that privilege to be given land again... it's just the inheritance [system] that is the problem (Male participant, KII).

Additionally, the chief of Vieri and key informant added that:

“Women cannot own land. At least as far as Wechiau paramountcy is concerned. There is no relationship, [between bride price and women ownership of land] because whether bride price or no bride price women do not own land”

The narratives above are a clear indication that constitutional arrangements are not sufficient in dealing with gender inequalities. The constitution of Ghana precisely article 17(2) frowns on discriminations as it states in full that “*a person shall not be discriminated against on grounds of gender, race, colour, ethnic origin, religion, creed or social or economic status*”. Also, article 22 of the same constitution guarantees the property rights of a spouse in marriages with or without will at death and particularly 22(3) states that “*spouses shall have equal access to property jointly acquired during marriage; [and] assets which are jointly acquired during marriage shall be distributed equitably between the spouses upon dissolution of the marriage*”. Customary laws in Ghana have been recognized in the Ghanaian courts but largely stay in the hands of the custodians of these customs when it comes to implementation.



Inheritance in agnatic societies embraces both ownership of property and identity of lineage. Rao, (2018:27) posits that “...*claiming inheritance rights to land in the parental home is also a way of retaining one’s status and identity in the home of one’s birth, and not just being treated as a transitory visitor*”. Women in their paternal homes are seen as visitors who will transit by way of marriage hence are not allowed to inherit land at home.

Unfortunately, husbands’ homes which should be women’s final destinations as culturally perceived are equally sojourns, enroute of unknown terminuses. This “visitor tag” place on women denies them land ownership at their paternal homes and in marriages especially as an inheritance in agnatic settings is lineage inclined but a major mode of land acquisition.

Also, a widow from Kakalapari, during in-depth interview narrated that; “*there is no bearing of bride price payment on women ownership of land. Even before I got married, I didn’t own land in my father’s house*”.

The theory of patriarchy espoused by Walby (1990: 20) posits that “patriarchy is a system of social structures and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women”. Male dominance in land ownership has been well articulated in the literature (Duncan & Brants, 2004; Dery, 2015; Kusaana, Kidido & Halidu-Adam, 2013; Kpieta & Bonye, 2012a; Bonye & Kpieta 2012b; Alidu, 2015, Fobih, 2004 and Kasanga, 2004). Women are hardly involved in the decision-making process when resources are concerned. Cotula (2007) reiterated that elderly women are consulted on pastoral land and when land boundaries are in contention. The Collation for Women Manifesto for Ghana (2004:44) outlined that “socialisation practises and proverbs such as ‘women are to be seen and not to be heard’ reinforce these practices which automatically



strengthens the community decision-making powers of men”. These domineering practices which are intertwined with the patrilineal inheritance system have caused feminists to advocate economic, social and political equality between men and women (Walby, 1990 & Crossman, 2019).

4.3 Traditions governing women’s access and ownership of land

4.3.1 The process of women land acquisition

To access land, women will simply ask their husbands for it and in instances where women have to approach the Tendamba for land, men lead the process. Widows have access to their late husbands’ farmlands and divorcees rely on their families for land. Widows with male children easily have access to land. This makes sex a determinant of land access. In an interview with the paramount chief of Dorimon, he narrated that; *“When you (a woman) come to seek land without a man leading you; you will be subjected to an interview on whether you are married; not married or you are a widow”*. In probing why different treatments will be given to women who want to acquire land without men leading, he replied that:

“Well, we have been living with it for some time now so we are more or less used to it. It is not discriminatory but is done to guide against future misfortunes. You see, sometimes, some of the women cause trouble between them and their husbands and go out of their ways to acquire these things [land] and it could become a problem” (Paramount chief, KII).

These narratives support the patriarchal demands of a society that require women to always be followers. This position has been contextualized in literature as reported by Dery, 2016; Kpieta and Bonye 2012; Kuusana, Kidido & Halidu-Adam, 2013; Cotula, 2007 and Duncan and Brants, 2004, amongst others as they postulated that women’s



access to land varies depending on whether a woman is married, has children or is childless. Even when the children exist their sex; male or female matters.

Traditionally, women have access to their husbands' lands; widows who also accept levirate easily have access to their late husbands' lands; widows who have male children are also guaranteed access to their husbands' land; women could also beg for land from men or the Tendana and divorcees have access to land at their fathers' homes and can also beg for land from men. Married women easily get access to land as compared to single women. Marriage is a relational adventure that when women get into it, it leverages their chances of getting land. It was however unearthed that widows who resist levirate are denied access to land and in some cases thrown out. *"It's [levirate] a must because you will be ejected what will you do? If a widow also decides to resist the ejection, because of levirate nobody will come to her aid. On many occasions, widows have been thrown out because they resisted levirate. There are many instances of widows being ejected [in Sanuori]"*. Kaye et al., (2006) and Asimwe, (2013) intimated that bride price makes women powerless and takes their economic independence and increases gender inequalities.

Land is not on sale in the study areas but land seekers are often required to present a token before the land is secured. The token is often in the form of kola and a fowl in some cases. The token is however not an indication of land purchase hence the lands remain the property of the Tendamba or Chief. According to the chief of Vieri, *"We do not sell land in as far as Wehiau paramountcy is concerned. If you see land and you need it and it is not occupied by anybody the chief will let you have it. The only thing required is kola"* (Chief, KII).



Kola has been quantified in monetary terms as some respondents claimed land is now sold which is against custom. Some participants at Vieri claimed that community members who wish to put up new settlements or buildings are asked to pay twenty Ghana cedis (GH¢ 20.00) but such claims were refuted during probes. A hypothetical figure of GH¢2000.00 was used during an interview with the chief and this is what he had to say:

If we were to sell land at GH¢2000.00, people will not get places to stay.

I am yet to hear of land sales in the Wechiau paramountcy. We don't have a specific number/requirement [of kola]. Even if they are twenty-five (25) pieces of kola or fifty (50) pieces you just take that and share it among the people. If the person seeking the land decides to give money, we will collect but it's not compulsory to make it big. Whether ¢10,000, ¢1000.00 or whatever but that's the kola. But this doesn't indicate that you have bought the land hence it can be taken back from you. You can cultivate or build on the land. But nobody owns land here except the chief (Chief, KII).



Participants also revealed that the option of buying land is a way of acquiring land, although land purchase seems to be very contentious. While many respondents insisted that land is not sold in the study areas, others indicated that some Tendamba have started selling land. The general concern from participants, however, was the inability of women to be able to raise money to buy land even if it is available. In short, participants believe that land ownership is a preserve of men except that men who own land outside the allodial mode of ownership are only 'temporary owners' in that the Tendana could take the land from them any time there is the need.

4.3.2 The inheritance system and its influence on women's access and ownership of land

According to participants in all communities, inheritance is the commonest mode of acquiring land in the study areas. However, the inheritance system is patrilineal and favours only men. The Birifor seem to practice both matrilineal and patrilineal systems of inheritance which is similar to what Goody, (1969) intimated when he articulated that the Birifor practice a “double descent” thus both agnatic and enatic successions. But as much as land is concerned everything is patrilineal and only paternal brothers inherit land. Land is described as “*Saabieri mobo*” (paternal property) making it impossible for women to inherit land in their husbands' homes. This is also consistent with the work of Ngmendoma (2019) as he posits that “*the Birifors have two system(s) of inheritance. The “Bal bomo” (Matrilineal inheritance) and the “Saabie bomo” (Patrilineal inheritance)*”. And that things that are inherited through the father's line include land, houses, and property acquired without the support of the matriclan (“Bal”) family. Participants claimed land is not sold but inherited, hence the role of inheritance then becomes paramount in the land acquisition process. When a man dies his brothers are expected to marry the widow and inherit his property including land. The inherited property is then used to take care of the widow(s) and her children if any. If no man within the family or clan is ready to marry the widow, she stays and continues to use the husband's land to cultivate. Many families easily come to terms with this arrangement especially when the widow has male children. The widow will have access to the land but the land will be owned by the deceased's (husband) family. Widows who do not get the *Lezara* (cowries that indicate a marriage proposal to a widow) from any of the brothers of their late husbands are at liberty to marry outside their first husbands' clan for the first husbands' families to collect their bride price. However,



participants revealed that when widows resist levirate, they are denied land completely and depending on the family the widow could be ejected from the house especially if the widow is childless. During a women FGD at Sanuori, participants pointing to workers at an ongoing building project said: *“You see the way they are struggling together but let the man die if care is not taken the widow will be asked to vacate the building if the widow resists levirate”* (FGD, January 30, 2020). As I probed to understand why they added that: *“It’s [levirate] a must because you will be ejected what you will do? If a widow also decides to resist the ejection, because of levirate nobody will come to her aid. On many occasions, widows have been thrown out because they resisted levirate. There are many instances of widows being ejected [in Sanuori]”*.

