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Manifestations of Power and Marginality in Marriage Practices: A Qualitative Analysis of Sukuma Songs in Tanzania

By Esther Julius Masele¹ and Venkatachalam Lakshmanan²

Abstract

This study examined manifestations of power and marginality in Sukuma marriage practices. The study was conducted in Kishapu District, Tanzania. It drew its materials from Sukuma marriage rituals, which include singing and performance of songs. The study adopted an ethnographic research design and used both primary and secondary data to analyse the construction of gender roles in songs and societal views. The songs were observed at live performances, and data related to their composition, interpretation, and impact were gathered through interviews with the singers. Thematic Code Analysis was used to analyze the data, which were then interpreted based on poststructuralist theory. The results obtained showed that Sukuma marriage songs present and propagate imbalanced gender roles. It was further found that these songs impliedly bolster gender inequality leading to women's subordination and men's authority over women in Sukuma society.

Keywords: Power, Marginality, marriage songs, Tanzania, gender inequality, gender roles, Sukuma, Sukuma marriage, marriage rituals

Introduction

Power and Marginality in Marriage

Power and marginality in marriage practices are among the major factors of manifestation of gender inequality, which transpire as a result of authority culturally bestowed onto men in families. This form of inequality has triggered the desire, needs, and interest of a number of researchers around the world to investigate its source, nature, and effect. However, there is no single definition of marriage. This is due to the fact that people perceive the term marriage differently based on cultural, religious, and other personal factors. However, there are some definitions offered by scholars, which cut across borders and hence, are widely accepted in one way or another. For example, Gough (1975) defines marriage as a socially recognized, durable (although not necessarily life-long) relationship between men and women. Likewise, Titi (2019) defines marriage as a legally recognized relationship, established by a civil or religious ceremony, between two people who intend to live together as sexual and domestic partners. This relationship, according to Gough and Titi, unites the man and woman's lives legally economically and emotionally. Being married, as Henrich, Boyd and Richerson (2012) put it,

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involves economic, social and sexual expectations, prescriptions and prohibitions for both parties, who are accordingly evaluated by their community based on these norms.³

Although the description of marriage, as stated by Gough and Titi, implies the essential, progressive nature of marriage, studies by other scholars, show that the institution of marriage is facing many challenges as a result of unequal power relations between the sexes (Lowe and Nunn 2017; Titi; 2019 Shah; 2019) to mention just a few. While explaining about the nature of power and marginalization, the 18th century English women's rights advocate, Wollstonecraft (1992) argued that inequality of power in marriage is a consequence of early associations of ideas, which depicted women as defective in nature. Such ideas, as described by Wollstonecraft, are usually transmitted at different periods, grow in people's minds and exert great effects on the moral character of women. In addition, Seabright (2012) asserted that unequal balance of power and respect has resulted from the mixed inheritance conflicts left behind by the ancestors. Because of many assumptions on the existence of inequality between women and men in marriage, Silberschmidt (1999) confirms that marriage is an important determinant for the construction of gender identity and sexuality, in which gender ideology is produced, revised and reconstructed.

This is also obvious in the African context where researchers have long noted the grassroots level occurrence of gender inequality and its effect in marital relationships. Unequal power relations in marriage is observable in many African ethnic communities since the pre-colonial period where it had a great impact in the life of men and women in almost all aspects of life including economy, education and legal rights such as land ownership and inheritance law. In this pre-colonial period all these rights were available only to men. Such marginalization though typical of the pre-colonial period has had severe implication in current life and has been causing conflicts among married couples leading to crisis in marriages and marital relationship in general. A classic example is that of the Kisii society in Kenya whose patriarchy exercise during the pre-colonial period is found to impact relationships between the sexes in contemporary Kenya. While making an expository analysis of bride price syndrome and dominance in marriage in Nigeria Titi (2019) concluded that bride price has increasingly become a tool of oppression of married women and as such, a means of gender disparity in society. It has also become a severe syndrome that has brought about dominance of males (husbands) over the females (wives).