Actions of this nature are catered for in the 1992 constitution of Ghana in article 22(3) as equitable sharing of the joint property has been advocated strongly to ensure women benefit from what they acquire together with their husbands. The PNDC Law 111 and Spousal Bill are also relevant laws that should cater to women who to an extent can be described as a vulnerable group but they have not been enforced religiously. Unfortunately, it often takes the courts to define a joint property. Many women are ignorant of the legal processes involved in seeking redress and even the few that are informed are often threatened to drop legal actions in the name of family cohesion. Besides, those who move to court to seek redress are often challenged to prove they contributed to the acquisition of the property in question [land] which is difficult to do as documentations are usually done with names of men (Fynn, 2016). Legal cost and time frame within which cases are disposed of in the Ghanaian courts are a disincentive to women who wish to challenge discriminatory treatments meted out to them within the inheritance system. Traditions are relevant in every society but what is detrimental



to the wellbeing of society certainly has outlived its usefulness and has to be modified if not discarded.

As advocated by the theory of patriarchy, men dominate and lead in a society which puts women in a disadvantaged economic position (Walby, 1990). SEND-GHANA, (2014) reported that socio-cultural practices [bride price] restrict women's access and ownership of land. This situation will only change when women rise to the occasion by challenging societal norms that are detrimental to their wellbeing (ibid).

However, some exceptions were mentioned as conditions that once met women will have the ability to inherit land. It was stated that women can only inherit land when all the male members of a family die, and women who are from landowning families or clans have the right to own land and may be considered when their families are sharing the land. Similar findings have been reported by Kpieta and Bonye (2012) as they looked at "Land as a God" among the Dagaaba and well-articulated in the Bible as a tradition of the Israelis. "*So, shall no inheritance of the children of Israel remove from tribe to tribe; for the children of Israel shall cleave everyone to the inheritance of the tribe of his fathers*" (American Standard Version; Numbers 36:7)

This provision in the bible is a foundation for the patriarchy that has elevated men as natural leaders while subordinating women. Women do not marry within their lineage hence the opportunity to inherit is curtailed at birth by sex.

Duncan and Brants, (2004); Fobih, (2004); Bonye and Kpieta, (2012) among others all acknowledged the role of inheritance in land transfers but conceded that the system is disadvantageous to women in agnatic societies.



4.3.3 Women's land tenancy security

Women do not have secure access to land and this is manifested in the narrative below:

Women don't have access to secure land because at any point in time because of divorce issues if you marry someone what is the guarantee that the person will be with you forever? Marital status is a factor as to whether you have land or not. So, when you remain married you have access [to land], and you divorce and that ends it. The women cannot have access to the land again and you cannot come back to that land again and you cannot come back to the house to say you are coming to farm on that land again. Certainly, the men cannot sell the land and the women too cannot sell it. If you understand it that way fine but you see when the land is transferred to the man, he has temporary ownership of it (Male participant, KII).

Insecure land tenure systems have led to low long-term investments [in agriculture] (Kasanga & Kotey, 2001). The benefits of women having access to land are enormous and globally acknowledged especially in the areas of food security and poverty reduction strategies yet traditions have curtailed secured access to land. In rural areas, the primary resource is land and many lives [if not all] are dependent on land in their agricultural activities. The traditional arrangements of inheriting land where women are alienated by the same cultural practices in the inheritance system is counter-productive. There is an imbalance of power in marriages hence women certainly will always lose in the equation of traditional land access where the men will have to share their lands with women. In any case, as reported by Doss et al, (2014:10) "women are not real farmers". This patriarchal notion alone relegates women to the background and elevates men to be leaders (Sultana, 2011 and Rawat, 2014). Dery, (2016:29) puts it better as he



stated that “.... *gender-erected discrimination and exclusion are key barriers that prevent many rural women from accessing land*”.

4.3.4 Land and sacrifices

Traditions relating to land management require that the Tendana (Landlord) and men, in general, make sacrifices to the Tengani (earth god) in thanksgiving during harvest, after harvest and when there are misfortunes or difficulties. For example, when the rains are not coming, the Tendana must perform libation to call on the Tengani to let the rains fall to avert famine in the following year. Women, however, are considered “unworthy” to approach the Tengani let alone carry out a sacrifice. This belief system by itself is a barrier to women’s ownership of land. Participants indicated that yearly rituals are a requirement in land issues. A widow at Sanuori explained that:

“Women are not allowed to sacrifice to the earth’s gods or carry out any ritual that involves sacrifices so; women have no strength. If you want to do anything in this regard you have to meet a man even if he is very small so that he will lead you to carry out whatever rituals you have to carry out. Among us the Dagaaba that is the norm and tradition”.

This ritual exercise which is so mandatory in customary land ownership is a barrier to women land ownership as Kpieta and Bonye, (2012:109) concluded that: “... *in the Dagaaba people belief system, any person or group of persons that do not have the right to offer sacrifices to the earth ‘god’ through the ancestors cannot own land*”.

It is, however, curious that participants agreed that bride price commodifies women as reported by Lowes and Nunn, (2017) and denies them the opportunity to own property



(Kpieta & Bonye, 2012; Dery, 2015) yet they did not acknowledge any relationship between bride price and women ownership of land.

4.3.5 Land management and disputes resolution

Land management, control and ownership are customarily done in the study areas and the processes are governed by the traditions of the people. The study revealed that land ownership is customary and rest in the hands of the Tendamba in Motori, Sanuori, Dorimon and Kakalabri except in the case of Vieri where the land is rather a skin land and is owned by the chief. In an interview with Chief of Vieri, and key informant he revealed that “.... you can cultivate or build on the land. But nobody owns land here except the chief and no one can acquire land in Vieri here without the knowledge of the chief” (Chief, KII).

In another interview with a clan head and the oldest elder for that matter in Vieri, it was further revealed that:

The Tendana will give land to every person to settle if you want to come and farm.

The Tendana controls and manages the land but will not charge for land. The chief and the Tendana both play their roles to ensure peaceful settlements. The Tendana family were the first to settle in Vieri and they come from Guo. But there is a claim that the people of Kende are the owners of the land because they are the chiefs (Male participant, IDI).

Landholders within the customary land tenure system include; “individual and families; Communities, represented by stools, skins and families. Chiefs represent stools and skins which symbolise the community in certain areas; and Tendamba’ (i.e. the first settlers) or clans” (Kasanga & Kotey, 2001:13). This is not different in the current study. But there is a seeming conflict in the case of Vieri between the Tendamba and



chief as to who owns the land. Though conflicts and changes in customary land ownership are not new developments, they are contrary to the customary arrangements that indicate that the Tendamba. Such negative developments have characterized land management issues as urbanization surfaces. Land value increases with urbanization and commercialization that induce landlords to sell land at exorbitant prices to those that can purchase to the neglect of the rural poor who in any case have settled on those lands several years back. It has been reported by Kasanga and Kotey, (2001:14) that:

“Some chiefs in the Upper East and Upper West Regions, contrary to customary land law, are claiming that they are the allodial title holders to land, rather than the Tendamba”.

Customarily the lands are managed, controlled and distributed by the Tendamba and chief in the case of Vieri at the community levels while family heads take control of land management, control and distribution of land at the family levels which women’s access through their husbands and other men in their various communities. Women are left out of decision-making processes hence even if they are allowed to attend meetings regarding land management issues, they attend as passive observers who only listen without making inputs (Cotula, 2007).

4.4 Gendered perceptions about women’s access and ownership of land

4.4.1 Land and women in agriculture

Limited access to land and harrowing cultural practices couple with the financial difficulties that women face has pushed them into subsistence agriculture. A widow in Sanuori community in an in-depth interview reported that:



“When I can cultivate one acre, I sow guinea corn, groundnuts and beans, to also get something to eat. So, when I harvest the guinea corn that is what we eat and once it finishes, we buy from the market” (Widow, IDI).

The issue of women engaging in subsistence agriculture is common. While some do not have access to large lands to cultivate, others have access but are financially constrained to invest in more acres. *“Development policies typically emphasize export-oriented growth and manufacturing, which is largely the bane of men, hence neglecting subsistence agriculture and the informal sector, the usual preserve of women” (Amu, 2005:27).* The development of agriculture in Ghana has been slow and even when steps are taken, the policies are often more favourable to men than women. In rural Ghana, many women depend on agriculture to survive and to support their households yet women are not empowered to engage in large scale agriculture. It, therefore, makes women economically dependent on men. Female participation in the most crucial sector of the Ghanaian economy thus agriculture is so high but for subsistence purposes. As Rao (2006) points out, the involvement of women in agriculture as a result of land availability is not a signal of gender equality but an indication of women’s segregation in the other sectors which probably pay more. All that married women work for is therefore under the control of their husbands.

In an interview with a widow in Vieri, she described women as “labourers” of their husbands who have been “caged” to work for their husbands. Even widows and divorcees are not spared this discrimination. In an interview with an extension service officer for Wa West, he disclosed that there will be misgivings if women demand to own land and by extension try to own or have their farm because women play a complementary role to their husbands.



There will be negative perceptions about women if they demand land ownership. Men will feel that now we are on the same level and usually in our area here men provide for the family so now if I own five (5) parcels of land and my wife too owns five (5) parcels of land and we are both doing the farming knowing well that here the farming activities are jointly carried out by the husband and the wife. So, if you release land to your wife to do her farming and you the husband also do your farming so who is now the man here and who is the wife? (Male participant, KII).

Customary practices influence women's land use and can determine women's access to land in terms of land use rights or ownership. Patriarchy and patrilineal inheritance systems create cultural hurdles for women in rural agriculture thereby reducing the ambitions and productive capacity of women (Iruonagbe, 2009). The productive role of rural women in agriculture has been underestimated. The contributions of women have not been considered locally and nationally with the attention that it is due, making an industrious section of the labour force live impoverished lives. Tian et al. (2015) postulated that women's effort is not paid for in the production process. The worst part of it is that some crops like guinea corn have been described as "Bong Tuo" [forbidden crops] for women such that their cultivation is a preserve for men and even when women are allowed to cultivate them it is purely for consumption.

"In Wa West, largely, it's just recently that the women started farming maize; it used to be soya beans, cowpea, okra, pepper and vegetables... you hardly find a woman cultivating yam, cassava" (Male participant, KII). According to Kpieta and Bonye (2012), there are crops and animals which are ritual and people who do not qualify to become ancestors are excluded from cultivating such crops and rearing of ritual animals. Women, unfortunately, do not qualify to become ancestors hence cannot



cultivate or own ritual crops like beans, yam, guinea corns among others even if they cultivate them. During a women FGD at Motori, they opined that “*Women can own animals and can sell because it’s their money they have used to buy the animals...as for guinea corn if you joke with it, you would be buried fast*” (FGD, February 1, 2020).

This narrative supports the findings of Bonye and Kpieta (2012) when they reported that in the Dagaaba society, some crops have been described as ritual crops and their cultivation is a preserve of men. In these rural areas, the economic activities of women include brewing of *pito* [a local beer] and shea butter production. With guinea corn as the main raw material for the production of *pito*, limiting its production has far-reaching consequences for the economic independence of women. Women, then have to purchase guinea corn from men to engage in the trade of *pito* brewing.

4.4.2 Bride price and women’s ownership of farm produce

Beyond the limitations placed on the cultivation of forbidden or ritual crops and rearing of ritual animals, women do not own their farm produce hence cannot sell without permission from their husbands in the study areas. Only consumption is allowed and three reasons according to participants account for this fate of women. They contend that women have been paid for through the payment of bride price which treats them as assets in their own right; secondly, men claim to be the owners of the hoe and finally, the lands belong to men. A widow in Motori narrated that:

The men say they have married the women; the women are staying in the houses of the men and the men have more importantly paid the bride prices of the women. So, when the women have property it belongs to the husbands and if a woman resists that the men can curse you by way of their utterances. The fear of the



repercussions is what makes us succumb to these customs so the men have to take some of the produce we women get to make it safe for sale or consumption (Female participant, IDI).

Additionally, a clan head and key informant at Vieri said; *“the ancestors will kill them [women] because the hoe is not theirs. Though women also contribute to labour by sowing, they do not buy the hoes. Even if they go to buy the hoes, the men still own them because the men have paid for them”* (Clan head, KII).

It was, however, revealed that women who are in groups and are supported by NGOs to do cultivation of different crops have the absolute ownership of their produce. According to Baehr, (2018) feminism is grounded in women’s autonomy and their ability to contribute to the creation of the conditions within which they live. However, women are not autonomous and hardly have a say in the decision-making processes that determine their living conditions. Aside from the crops and animals, women also compete with men for other resources from economic trees such as shea fruits or nuts. It was revealed that women in the Birifor communities (Sanuori and Kakalapari) do not own shea nuts from cultivated land of their husbands. What they are entitled are shea nuts from the wild bush while the nuts from the cultivated land are collected and prepared by women for their husbands.

“We normally gather our own from the bush first. Once we are done with collecting our own from the bush we then work on the nuts on the farms for the men. You don’t go for both at the same time” (FGD, January 30, 2020).

The situation is however different for the non-Birifor communities (Motori, Dorimon and Vieri). Over there, women own and use shea nuts for both domestic and commercial purposes. During an FGD at Motori, it was revealed that:



When women gather the shea nuts that is what is used to prepare food in the form of shea butter especially for workers on the farm. So, when the man has workers on the farm, he leaves everything into the hands of the women; is out of the sale of shea nuts that the women will grind flour and buy ingredients and grains if there is no food at home (FGD, February 1, 2020).

Shea nuts help women overcome some obligations in their household and women's conventional duties include the provision of "soup" ingredients and grains for food when the family granaries are empty (Kent, 2017). But with men controlling all aspects of the economic lives of women, it remains a myth talking about gender equality as championed by the SGDs and feminists' theorists.

4.4.3 Discrimination and inequalities between men and women in property ownership

In a patriarchal society, women's subordination is a normal practice that hardly gets questioned especially by its victims. Women who challenge such "normalized practices" are considered to be insolent and mutinous. In an in-depth interview with a widow at Sanuori on why women do not challenge patriarchal exigencies in society particularly on ownership of farm produce as she said:

"You will be labelled an insubordinate and a disrespectful woman and they won't allow your crops to yield well in the future" (Widow, IDI). How that will happen, she added that "they won't take the land but spiritually my efforts and yields will be manipulated to punish me".

According to the UN, (2018) about half of the world's population is in rural settings and one-third of the global population depends on agriculture. Inequalities between men



and women are pervasive in many sectors especially land control and ownership and particularly so during divorce or demise of husbands (Ortiz-Ospina & Roser, 2018).