Apart from the realistic practices explained by the scholars, which have been mentioned here as perpetrators of inequality, there is also a substantial body of scholarship that addresses the distribution of power in various oral literature genres. The articulations of power in these oral art forms illustrate the intrinsic relationship between oral literature and power relations in a number of ways (Azuonye, 1995; Derive, 1995; Furniss, 1995; Johnson, 1995; Senkoro, 2005; Chandra, 2011). For instance, Furniss (1995) points out oral literature as a significant domain in which participants comment extensively upon power relations in society and thereby create and channelize the power structure of their choice in the target society. Evidently, power and marginality are being made use of in oral literature to explain and rationalize unequal relationships between the social groups and the social behaviour of that society. It should, therefore, be agreed that oral songs could be used effectively to illustrate power relations and exemplify the inner history of social relationship between individuals and groups within a society.

³ This paper considers heterosexual marriages focusing on power dynamics between men and women but recognizes the growing number of countries legalizing same-sex marriage.

Theoretical Background

There has been a significant number of research studies devoted to examining gender inequity in oral literary forms and contributing to understanding of gender relations in various communities. While these studies have been helpful in demonstrating that inequities continue to exist, most of them do not explain the deeper mechanisms that perpetuate the inequity. The authors of this paper are of the view that post-structuralist feminism would offer a useful framework for examining sources of power and marginalization as the paper draws attention to the complex relationship between knowledge, power, and gender. The theory recognizes that “power” is located in systems of shared meaning that reinforce mainstream ideas and silence alternatives (Fletcher, 1999). Additionally, it acknowledges that assumptions about gender are embedded within social relations in formal and informal practices, symbols, rituals, and social interactions (Kolb and McGinn (2009). The aim of post-structuralist feminism, therefore, is to question the accepted and traditional power structures by evaluating existing conventions; and also establishing contexts whereby individuals can draw upon other materials to produce new meanings and practices. In the present study, Sukuma marriage songs are analyzed in this perspective.

Methodology

This study employed ethnographic research design because of its emphasis on knowing things from those involved rather than explaining things from the outsider’s knowledge. It is a qualitative research, which aimed not only to collect and analyze Sukuma marriage songs, but also to understand and interpret Sukuma cultural life, particularly those associated with marriage practices. The major objective of this study was to examine the manifestation of power and marginality in the institution of marriage as expressed in the discourse of Sukuma songs. The study used in-depth interviews and direct observation to collect data. The informants were obtained through purposive and snowball sampling procedures. Overall, 20 songs were collected from 10 Sukuma singers and six songs were short-listed for analysis based on the suitability of the content. The data were analyzed through Thematic Code Analysis (TCA) as exemplified by Guest *et al* (1963) and the theoretical framework provided by Poststructuralist feminism.

Results and Discussion

Based on the findings of the study, this section critically discusses the role of Sukuma songs in manifesting power and marginality in marriage practices. Marriage, as observed by the Sukuma people, is not only crucial for social status, but also for building a respectable family. A man who has no wife is considered socially a failure in his life. The same applies to a woman who is not married. The Sukuma call such a woman *nshimbe*, ‘a woman belonging to nobody’. This woman has lesser or no respect compared to a married woman. Kabaji (2005), in his study ‘The Construction of Gender through the Narrative Process of the African Folktale’ propagates a similar view on the Maragoli folktales of Western Kenya and argues that an unmarried woman, who remains in her village of nativity, is a target of hostility even for her own brothers. Sukuma marriage songs describe such occasions to reflect on gender power relations. The theme and content of these songs expresses power and marginality through images and descriptions of gender roles as shown below.

Representation of Unequal Gender Role in Marriage

From the perspective of post-structuralism, Smith and Young, cited in Mascia-Lees and Black (2000), remark that discourse always marks the status and roles between the two sexes. It was observed that the discourse of Sukuma songs not only define but also emphasize gender role representation in the Sukuma society. Likewise, the songs highlight the existence of unequal gender roles between wives and husbands. Normally, these songs are directed to the bride who is going to be the wife explaining what she should or should not do in her married life. Such songs are commonly sung in one kind of Sukuma marriage known as *kwitanilwa*. According to field data, *kwitanilwa* is defined as the type of marriage, which follows all the formal processes of Sukuma marriage conventions such as paying bride wealth, which brings great respect to the girl's family and society in general. The event of the bride and groom to come together in *kwitanilwa* marriage is called *kufumanija* and always goes simultaneously with a big ceremony known as *Bhukombe*. One of the songs sung in this event is *Bhushauri*, as presented below.