In an interview with the paramount chief of Dorimon on the way forward on how to bridge the gender disparities between men and women in his traditional area, he retorted that; “*that is in theory*”. For the paramount chief, gender disparities have customarily been institutionalized and will remain with the people as long as the people remain on earth. It has been like that and will remain like that he added. In an FGD at Kakalapari with men, they recounted that:

We don't harass the women but you see the issue of inequality started in history. It is not the fault of those of us seated here. If we want to ensure equality, we would have to evaluate and assess the situation. It is we the men that will have to reduce the issues of inequality in society and then bring the women on board. But if the men don't agree to change then women will be cheated continuously. We are not entirely discriminating against women because we are only following what our forebears left behind and we cannot abandon that.



The SDGs, for example, goals five and ten target ending discriminations against women and girls as well as reducing inequalities between men and women (UN, 2015). Also, CEDAW, (1979:2) intimated that “...*the economic and political subordination of women, perpetuate the inferior status of women and inhibit structural and attitudinal changes necessary to eliminate gender inequality*”. Until women are seen by society as complete and independent people rather than complements of men and government set the right agenda, women will continue to be relegated to the background. Decision-making processes must involve women actively not passively as it is currently the case. Patriarchy, precisely patrilineal inheritance system has alienated women and needs a

concerted review. In such reviews, the custodians of the traditions have a critical role to ensure that this is done successfully. Gender discourse is highly perceptive because of cultural diversity. Doss et al., (2014) contend that women are not seen as real farmers. They are subordinates who only complement their husbands and this situation has accounted for the notion that even when women have their farms, they still need their husbands' permission to sell their farm produce. Land is seen as a generational property that is passed onto men who are heirs but in the face of urbanization and commercialization that argument is respectfully lame in the sense that when land is sold or leased out, it takes half a century to have it back and same if it is bought for commercial purpose and ninety-nine years to regain it if is purchased for residential use. This certainly sets some generations off by denying them ownership of land though they may not be women.

4.5 Socio-economic importance of bride price and implications for women's access and ownership of land

4.5.1 The social importance of bride price payment

To begin with, participants intimated that bride price as a tradition bans wives from flirting and adultery but grants husbands' exclusive sexual rights to their wives. It furthers grants husbands the opportunity to demand adultery fees from men that sleep with their wives. A widow in Motori community reported that *"once the payments of bride price take place the woman cannot flirt or move out with any man again"* (Widow, *IDI*). In this regard, women who decide to engage in adultery must confess to be cleansed to avert death as the ultimate wage. Discriminatory as this practice may be, because it does not apply to men, it is upheld with all the seriousness it deserves. Similar findings have been reported in the literature. For example, Dery, (2015) reported that



in Nandom, bride price curtails women from adultery while Doodoo et al, (2014) claim it grants exclusive sexual rights to husbands.

Bride price was described as a tradition of marital exchanges between the bride's family and the groom's family. Dery, (2015) asserts it is deeply rooted that, even those affected by its implications do not support its abolishment. Its payment is so cherished by society to the extent that any marriage that fails to fulfil it, is considered illegitimate. The findings of this work captured numerous reasons by participants for which bride price is socio-economically important in the study areas.

Ownership of children is wealth and source of farm labour and bride price payments grant husbands the right to own the children of their union. A female divorcee in Motori Community indicated that; *“Among the Dagaaba if you have a child with a man [after he paid bride price] the child belongs to the man” (Divorcee, IDI)*. A man who engages in extramarital affairs with a married woman is considered a “thief” and has no ownership rights of the product or children that may come as a result of such intercourse. *In the past, even if you wouldn't pay at all a cock, a male goat and six (6) fowls' payments will guarantee a man's ownership of his children but failure to do so is the reason we have “Saayirbiiri” (children women return to their father's homes with). So, in the absence of the cock and a male goat the children are not yours as a man (FGD, February 1, 2020)*. It's used to pacify the gods and ancestors to ensure the brides are welcomed into the husband's family and enables the women to bear children successfully. In the absence of bride price payments, any child that is born by a woman belongs to their maternal home [Saar yir biere]. This situation can be likened to a goat an open range that returns home with pregnancy and eventually gives birth. The goat and the kids both belong to the owner. According to participants, bride price and ownership of children is a conflict zone that often induces friction between families



when husbands fail to pay bride price yet insist on owning children, they have biologically fathered. This position conforms to Ndoma, (2018) and Dodoo et al, (2014) as they posit that bride price makes husbands owners of children in marriages. This practice of men being considered as fathers or patriarchs is the crust of patriarchy as a theory. Women are classified as production materials or factors of production who only carry pregnancies for men. It results in the objectification of women and needless stereotyping as women are only treated as sex objects (Szymanski et al., 2011).

Additionally, it emerged that payments of bride price demonstrate a commitment on the part of the men to marry and ensure that men respect and value their wives. The ability of a man to pay the bride price of his children is viewed as an achievement and families that are wealthy even encourage their children to marry already married women caring less about the consequences of exorbitant charges that would be imposed. *“It’s an age-old thing and that shows commitment”* (Paramount chief, KII). According to Gaspart and Platteau, (2010), bride price is often made very high to demonstrate commitments from both sides to keep a marriage and particularly so for the bride not to ever contemplate paying the bride price back to free herself. This reduces marriage break-ups as brides’ parents have a responsibility to impress on their daughters to stay in their marriages even in difficult situations. However, Gray, (1960) claims that parents have no obligation in ensuring marriage stability. Bride price is a money-making venture and in-laws are under no obligation of paying back the bride price in the event of marriage failures (ibid). Adjei and Mpiani, (2018) argue that despite the latent effects of bride price payment and the negative stereotypes associated with it, it grants respect to womanhood and bestows dignity in marriages. This position is not different from the



information gathered for this study as respondents believe that bride price payments give women social recognition and acceptance among their peers.

Funerals are culturally important in the study areas. In order to have the right to carry out the funerals of wives, their bride price must be paid at least to an appreciable level that the brides' family will permit the performance of their funerals. Participants constructed that men who fail to pay the bride price of their wives do not own the women and by extension, their funerals but can plead with the brides' parents to have the funeral performed at their premises. It is, however, an embarrassment on the part of a husband to relinquish the dead body of his wife to in-laws to burry hence all families try to avoid such disgrace. It is not one-sided when men also die without paying the bride price of their wives, the women do not participate in the funeral fully as wives of such husbands do not wear 'ganaa' [a thread-like rope of a cow skin]. A clan head in Vieri community indicated that; *"The bride's family can stop or prevent the husband from taking the funeral of his deceased wife if the man fails to pay the bride price"*

(Clan head, IDI)

Another respondent, a widow from Vieri narrated that; *"I wouldn't have worn the "ganaa" during his funeral. And once the bride price is also not paid the widow will not take part in the funeral rites of the deceased husband which are done after burial"*.

In literature, Abdul-Korah, (2014) succinctly espoused the significance of bride price and the consequences that could ensue if a man fails to pay the bride price before the death of his wife.

Brideprice has some extensional significance, redefining a range of social relations, rights and obligations. During funerals, for example, if a wife dies



without the payment of the brideprice, the husband's lineage cannot exercise its otherwise absolute rights over the body and funeral unless quick arrangements are made for such a settlement. Further, if a wife divorces the husband and dies unmarried, it is the sole responsibility of the former husband's lineage to bury her and perform the funeral (AbdulKorah, 2014).

Moreover, bride price payment validates marriages and makes them recognized by society. It is a cherished tradition that any person that goes against it is frowned at. Married women are glad when their husbands pay their bride price because that improves their social capital among their colleague women and takes away the stigma of being pointed at in public as the woman that is cohabitating with a man. *"Without paying bride price society will say you are not yet married"* (FGD, January 31, 2020). Kpiebaya, (1991) and Abdul-Korah, (2014) posit that the most revered practice of the Dagaaba marriage is the payment of bride price and its fulfilment brings recognition to the union and makes it legal per the dictates of society and custom. Society abhors immorality and marriages that are consummated without the payments of bride price are considered illegitimate and an antisocial behaviour to engage in. MUFUMI, (2013) and CEDAW, (2014) posit that bride price is paid to appreciate, validate and ensure respect for the wives.

Also, respondents intimated that payments of bride price grant families the chance to also demand bride price when they have daughters out of the union ensuring fairness and justice. Men who fail to pay the bride price of their wives are culturally barred from demanding bride price if their daughters also marry. In such circumstances, the bride's parents are rather entitled to the bride price. It becomes a disgrace to bring up a child and will not be entitled to her bride price hence the need to often pay to avoid embarrassments. Another way out in such cases is for husbands who have failed to pay



bride price of their wives to now go and pay before also demanding the bride price of their daughters.

“It’s relevant because my husband paid bride price when we got married so if he has a daughter, it’s a must for him to get his property back” (FGD, February 1, 2020).

One would think that women should be objecting to the payment of bride price considering the negative reportage that its perpetuation has received and continue to receive as well as lamentations from female participants in this study about the excesses of it. But women have rather rejected suggestions in that regards claiming it is a tradition that has been left behind by their forbears and must not be abolished.

“The only thing that can happen is a reduction of the bride price, but stopping it would not work. Part is used to pacify the ancestors to help the woman bear children successfully so to suggest a stop in the payment of bride price is bad” (Widow at Sanuori).

Adjei and Mpiani, (2018) have intimated that the payment of bride price has unintended negatives but is perpetuated to sustain the masculine identity of men that has been culturally assumed.

4.5.2 Economic importance of bride price payments

Jointly, bride price is used to compensate and appreciate the effort of the bride’s family in bringing her up. The bride’s family gets farm labour from the groom or his family for years in supporting the bride’s father to take care of the bride’s mother. The farm labour contribution is however not time fixed. While some in-laws would seek it for as long as ten years particularly among the Birifor, others could stop after the third year especially among the non- Birifor. A widow from Kakalapari indicated that; *“It is the farm labour the in-laws or bride’s families are always interested in and thus part of the*





benefits of giving birth to female children” (Widow, IDI). Similarly, Dery, (2016) reported that farm labour is part of bride price payments in Nandom in addition to the money/cowries and animals that are presented in validating a marriage. A very fundamental reason for the collection of bride price is also the fact that the bride price of women is used to pay that of their brothers. It is often the responsibility of every man to pay the bride price of his children; at least their first wives and so men rely on the bride price of their daughters to pay that of their sons. It then implies that men who give birth to only boys have a herculean task of working hard to pay the bride price of their sons. But if fathers are financially challenged, the sons are obliged to provide resources for their fathers to then pay their bride price for them. Among the Birifor, the maternal uncles who are always entitled to a share of their sisters’ children bride price are required to help pay the bride price of their sisters’ sons. Gray, (1960) once again reported that among the Sonjo people, a double descent group just like the Birifor, uncles contribute to support the payment of bride price of their sisters’ sons. Anderson, (2007) and Gaspart and Platteau, (2010) reported alike findings in examining bride price. The opportunity for men to inherit women or their wives emanates from the payment of bride price.

It grants husbands the right to own and inherit the property of their wives according to custom. As indicated before the payment of bride price puts women in a fist such that even when there is a divorce without a return of the bride price, the divorcee still belongs to the husband and all material property that she acquires belong to the husband. The same applies to widows who decide not levirate but to stay away without a refund of the bride price. But it serves as a source of income for the bride to acquire

her utensils out of a token that may be given to the bride's mother. The Paramount Chief in Dorimon reported that:

“When you marry as a man you pay the bride price and when you pay the bride price, she becomes part of the man's family. you can inherit a woman if she has animals, if she has buildings, maybe a vehicle you can inherit her. That's why you have paid her bride price” (Paramount chief, KII).

Wendo, (2004), Kpieta and Bonye, (2012) and Pemunta, (2017) claim bride price commoditizes women making them the property of their husbands. Feminists have radically rejected such propositions but admit there is an exploitation of women in a society that subordinates women creating economic, social and cultural disparities. Huntingford, (1953) contradicts this position as he indicated that bride price payments are done for women but these do not commodify women. There are certainly germane reasons for the payment of bride price such as to compensate the bride's family for losing an extra hand on the farm. However, the unintended outcomes of this act cannot be underestimated when it comes to the subordination role it plays in the masculine and feminine discourse.

Additionally, respondents intimated that bride price serves as security/collateral for the bride's family and is later used to pay school fees or hospital bills when family members fall ill at a time other sources of money are not readily available.

“Once I get it, it becomes property and family security. The children that I have given birth to when they marry then I will pay. Now, education too is here. When I send my child to school and there are fees or bills then I will sell one of the cattle to settle it” (FGD, February 1, 2020). This finding, however, contradicts the widely held view that bride price is a major cause of forced or early marriages resulting in school drop-out.



For example, Care International, (2014) held what was described as Girl Summit in London with the sole aim of formulating strategies to reduce Child, Early and force marriages. Bride price was noted as a push factor that makes parents send their daughters out just to have money. MUFUMI and CREAM (2010) reported similar findings in the case of Uganda.

Notwithstanding the positive side of bride price payments, female participants equally lamented that men upon the payment of bride price own their wives but disagreed strongly that payment of bride price is equated to bride purchase. In a women's FGD in Sanuori, the group reported that; *"He owns you. If you can pay back the bride price that he paid then you will be free to own property"* (FGD, January 30, 2020).

Additionally, a widow from Vieri narrated that:

If my husband had not paid my bride price, I would have gone to my father's house to sit once he is late but with bride price paid, we have simply been caged. Because when your bride price is paid you belong to your husband and he owns you and you have nowhere to go even when your husband dies and the lezara [cowries given to a widow to signal a marriage proposal] is not given to you, you still cannot move away (Widow, IDI).

This is the crux of the matter as far as the payment of bride price and women's access to and ownership of land is concerned. Even though participants rejected vehemently every suggestion that bride price denies women ownership of land, they attributed the inability of women to own land to the inheritance system and the spiritualities that come with bride price payments and land ownership. It is, however, trite knowledge that once the bride price commodifies women, property certainly cannot own property (Kpieta & Bonye, 2012; Pemunta, 2017). Dery, (2015) reported that the payment of bride price



makes men have excessive power and authority over women. The payment of bride price as elucidated by Walby (1990) in theorizing patriarchy creates a social web that makes women subordinates and followers while men remain leaders. This power gap makes women subordinates (Ngomane, 2016) and vulnerable.

It further creates economic inequality by perpetuating gender discrimination and stereotypes. Women have access to their husbands' lands but without security of tenure. A male participant who is an extension officer reported that;

Women don't have access to secured land because at any point in time because of divorce issues if you marry someone what is the guarantee that the person will be with you forever? Marital status is a factor as to whether you have land or not. So, when you remain married you have access and you divorce and that ends it. The women cannot have access to the land again and you cannot come back to that land again, and you cannot come back to the house to say you are coming to farm on that land again. Certainly, the men cannot sell the land and the women too cannot sell it. If you understand it that way fine but you see when the land is transferred to the man, he has temporary ownership of it (Male participant, KII).

The above statement gives credence to the work of earlier researchers (Bonye & Kpieta, 2012; Dery, 2016; Pemunta, 2017; Rao, 2018).

Another concern regarding payments of bride price is that, produce from the farms of women are still under the control of men [their husbands] such that women are required to seek permission before selling anything of theirs and failure to do so could result in death. Husbands who feel threatened by the economic progress of their wives simply pick quarrels with their wives and eventually deny them an opportunity to sell.