BHUSHAURI

1. *Ishi watolwa mayu, jaga ukabheje kaya.*
2. *Nkima uyo alina ngoshi wakwe adebhe isheria ija hakaya yakwe.*
3. *Udizozunya kwenhelwa sheria ja kungi mayu*
4. *Udebhe iraha yangosha*
5. *Udime ililange lyakwe.*
6. *Udizuzunya bhushauri bhungi bhobhayaji bha mmakaya.*
7. *Ulu u ngoshi wako uli safari bhukaga maama u nsumbile.*
8. *Uluninga alinanigo gubhuchage ung'wanukule.*
9. *Ungwing'he minze gakoga oge, olekejaga witogwi mayu udizoninda wigashe.*
10. *Bhejaga kaya mayu iwelelo iligudi mungu uyo atayombaga.*
11. *Angu ulimfula noo ju ugambokele.*
12. *Galiho mambo gangi gagwiyongeja.*
13. *Uyo alibhona giki ukulile, wizuke i lilange linili.*

MY ADVICE

1. As you have already married, go and make a family.
2. A married woman must understand the norms of her family.
3. Don't be overtaken by the outsiders who may dictate terms to your family.
4. Know how to comfort your husband.
5. Follow what he teaches you.
6. Don't take others' advice, especially, those who visit others' homes.
7. If your husband is coming back home from a journey, go and hug him.
8. Help him with the luggage.
9. Put water in the bathroom for him, don't wait for him to come and sit, show your true love.
10. Keep your home! Because the world is like the gods who don't say a word.
11. If you have good behaviour go and hug your husband.
12. There are other things, which need experience.
13. Those who feel that they have grown enough should take this lesson.

Source: (Field data, 2015).

This song directs the bride on how she should serve her husband and live with him happily. The woman is advised to avoid friends who might mislead her. She is also instructed to care for her husband and follow the conventions of Sukuma family relations. This is an instance where the singers publicize gender inequity in their songs, which the post-structuralists call, “the categories of identity created by discourse.” This is because only women are taught the ways they should live in marriage and not men. This form of discourse sustains unequal power relations and circulates continuity of patterns of domination, which control people’s ideas and behaviour (Mascia-Lees and Black, 2000). This manifests the fact that discourse has the pragmatic function of channelizing intended actions (Mchoul and Rapley, 2001). It, thus, has the facility to change the attitudes and perceptions of a society.

Many concerns can be raised concerning the content of the song, such as why does the song not address anything to the groom who is going to be the husband? Does the absence imply that men do not have any role to play or nothing to learn in their married life? In the interview with one of the women singers it was said that women sing most of the wedding songs because it is the task of Sukuma women to welcome the new bride. When asked about the effect of the discourse she added that they are aware of the effect of the discourse of these songs in enhancing inequality; however, they cannot overcome the norms.

Expression of Power and Women’s Subordination

Apart from imparting gender roles, which typically exclude men, the discourse of Sukuma marriage songs favours women’s subordination, also been the subject matter of other studies. Paltridge (2006), for example, argues that language acts as a source of domination among the people, including men’s domination over women. The expression of women’s subordination in the Sukuma society is revealed in the process of fetching of bride wealth. When a man and a woman are united in marriage, the bride’s family arrange for a group of elders or young men to fetch bride wealth. This event in the Sukuma tradition is known as *kuswaga*. A song, which is sung when the bride’s family goes back to their home with the cattle acquired as her bride-wealth payment, is *Jamikila*, “Those with Tails”. In the interview it was reported that when the elders and the young men are going back home with the cattle, some women from the groom’s family escort them for a distance while singing and holding sticks in their hands pretending to take back their cattle. The payment of bride-wealth is also widespread in many parts of the world, based on custom, tradition, and religion. A potential husband, customarily with the support of his family, provides a significant amount of money or livestock or some highly valued goods to his prospective wife’s family before marriage (Titi, 2019). In some instances, paying bride-wealth is perceived as an exchange for the bride as expressed in verse one, of the song ‘If you really love your daughter, why are you selling her?’ Below is the song for consideration:

JA MIKILA

1. *Ulu mtogilwe ung'waniki wing'we ni bhuli g'wanjinja?*
2. *Eheee! Ng'wayega ishi dang'wing'ha ng'ombe.*
3. *Eheee! ng'wayega ishi dang'wing'ha ja mikila giti mbushi.*

THOSE WITH TAILS

1. If you really love your daughter, why are you selling her?
2. And, you are celebrating now because we gave you the cattle.
3. You are celebrating now because we gave you those with tails like the buffalo.

Source: (Field data, 2015).

Women from the groom's family sing this short song repeatedly on the day the representatives of bride's family visit the groom's house to claim the bride-wealth. The song addresses the representatives of the bride's family who are described as struggling to move with the cattle. In the song, the groom's side challenges the bride's side that they have sold their daughter, because they love cattle more than their daughter. The words "if you really love your daughter why are you selling her?" describe the subordinate position assigned to women within the community. Davies (1986), while commenting on such stereotypical representation of women as a thing or object, describes that a woman gets reduced to the status of an object or commodity whose value is negotiable with just a few heads of cattle. This notion of objectification of Sukuma women is emphasized further in the song when the bride's family is shown as happy and celebrating silently because they have been given the cattle.

The song *Ja mikila*, reflects the Sukuma cultural practice in which the cattle brought as bride-wealth by the girls through their marriage, are then going to be used when their brothers get married. The implication of the silence of the bride's family, despite the fact that they are being taunted, shows the subordinate position of women, which the women accept unwillingly. This silence is transmitted to the bride who has been brought up with this norm. Like her kinfolks who have maintained silence, she will also have to be silent in her marriage regardless of what her husband might say or do to her. The use of metaphoric terms that justifies men's power over women is also common in the discourse of Sukuma songs. The song below is a good example:

SUBHI YABHELA BHUGON'HO A LEOPARD HAS BROKEN THE BOUNDARY

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1. <i>Nulu mleke kuyegayega ise twansola u ng'wenga.</i> | 1. Even if you won't celebrate, we are taking a bride. |
| 2. <i>I subhi, yabhelile bhugongho ise twansola u ng'wenga.</i> | 2. A Leopard has broken your boundary, now we are taking a bride. |
| 3. <i>Ngwanike fulika a bhabhyi bhako yiiii bhakubyedile maaaa.</i> | 3. Calm down lady, as your parents do not love you. |
| 4. <i>Nulu Mleke kuyegayega ise twansola u ng'wenga.</i> | 4. Even if you won't celebrate, we are taking a bride. |

Source: (Field data, 2015).

This is a short song with certain words repeated many times during its singing. It is believed in Sukuma society that girls are raised protected within special boundaries by their parents. So, when a man has to take a girl in marriage, he has to break the boundary, which they call *bhugongho*. For a bride, leaving the family she grew up in, and entering a new and strange life, is something that likely worries her. She usually weeps as she leaves her parents. This is what is expressed in the song. The song is advising the bride to calm down, not because where she is going is a nice place, but because weeping will not help her as her parents, for their love of receiving bride-wealth, have given her away. The cultural practice of paying bride-wealth, which is sometimes referred as bride price, has been observed to cause poor treatment of wives in many communities. In their study 'Bride Price and Sexual Risk in Uganda', Bishai, *et al.*, (2009) argue that the way bride price is practiced ranges from a mainly ritualistic transfer of tokens of esteem to an outright purchase, in which the man reserves a right to ask for a refund from the woman's parents if he backs a claim that her behaviour is unsatisfactory. Therefore, the weeping of the bride in this song creates the paradoxical impression of whether the bride feels that she has been sold or if she foresees the difficulties she will face, with endurance. This implies that for the young woman who is given away, this is a painful experience; while, for the groom it is a happy event. In this song, men are portrayed metaphorically as leopards, signifying men's power in marriage. The content of this song clearly favours patriarchy. The power and marginalization expressed in the discourse of this song corresponds with the findings of many related studies, like that of Furnis and Gunner (1995) who studied Shona oral art forms of Zimbabwe and found that gender behavioural patterns embedded in Shona art forms urge women to conform to established roles and emphasize virtues such as docility, kindness and generosity.

Expression of Cultural Norms and Customs and their Influence on Power and Marginalization

Another theme found in the discourse of Sukuma marriage songs is about the presence of cultural norms and customs in traditional marriages, which seem to marginalize some social groups such as women and the low-income people in the community. Such songs question the norms and customs of paying cattle as bride wealth while most of the families own nothing in terms of cattle. The payment of bride price always makes a marriage to be legal and show the legitimacy of children, as bearing children out of wedlock especially in the African society is a

taboo (Titi, 2019). However, Bride wealth, which Schlegel (1993) defines as marriage ‘transaction’ given by the groom, is very significant in defining power relations. Like in other societies, this custom is in practice in the Sukuma, whereby gift of cattle as bride wealth is essentially integrated to marriage rituals. The number of cattle to be paid always depends on economy and time. In the past, the Sukuma paid a big number of cattle ranging from thirty to forty heads. Recently, the number of cattle paid as bride wealth is reduced and sometimes marriages happen without bride wealth, which, however, is very rare. When the Sukuma mention a marriage of a particular girl, they always make reference to the number of cattle the family received as bride wealth. Also, a woman who gets married with a good number of cattle always feels proud. This is evident in Samwel (2012) who argues that in Sukuma society women prefer to get married with a huge number of cattle and for them this is a sign of prestige. Normally, they tend to say “*Ngoshi wane wanikwa mitugo*” meaning that “my husband you paid a number of heads of cattle when marrying me”.