The men say they have married the women, the women are staying in the houses of the men and the men have more importantly paid the bride prices of the women so when the women have property it belongs to the husbands and if a woman resists that the men can curse you by way of their utterances. The fear of the repercussions is what makes us succumb to these customs so the men have to take some of the produce we women get to make it safe for sale or consumption (Female participant, IDI).

This conclusion makes the theoretical arguments advanced by liberal feminists succinct and liberating. Theoretical perspectives or strands from liberal and socialist feminists advocate economic, social and political equality between men and women and that resources [agricultural land] should be accessible to all without cultural and social hurdles that discriminate, exploit and subordinate women to the advantage of men (Asen, 2017; Samkange, 2015).



CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter brings to an end the study on the implications of the payment of bride price on women's access and ownership of land in the Wa West District. This section involves the summaries of major findings, conclusions based on the findings established and recommendations as well as limitations and future studies.

5.2 Summaries of major findings

Bride price is an old age tradition that is cherished by the people that practice it across the globe and the same exists in the Wa West district. It is however not uniformed but varies from family to family, clan to clan and state to state. Though its implications are similar such as; to validate marriages, compensate the bride's family, serving as security or collateral, grants men the opportunity to own and inherit their wives and own children that may come out of the unions amongst others. The revelation in this study was that bride price is now under pressure and with changes that are new to the original practice. For instance, among the non-Birifor in the past bride price was not increased arbitrarily as is done today. Today, fathers are ready to collect money without recourse to the amount they paid when they married their wives which is eerie. The Birifor on the other hand, however, claimed bride price is now cheap especially as girls are not betrothed at age eight which will require potential husbands to contribute farm labour for at least ten years by which time the girl would have grown enough before the marriage could then take place and the animals as well as cowries will then follow. This work found that bride price makes women property of their husbands and denies them the right to own property but argues strongly that there is no direct relationship between



bride price and women's inability to own land. However, women have access to land even when they are not married but security of access is better guaranteed when the marital status of a woman is validated by the payments of bride price and further strengthened if there are children in the marriage particularly male children. So, while there is a relationship between bride price and women's access to land, there is however no direct relationship between bride price payments and women's ownership of land.

Additionally, women's land access and ownership are governed by traditions that are patriarchal and male-dominated with women playing a subordinating role. Women access land through men but largely via their husbands. Women who are unable to access land directly from their husbands may access land from the Tendana (landlord) but the negotiations are led by their husbands or a male. When women go before the Tendana alone, there is a high possibility of them being denied access to the land. But the same kola which is now monetized and is required when men are seeking land is what women are asked to provide when they also seek land and that ensures some equity. Marriage is a major factor regulating women's access to land and widows are encouraged to remarry in the family or lineage to continue to have access to their late husbands' land and when they do resist levirate, access to land could be denied. The commonest mode of land acquisition per this study is via inheritance. Unfortunately, the inheritance system is patrilineal and that has relegated women to the background with a cumulative effect of women having to economically depend on men. Per traditions, women, whether married or not do not have the right to own land hence the inheritance system and the customs such as sacrifices to the Tengani [earth god] associated with land ownership are deemed to have given women a technical know-out in land ownership discourse. As intimated earlier, land ownership requires sacrifices intermittently and women are barred from carrying out such spiritual activities. Land is



viewed as a spiritual entity [Tengani] and the only time women get near the Tengani zu [earth gods] is when there is a misfortune and community members are asked to swear by the Tengani to prove their innocence. Also, women have the option of buying land if they have the pecuniary muscles but this is not known to the women as they expressed dismay about the existence of such laws. The question that lingers, however, is how many women can buy the lands? Land control and management decisions are therefore made at the community levels by the Tendana and in the case of Vieri the chief or both depending on the impact of such decisions. At the family levels, however, clan heads or family heads in the community take absolute control of land management and distribution to their members and it is also their responsibility to resolve land disputes when they do arise at the family levels. This reaffirms the long-held notion that society is discriminatory against women in resource distribution resulting in their economic exploitation.

Moreover, the payment of bride price has gender implications for women's access and ownership of land. It emerged that bride price once paid grants men the right to own their wives. But bride purchase was however rejected with emphasis. The notion or motive for bride price's existence was largely to compensate for the loss of an extra hand in terms of farm labour and to validate marriage per societal standards. Women as acquired assets are perceived as subordinates or complements to men and virtually labour force for men in addition to the "childbearing machine role". Women who venture into agriculture do it on small scale just for subsistence and ownership of women farm produce is in the hands of men. Women are at liberty to consume what they cultivate but will have to seek permission from their husbands before their produce can be taken to the market. Husbands who feel threatened by the economic progress of their wives deny them permission to sell particularly when husbands disagree with the





investment plans of their wives. It's however refreshing to note that women farmer groups that cultivate very often with support from NGOs in agriculture have absolute control and ownership of their farm produce. Wives at the family or individual levels, apart from being treated as assets and denied complete ownership of their produce, are also forbidden from cultivating some crops such as guinea corn and beans. These crops which are a preserve of men are not cultivated by women and even when widows do cultivate them, the widows cannot sell them without the permission of their late husbands' brothers. Economic trees are equally under the control of men, particularly among the Birifor. Shea nuts within cultivated land, in Sanuori and Kakalapari belong to men while that of uncultivated land belongs to the women but this is contrary to what happens in the non- Birifor communities as shea nuts are entirely the property of women and are used to complement the food supply at home. These stereotyping and objectification tendencies orchestrated by patriarchal structures have put women in an economic fist as men control women autonomy clandestinely in the name of preserving traditions and customs. The study further revealed there are discriminations and inequality between men and women but male participants argued that discriminations and inequalities have been with society for ages and are generational. Women who try to challenge the status quo are described as insubordinate and disrespectful forcing them to quell.

Finally, the continuous existence of bride price is because of its socio-economic importance. This study revealed reasons for the continued patronage of bride price though with reservations.

Socially, bride price grants husbands' exclusive sexual rights to their wives; provides husbands with the opportunity to demand adultery fees from men that sleep with their wives; part is used for the pacification of the gods to grant the brides fruitful wombs

and grants men ownership rights of children that come in the marriages. Also, bride price validates marriages and makes them recognized by the society; grants men the right to perform the funerals of their wives and enables women to take part in the funeral rites of their husbands. The study also established that bride price makes men respect and value their wives; grants families the chance to also demand bride price when they have daughters out of the union ensuring fairness and justice; demonstrates a commitment on the part of the men to marry and it is a tradition that should be preserved

Economically, bride price is used to compensate and appreciate the efforts of the bride's family in bringing her up; the bride's family gets farm labour from the groom or his family for years which is the husbands' contribution in supporting the brides' fathers to cater for their wives; it is used to pay the bride price of the brides' brothers and it's used to pay school fees. Also, it serves as security/collateral for the bride's family; grants husbands the right to own and inherit the property of their wives and serves as a source of income for the bride to acquire her utensils. Despite these reasons which have been espoused to justify the need to maintain bride price, this work revealed that by implication bride price has caged women, made them labourers of their husbands and held them hostage to the whims and caprices of their husbands. Women, even though are not consulted on decisions regarding the payment of their bride price and its disbursement or utilization, bear the consequences that ensue from its execution.

5.3 Conclusions

This study examined the implications of bride price payments on women's access and ownership of land in the Wa West District. Bride price as a cultural practice has reinforced the patriarchal tendencies that exist in society. Bride price is an old age



practice that is not ending any moment and is cherished but perpetuated with reservations especially among women. The concept of bride price is now revolving as there are alterations to its tenets and meaning as a result of economic and social transformations and demands present in society. Bride price commoditizes women and consequently denies women the right to own property and, in this case, reinforces the agnatic exigencies of society resulting in challenges or barriers of women's land ownership.