In the analysis of the discourse of Sukuma songs, it was found that this tradition has far reaching implications in marriage, gender relations in particular. One such implication is women’s lack of decision-making and freedom of choice in individual issues within the family and in the society at large, something that suggest differences in power relations among men and women in marriage. Another implication is that a woman is presented as an object that can be negotiated with. Also, in their marriage they become victims of bride wealth, which their husbands pay when marrying them. This is because when a man sees that the woman does not match his expectations such as inability to work hard or bear children, he has the right to take back the bride wealth he paid, which in Sukuma language they call *kujimula*. This is also seen in other studies including Lowes and Nunn 2017; Titi 2019; Shah and others. For example, Lowes and Nunn in their article ‘Bride Price and the Wellbeing of Women’ reports that husbands sometimes feel that they can mistreat their wives because they have paid for them, leaving women in marriages prone to physical violence and conflict.

Apart from enhancing women’s subordination, paying cattle as bride price is also observed to enhance difficulties to young men particularly those from poor families to fulfill it. Because of its complexity, this practice has nowadays come under criticism in the Sukuma community as a result both women and men sing the songs that laments about the obligation of using cattle as bride wealth. Given below is the song, which a man has the intent to replace maize and cassava as bride wealth instead of herds of cattle.

SANJI

1. *Sanji unin'he u nkima unene nagupe mandege.*
2. *Ing'ombe nadinajo ila ung'wana wako nantogilwe.*
3. *Solaga sanji nulu bhudaga I sabho nadinajo.*
4. *Izukaga sanji nu ng'habhi agutolaga.*
5. *Ahene nduhu u nkima o bhule i haha.*
6. *Ng'ombe makumi mpungati na upandike nkima.*
7. *Aliyo i haha mleduma ng'ombe itano du?*
8. *Bhayanda ng'wacha mdatolileee.*

MY IN-LAW

1. My in-law, give me a wife, and I will give you maize.
2. I love your daughter even though I don't have the cattle to pay you.
3. Take even the cassava flour because I don't have anything else.
4. My in-law, remember that even a poor man deserves a marriage.
5. There is no marriage if you don't have any cattle.
6. You are supposed to pay at least six heads of cattle.
7. But nowadays people fail to pay even five cows.
8. Young man, you are dying without getting married.

Source: (Field data, 2015).

Raising their voices against bride-wealth, the singers of the song *Sanji*, 'My in-law' ask, "Does it mean that young men from poor families do not deserve marriage? If they deserve, why should they pay only cattle as bride wealth?" These are few questions raised in the song, which reveals that bride-wealth affects not only women but also men who are unable to pay it in full.

Although bride-wealth for the Sukuma seems to be obligatory, sometimes marriage without paying it takes place, as is shown in the discourse of the song 'My in-law'. The marriage practice, which involves asking a groom to get a wife without paying cattle as bride wealth in the Sukuma is commonly known as *kulombelwa*, which means 'asking permission'. In this song a young man wants to get married through *kulombelwa* marriage process. Normally, in this marriage practice, a groom would ask his parents or the village elders, to go to the girl's parents to request their daughter to marry him, but in this song, the man who wants to be married, speaks directly to the girl's parents and expresses his wishes of exchanging the girl for cassava flour. The man uses polite language to the girl's father in order for his request to be granted. He is asking the girl's father (*sanji*) to take maize, cassava or millet flour, or even tomatoes as bride wealth in exchange for his girl. For the Sukuma, giving a girl to someone by exchanging her with such stuff is considered inferior and is an insult to the girl's family, as these do not match with the value of their daughter. Mascia-Lees and Black (2000) observe that post-structuralism looks at discourse as a system of knowledge that governs people's consciousness and attitudes. The persona in this song, accordingly, has gained knowledge that Sukuma marriage practices of late are supported by swapping of maize and millet flour for cattle wealth; hence, he makes this proposition in his song declaring his poverty. He ends by advising young men that there is no

marriage if you don't have any cattle. The verses express the difficulties modern young men face when they want to engage in marriage. The persona in the song expresses his discontent for this cultural practice, which seems to affect both men and women in the contemporary Sukuma society. The man is branded inferior because he has no cattle to pay as bride-wealth. At the end of the song, he admonishes and advises other young men to work hard: "Young men, you are dying without getting married".

This enforced cultural practice of paying cattle as bride-wealth has led to the introduction of another form of marriage among the Sukuma. Those young men, who have no cattle to pay as bride-wealth, decide to use *kupula* to get a wife. *Kupula* involves a young man and a young girl agreeing to marry without informing or seeking the consent of their families (elopement). This happens when the young man loves the girl, but he does not have the means to pay bride-wealth, when the bride-wealth is too high, or the girl's family objects to the marriage. The lovers then decide to elope. When the girl is missing from her home, her parents will begin to look for her. And, when they find the house where the girl is, they usually go to that house and take one cow as a fine, *mchenya*. Then, the girl's parents will either decide to take their daughter back home or leave her with that man. *Kupula* does not appeal to many parents, both men and women. Most Sukuma songs express discontent toward this form of marriage practices, unmindful of the reasons that such marriages occur. This is expressed in the following song with the title *Ukubyala Nakoya no* "I Had Hard Time Bearing Children":

UKUBYALA NAKOYA NO

1. *Unene ubhubhyile bhonikoya no.*
2. *Naliyomba ubhubhyile bhonikoya no.*
3. *Aho namyalaga u Restituta nagatandulwa.*
4. *Natalibha gete a makoye genayo.*
5. *Bhiza bhunsola u kitindamimba one.*
6. *U nene Sozi natalazunya, Naduhayaga bhajikwije i jikolo.*
7. *Ni hela natuhayaga nalihaya mang'ombe*
8. *Ulu giki baleme msole jakupulila.*
9. *Nu ng'wei mungweng'hanije.*

I HAD HARD TIME BEARING CHILDREN

1. I really had a hard time getting my children.
2. I tell you, I really had a hard time getting these children.
3. When I was giving birth to Restituta, I went through a Caesarian section.
4. I will never forget that hard time I went through.
5. And, now they have come to take my last born.
6. I, Sozi, will never allow this to happen.
7. I neither need many things, nor money, but only the cattle.
8. If they will refuse to pay the bride wealth, make sure you take the cattle as a penalty.
9. And, you must come with the girl back.

Source: (Field data, 2015).

In this song, the bride's mother is saying that she birthed one of her children by Caesarian section: "I really had a hard time getting my child." She pleads that taking such hard-born child away from her without her consent is objectionable. Obviously, the mother is telling the men to go and fetch bride-wealth for her daughter, which must be only in the form of cattle. If the man

who has taken her daughter has not enough cattle for bride wealth, the men must take at least a few of them as penalty and the girl must be brought back home.

It was also observed that some of the young men who abscond with the young women in this way do it only to satisfy their instantaneous ego. Later, they fail to manage and maintain the family because they lack serious marriage commitments. Moreover, such men do not start their family life until their parents allow them to be free to start their family life. The Sukuma call this act *kwizugiila*. The aim behind this is to make sure that a young man is mature enough to handle his own family. This is also the theme of the discourse of Sukuma songs. The song below speaks about the relationship between the couple and their respective parents before *kwizugiila*.

HESHIMA

1. *U bhebhe ulinkima wane, widebhe nu mayu wane.*
 2. *Shitawelwa mayu zugaga, nahangi walihya u nnomo.*
 3. *Kulwaki mayu ulilihya u nnomo ulu wawilagwa kuzuga nu mayu bhukwi.*
 4. *Degelekaga, mayombo mabhi nkima ne heshima itagulagwa ng'wi gulilu nulu ng'wi duka.*
- Source: (Field data, 2015)

OBEDIENCE

1. You are my wife, so you should respect my mother.
2. If you are told to cook, you should do it.
3. Why do you misbehave when your mother in-law wants you to prepare food?
4. Listen, there is no need for violence as it is not a good habit, respect cannot be bought in the marketplace or in the shop.