Though access to land is not a challenge, the security of access is hinged on women's marital statuses and their relationships with other male family members. Hence the insecurity in access serves as a disincentive for women to do long term investment; rather, women are engaged in subsistence agriculture. Traditions surrounding land access and ownership are unfavourable to women and are simply discriminatory. The patrilineal inheritance system already discriminates against women which are buttressed by the payments of bride price. Land acquisition, ownership or management and control decisions are all made by men attenuating women to the background in land discourse. These revelations demonstrate that women are in a fist when it comes to their autonomy and the chance to participatory create their conditions of living is truncated by male dominance. Bride price simply disempowers women by making them dependent on men economically, socially, politically and culturally. To this end, the long-term development of rural women is curtailed because their sole occupation which is agriculture is under the whims and caprices of their husbands since land, their primary resource and source of survival is abundantly scarce in the economic progress of women. Also, crops such as guinea corn and beans are considered sacred and their cultivation a preserve of men such. This believe system is equally inimical to the forward march of women emancipation especially as rural women do not have the



opportunity to change land at will to allow for fallowing. This in effect denies women the opportunity to do crop rotation or chance to cultivate crops that suit the soil. It however emerged that women have complete ownership of their farm produce when the cultivation is done in a group which is very often sponsored by NGOs.

Finally, bride price is valued and strongly embedded in the lives of the people and will take conscious and all-encompassing efforts to reform it. Its implications are enormous and grievous to the socio-economic development of women for the reason that the economic benefits of bride price which are currently driving its existence deviate from the original tenets of bride price perpetuated by the forebears of the current generations.

5.4 Recommendations

Women's access to land and ability to own it have a great positive impact on local, national and global economies especially in the areas of food security and poverty reduction. The SDGs, particularly on gender equality will be a mirage if women continue to stay in the cultural web predetermined by patriarchal norms and values. Therefore, there is a need for local authorities and women's rights organizations to consciously transform bride price and the inheritance system to make them progressive and development-oriented. This transformation process must actively involve the custodians of the customs such as chiefs and Tendamba (landlords) to lead the chart for society to benefit from the developments that women empowerments come with. Cultures vary and so any attempt to make such transformation a national agenda will fail because there is no fit for all solution to the problem of gender discrimination and women exploitations.

Secondly, chiefs and other opinion leaders like the assemblymen must educate men to understand that women economic independence is a win for every family and will



improve the living conditions of society in general. This education, if properly done will reduce the perceptions men have about women as their acquired assets who must be exploited at the detriment of entire families and society in general.

Additionally, traditions like the offering of sacrifices to the Tengani [earth gods] associated with land ownership are retrogressive in the current development challenges that women are confronted with hence there must be an engagement with the Tendamba [Landlords] to let them appreciate the developmental role women have in society such that cultural impediments could be taken out to at least make it easy for women who have the financial ability to acquire land without necessarily seeking the services of a man.

Fourthly, group farming should be encouraged by the District Assembly and NGOs in agriculture such that women may have control over their farm produce. To achieve this government and NGOs in agriculture should help women in agriculture in groups with inputs like certified seeds and fertilizer rather than individuals.

Furthermore, to overcome the challenges women encounter in accessing land and its attendant tenancy security issues, this study recommends that the district assembly should acquire lands in the district for the state and release or allocate them to women farmers who are ready to get into long term investment in the agricultural sector. This certainly will ensure some stability in women's investment decision-making, grant women more control over their produce and encourage group farming which is always supported by NGOs in agriculture.

In instances where laws and policies must be made at the National level, the study recommends that the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection must consult



extensively to make the policies realistic and enforceable. Making laws or policies without the target beneficiaries' input makes implementation problematic and unsustainable.

Finally, the study recommends that local legislation and sensitization be done on the inheritance system to allow for women participation in land management decisions making. Civil Society Organizations, Custodians of the customs like chiefs and the District Assembly must collaborate to get refined solutions rather than a national approach which may not cater for the needs of Wa West women as a result of the vast diversity in cultural practices that exist in Ghana. With this done, women may find their voice and also contribute economically to the development of the district and Ghana at large in the areas of food security and poverty reduction.

5.5 Limitations and future research

The study design utilized a qualitative approach in gathering data with case study strategy. With this, sampling was hinged on sample saturation. Therefore, the scope of the study was limited since a small sample size was required. Generalization of study findings is hence restricted. Also, during community entry, more people were recruited or contacted to take part in the study hoping that some potential participants may not turn up. Unfortunately, this did not happen and who to exclude from the study or interviews became a challenge as more people were willing to participate in the study even at the point of saturation. Thirdly, measuring the relationships between bride price women's access to and ownership of land could be alternatively or quantitatively measured. For future studies, it is recommended that a mixed-methods approach be used to cover a larger scope and sample. This will allow for more perspectives and consequent generalization of the findings.



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APPENDICES

BRIDE PRICE SYSTEM IN WA WEST: IMPLICATIONS FOR WOMEN'S ACCESS AND OWNERSHIP TO LAND IN THE WA WEST DISTRICT. CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Identification of Investigators & Purpose of Study

You are being asked to participate in a research study conducted by *David Wuollah-Dire* from University for Development Studies Wa Campus. I am pursuing a MPHIL in Development Management. The purpose of this study is to examine the implications of Bride Price system in Ghana with a special focus in Wa West on women's access and ownership of land. This study is for academic reasons.

Research Procedures

Please note that once you agree to take part in this research, you will be asked to sign this consent form after all your questions have been answered to your satisfaction. This study consists of Focus Group Discussion and Key Informant Interview questions that will be administered to both groups and individual participants at locations that are conducive. You will be required to respond to a number of questions related to Bride Price payments and its implications if any to women's access and ownership of land. Please note that our interactions will be audio and video recorded for later analysis.

Time Required

Participation in this study will take about 60 minutes of your time. Risks

Your involvement in this study does not have any direct risk except the information you provide during the interaction which researcher will ensure your identity is kept anonymous.

Benefits

Potential benefits from participation in this study include reforms that could be generated and implemented by the local government to empower women regarding property



ownership. Participants could also get exposure to speak up about ills that happen in society.

Confidentiality

The results of this research will be presented at the school level and possibly at conferences. The results of this project will be coded using pseudonym to ensure that respondents' identities will not be attached to the final form of this study. The researcher retains the right to use and publish non-identifiable data. While individual responses are confidential, aggregate data will be presented in the form of a report and may be published. All data will be stored in a secure location accessible only to the researcher and supervisor. Upon completion of the study, all information that matches up individual respondents with their answers and the recordings will be discarded.

Participation & Withdrawal

Your participation is entirely voluntary. You are free to choose not to participate. Should you choose to participate, you can withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind.

Questions about the Study

If you have questions or concerns during the time of your participation in this study, or after its completion or you would like to receive a copy of the final aggregate results of this study, please contact me via: 0243814195/0202954181 or Email: wuollahdire5@gmail.com

Giving of Consent

I have read this consent form or it has been explained to me and I understand what is being requested of me as a participant in this study. I freely consent to participate. I have been given satisfactory answers to my questions. The investigator provided me with a copy of this form. I certify that I am at least 18 years of age

I give consent to be audio and video recorded during my interview



Name of Researcher (Signed)

Date

UNIVERSITY FOR DEVELOPMENT STUDIES



FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE



FGD questions	Research objectives
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What is your understanding of bride price? 2. What constitutes bride price? 3. How important is land to you? 4. How related do you think bride price is to women land acquisition? 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. explore the relationship between bride price and women access and ownership of land in the Wa West district
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. Why do people pay bride price? 6. Who benefits when bride price is paid? 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. examine the socio-economic importance of bride price and their implications for women's access and ownership of land in the Wa West district
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. How do people acquire land in this community? 4. How different is the process of land acquisition when women ask for land? 5. How is land managed in this community? 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. assess the customary norms and practices governing women's access and ownership of land in the Wa West district
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. How accessible is land to women? 5. Do women have rights to land ownership? Why? 6. What is the contribution of women in ensuring food security at the family level? 7. What can be done to ensure equality between men and 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. analyze gender perceptions of women's access and ownership of land in the Wa West district