In this song, the persona is advising his wife on how she should behave with her mother in-law. He says, as the wife she must stay at home and do all the household chores. If she won't behave in such a way, she would be taken back to her parents so that she would learn how a good wife should behave. Lack of freedom to the wife, particularly economic freedom, normally, though not always, affects her, as she would always be inferior. Also, the woman is required to work very hard, even to the extent of exhaustion, in order to please her mother in-law; and she is expected to carry out all the intentions and instructions of both her husband and her mother in-law. In addition, the wife is also expected to respond quickly to everything she is told and to accept and cope with the lifestyle of her in-laws. If her in-laws see her working hard, they can appreciate her saying, *ng'winga nchaguku*, "the daughter-in-law is a hard worker." If she does not work hard, her in-laws and/or her husband tend to hurt her, through harsh language as could be seen in the song above (Masele, 2012).

Conclusions and Recommendations

Marriage offers great hope of life to those who are planning to engage in this relationship. However, women face challenges in marital relationships because of undesirable inherent cultural practices, which are transferred from one generation to another. From the above discussion about the manifestation of power and marginality, it is clear that marriage songs, as one of the tools of cultural transmission, favour men over women. For instance, the role assigned to one partner corresponds to the expectation of the community, which are basically gendered. The marital relationship between the two sexes, as Titi (2019) puts it, can follow traditional or

religious practices. But the current study did not consider this type of relationship because even religious marriage ceremony may be blended with some traditional elements such as singing, which, in one way or another, has the function of inflicting traditional and community norms.

The study focused on the themes in the discourse of the songs, which manifest power and marginality in marriage practices, and their influence in enhancing inequalities to the couple. The discourse of marriage songs as revealed in this study increase gender inequality which makes the relationship among the couple to be complex. In the song 'My advice', for example, only the bride is advised about her role in marriage life and not the groom. A groom who is going to be the husband is also expected to be knowledgeable about his role as the "master" of the family. This power if not used properly can lead to negative implication in marital relationship as shown in the song 'Obedience'.

Also, the study identified that the statutory requirement of paying bride-wealth in the form of cattle in the Sukuma community is a recurrent theme in their songs. The study found that bride wealth, which is sometimes referred to as bride price, is used as a swap for the girl. A good example is in the song 'Those with Tails' which says, 'if you really love your daughter why are you selling her?' This study is of the opinion that the negative perception about bride wealth may have extreme implications in marital relationship and gender relations in general. For example, it may lead to humiliation and oppression among women. This is consistent with previous studies that have found that bride wealth may have both positive and negative impact in marriage. Negatively, bride-wealth may lead to early marriage due to the parents' greed. It may contribute to domestic violence when people believe that husbands can legitimately treat women badly. In explaining the positive impact Lowes and Nunn (2017) argue that a higher bride-wealth paid at the time of marriage is associated with the wife being less accepting of domestic violence. This resulted from the practice of paying back bride-wealth if the wife fails to fulfill the expectation of her husband. However, many studies focus on the effect of bride-wealth on women in marriage life (Bishai *et al* 2009; Lowes and Nunn 2017; Titi 2019). This study, in an exceptional way, observed the effect on men and women, of paying cattle as bride-wealth. For the men, especially for those who own nothing in terms of cattle, this practice is a threat to them. The song 'My in-law' shows the lamentations of a man who seems to hate this cultural practice, as he believes that it affects the poor. However, in the discussion with the informants, it was reported that nowadays cash replaced cattle gift because most of the families have no cattle as in the past years.

Apart from highlighting the manifestation of power and marginality in marriage practices, the study also identified various cultural norms in marriage, which resulted from many factors including the practice of paying or taking back the bride wealth. Although there are many recent claims related to women's liberation, Sukuma songs portray women as facing a lot of harsh treatment resulting from the cultural norms in marriage practices. Therefore, this study concludes that Sukuma marriage songs bolster imbalanced power relations and marginality among the sexes upholding old and inherited patriarchal cultural practices. Such cultural practices are manifested based on a number of factors such as the stereotypical nature of gender roles and the practice of paying cattle as bride-wealth. Hence, significant effort is required to change the social and cultural mindset of the people with regard to gender inequality and sexual stereotyping, and to remove those social and cultural norms that hinder equality between sexes. The stakeholders, such as the village leaders, the chairpersons, division executive officers, and cultural leaders should be directed to educate people against gender inequality and its

consequences by holding meetings and discussions with the residents. This will promote equality between genders and generate ways for women's emancipation.

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