<p>women regarding access and ownership of land?</p> <p>8. What suggestions/opinions do you have regarding the payment of bride price, women's access to land and ownership of land</p>	
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IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR CHIEFS AND TENDAMBA

Questions	Research objectives
<p>1. What is your understanding of bride price?</p> <p>2. What constitutes bride price?</p> <p>3. How important is land to you and the entire community?</p> <p>4. Bride price payment is a major reason why women do not have land ownership rights. To what extent do you agree to this assertion?</p>	<p>1. explore the relationship between bride price and women access and ownership of land in the Wa West district.</p>
<p>5. Why do people demand and pay bride price?</p>	<p>2. examine the socio-economic importance of bride price and their implications for women's access and ownership of land in the Wa West district</p>
<p>6. How is land managed and distributed in this community?</p> <p>7. How do people acquire land in this community?</p> <p>8. What traditions govern land access in this community?</p> <p>9. What traditions exist in this community regarding women ownership of land?</p> <p>10. By what means do people acquire land in this community?</p>	<p>3. assess the customary norms and practices governing women's access and ownership of land in the Wa West district</p>
<p>11. How accessible is land to women in this community?</p> <p>12. Do women own land in this community? Why?</p>	<p>4. analyze gender perceptions of women's access and ownership of land in the Wa West district</p>





<p>13. How different is the process of land acquisition when women ask for land?</p> <p>14. Land control and management decisions are often made without the involvement of women. What is your reaction to this?</p> <p>15. Who controls the distribution of land at the family level?</p> <p>16. Who controls the distribution of land in this community?</p> <p>17. How are land disputes resolved in your community?</p> <p>18. What suggestions/opinions do you have regarding the payment of bride price, women's access and ownership of land?</p>	
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In-depth interview guide for divorcees and widows

Questions	Research objectives
<p>1. What is your understanding of bride price?</p> <p>2. What forms bride price?</p>	<p>1. explore the relationship between bride price and women access and ownership of land in the Wa West district</p>
<p>3. How relevant is bride price in this community?</p> <p>4. What benefits do women get from bride price payments?</p>	<p>2. examine the socio-economic importance of bride price and their implications for women's access and ownership of land in the Wa West district</p>
<p>3. In this community do women in your situation get the opportunity to inherit their husbands' property including land? Why?</p> <p>4. Divorced/widowed women are not guaranteed any right to land in the marital home. What is your opinion?</p> <p>5. Would the story had been different if your husband did not pay your bride price? How?</p> <p>6. What traditions regulate women's access to land?</p>	<p>3. assess the traditions governing women's access and ownership of land in the Wa West district</p>
<p>4. How relevant is land to you?</p> <p>5. How do people perceive women ownership of land in this community?</p>	<p>4. analyze gender perceptions of women's access and ownership of land in the Wa West district</p>



<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6. Before your marriage came to its present state did you have access to land? What has changed? 7. What do you think you can do to own land? 8. What can be done to ensure that there is no discrimination between men and women regarding access and ownership of land? 9. There is a good legal regime in Ghana that caters for the needs of women in your situation regarding challenges in accessing or ownership of land. What is your opinion on this assertion? 10. What suggestions/opinions do you have regarding the payment of bride price, women's access and ownership of land? 	
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In-depth interview guide for extension officer

Questions	Research objectives
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What is bride price? 2. There is a good legal regime in Ghana that caters for the needs of women when it comes to land access and ownership. What is your opinion on this assertion? 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. explore the relationship between bride price and women access and ownership of land in the Wa West district
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Why the demand and payment of bride price? 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. examine the socio-economic importance of bride price and their implications for women's access and ownership of land in the Wa West district
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Bride price payment is a major reason why women do not have land ownership rights. What is your reaction to this statement? 5. What traditions curtail women land access in Wa West? 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. assess the traditions governing women's access and ownership of land in the Wa West district



<p>6. From your experience how do you describe traditions governing women ownership of land in Wa West District?</p> <p>7. Who controls the distribution or allocation of land in the district at family level?</p> <p>8. Who manages land in the district?</p> <p>9. Women are not the owners of their farm produce. How do you react to this statement?</p>	
<p>10. How secured can you say land is in the hands of women?</p> <p>11. How are women perceived to be when they acquire or try to acquire land?</p> <p>12. Which group of people request your services more?</p> <p>13. How do women's access the extension services as compared to men?</p> <p>14. How significant is the contribution of women to food security</p> <p>15. What suggestions/opinions do you have regarding the payment of bride price, women's access and ownership of land?</p> <p>16. What role can land play in ensuring women economic independence?</p>	<p>4.analyze gender perceptions of women's access and ownership of land in the Wa West district</p>

KII for Gender Desk officer at the district Assembly, Wechiau

Questions	Research objectives
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What is your understanding of bride price? 2. What bearing does bride price have on women land access? 3. How relevant is land to women in Wa West? 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. explore the relationship between bride price and women access and ownership of land in the Wa West district
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. How helpful will you say the practice of bride price system is particularly to women in the district? 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. examine the socio-economic importance of bride price and their implications for women's access and ownership of land in the Wa West district
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. What customs exist in the district that curtail women land access? 5. By what means can women own land in the district? 6. "Women are property of their husbands and property cannot owe property". What is your reaction? 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. assess the customary norms and practices governing women's access and ownership of land in the Wa West district
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 7. Divorced/widowed women are not guaranteed any right to land in the marital home. What is your opinion? 8. How easy is it for women to get land in the district for farming? 9. By what means can there be equality between men and women regarding land access and ownership in the district 10. . The legal system in Ghana is balanced enough to cater for women land access and ownership needs. What is your opinion? 11. How can women in this district gain economic independence? 12. If you have the opportunity to make a recommendation on bride price payment in Wa West to ensure women have economic independence what will it be? 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. analyze gender perceptions of women's access and ownership of land in the Wa West district



KII for clan heads and household heads

Questions	Research objective
1. What is bride price? 2. How related is bride price and women inabilities to own land?	1. explore the relationship between bride price and women access and ownership of land in the Wa West district
3. Why do parents demand bride price in marriages? 4. How relevant is bride price system?	2. examine the socio-economic importance of bride price and their implications for women's access and ownership of land in the Wa West district
4. What is the process of acquiring land in the community? 5. Who is in charge of land management in your family? 6. How do you allocate land in the family? 7. How different is the process of acquiring land when women are involved?	3 assess the customary norms and practices governing women's access and ownership of land in the Wa West district
8. By what means can women acquire land in the family? 9. Women are property of their husbands and do not have the right to own land. What is your opinion? 10. How are disputes relating to land resolved in the family?	4.analyze gender perceptions of women's access and ownership of land in the Wa West district



KII GUIDE FOR ASSEMBLY MEMBERS

Questions	Research objectives
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What is your understanding of bride price? 2. How related is bride price to women land ownership? 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. explore the relationship between bride price and women access and ownership of land in the Wa West district
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. How important is bride price in your electoral area? 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. examine the socio-economic importance of bride price and their implications for women’s access and ownership of land in the Wa West district
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. How is land managed and controlled in your electoral area? 5. What roles do women play in land allocation and distribution decision-making? 6. How do people acquire land in your electoral area? 7. How different is the process when women are involved? 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 8. assess the customary norms and practices governing women’s access and ownership of land in the Wa West district
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 9. Women are property of their husbands and do not have the right to own land. What is your opinion? 10. How secured is land in the hands of women? 10 . How are disputes relating to land resolved within your electoral area? 11. What is the contribution of women in ensuring food security? 12. If you have the chance to make reforms to the bride price system, what will be your recommendations? 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. analyze gender perceptions of women’s access and ownership of land in the Wa West district

