

## **THE DETERMINANTS OF GROOM PRICE:With Special Reference to Selected Muslim Area in Ampara District**

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### **Abstract**

Payments between families at the time of marriage are common practice in many areas in Sri Lanka. These payments can be substantial enough to affect the welfare of the society. Marriage payments are very high in North, Eastern and South Eastern Province in Sri Lanka. Compared with other Muslim area in Sri Lanka, these payments are very high in Muslim areas in Ampara district. These payments have risen sharply in year by year. Most probably marriages payments have paid by bride side to groom side. Groom's Job, educational qualification, age, income and family status are the main determinants of marriage payments in the marriage market.

The main objective of this study is to identify the main determinants of marriage payments for groom in marriage market in Ampara Muslim area. Data for this study has been collected by participated interview method. Regression method and descriptive statistical methods were used to analysis the data and Eviews statistical software has used to achieve this aim.

Finding of this study indicate that there are several external factors such as Grooms' professional qualification, educational qualifications, age different and groom monthly income were identified as a main determinants of groom price in marriage market in Ampara Muslim area.

**Keywords**Groom Price, Marriage market and Determinants

### **Introduction**

Marriage plays an important role in human life. As we all know it is a turning point of our life. Naturally another generation will be generated with the integration of the couples. However there are several immoral practices behind this marriage. 'Dowry or Groom Price' is one of the unavoidable immoral practices in the marriage system in Sri Lanka. Payments between families at the time of marriage are common practice in many areas in Sri Lanka. These payments can be significantly impact on Socio-economic factors of the society. The marriage payments come in various forms and sizes but can be classified into two broad categories: transfers from the family of the bride to that of the groom or grooms family, broadly termed as "Dowry or Groom price," or from the groom's side to the bride's, broadly termed as "bride-price or in Islamic term - Mahr".Dowry or groom prices are very high in North, Eastern and South Eastern Province in Sri Lanka. Compared with other Muslim area in Sri Lanka, these payments are very high in Ampara Muslim area. These payments have risen sharply in year by year.

Groom price normally means gifts given during the marriage to the son-in-law or his family either in cash or kind. From the point of view of women's status, however, dowry has to be looked at as constituting what is given to the bride, and is often settled before hand. The practice of giving dowry was meant to assist a newlywed couple to start their life together without difficulty. However, now it has degenerated into a sordid

commercial transaction in which monetary considerations receive priority over the personal merits of the bride.

Dowry system was dates back to Mexico and Brazil in seventeenth and eighteenth century (Anderson, 2007, Pp:154). Now this dowry system is transferred in to most of south Asian countries. Dowry system was not a traditional practice in Muslim society in Sri Lanka but it is believed that it was transferred from Tamil society in Sri Lanka and from South India. In the Muslim society, Islam does not permit to give and take dowry. Under Islamic religious law, groom need to give '**Mahr**' or bride price to bride in the wedding. However, in Muslim communities in Sri Lanka, the dowry given to the groom has become more important than the '**mahr**' given to the bride. Similarly, the '**mahr**' is now became a token payment in the wedding. Dowry in non-Muslim communities in Sri Lanka was a gift traditionally given to a daughter by her parents on the occasion of her marriage. This custom still prevails among the Sinhala and Tamil communities.

### **Problem of the Study**

Marriage payments have becoming a vital importance to influences on social and economic factors in the society. There are several external factors have substantially influences to determine groom price in marriage market in Ampara Muslim areas. Identifying the main factor and its consequences are the major problem in this study.

### **Dowry in Islam**

Dowry is prohibited and it cause of utter shame and disrespect in this life and a cause of punishment in the life after death in Islamic Sareeah. According to Islamic justice the responsibility of earning and maintenance of the family is compulsory to the man or a husband. And as such earning wealth by means of dowry is immoral. Bride price should be given to bride by groom on marriage. It's the right of women. But people follow just opposite irrespective to these verses. Islam lets men to accept any gifts from bride or her family. But this gift should not be dowry. The groom can only accept this gift if they are providing it based on their own will. But people misinterpret it (deliberately) and consider it as a compulsory dowry system. In fact men underestimate the right of women. After receiving a huge amount as dowry from girl's family, he gives a bit from it to her as "Mahr". "Mahr" is the compulsory wedding payments (money /Gold/ Silver) given by the husband to his wife at the time of marriage. Quraan said about 'Mahr' as follows,

*"And give women (on marriage) their dower (Mahr) as a free gift; but if they, of their own good pleasure, remit any part of it to you, take it and enjoy it with right good cheer."*

*(Al-Qur'an: Al-Nisa' :4)*

### **Marriage System in Ampara Muslim area**

As for the arranged marriages, the initial step is find appropriate groom by the family and broker or intermediate would play as an intermediary between the two parties. Next step is usual investigation. Both parties would investigate each other (via relatives or neighbors) about the family back ground, ancestry and financial status. If both parties are satisfied with the investigation, the next step is the traditional meeting of the prospective bride and bridegroom and both family. As for arranged marriages, it is the first time the prospective bride and groom meet each other. If the boy and girl liked each other, the final step prior to the confirmation would take place. "Dowry" is the biggest demand requeste by groom side. The family of the groom demands a dowry from bride family, often

engaging in hard bargaining to obtain the maximum. The practice of dowry in its materialization undervalues women and commercializes the marriage transaction. As the qualification of Groom increases, the rate of dowry also increases accordingly. For instance, if the groom is graduated in the field of Medicine or Engineering or law or Accounting, the rate would be 10 lakhs money, 2 to 3 lakhs of Jewlry, 10 to 15 acre paddy land, 10 to 15 lakhs of vehicals and 50 to 70 lakhs of house or more. Eventually the girl's family would be forced to give the bundle and property. It is clear that the payments of dowry are impact significantly in social economic system in the society. This black money definitely would affect to the wealth distribution and the calculation of the Gross Domestic Product of the country.

### **Review of Literature**

Groom price or Dowry is one of the leading socio economic problems in South Asian region. However, limited volumes of literature are available in this field. To my best knowledge none of the study has been undertaken in economic view of dowry and also some amount of essays has published in news papers and journals in Sri Lanka. Therefore, this study is intended to fill the gap in economic literature.

Suran, Amin, Huq, and Chowdury (2004), has studied 'Does dowry improve life for brides in rural Bangladesh. Panel data has used explore the association between dowry and the prevalence of domestic abuse to test the bequest theory of dowry in rural Bangladesh. They have suggested that among Muslims in Bangladesh and Hindus in south India, dowry has become commonplace whereas the practice did not exist a generation ago. They have found that, married females who paid dowry at marriage have a higher likelihood of reporting domestic violence compared to those who did not. In addition, the relation between dowry and abuse is highly level-specific: respondents who paid small dowries report much higher levels of abuse than those who paid large dowries. In fact, paying no dowry is just as protective, if not more so, in terms of preventing abuse as the largest dowry payments.

Anderson (2004) investigated the relationship between dowry and property rights. He has argued that dowries traditionally serve as a pre-mortem bequest to daughters. In segregated societies, men had economic value but women did not. In modernization period dowry was compulsory in marriage. The results suggest that the transformation of dowry from bequest to groom-price appears to be underway in some areas.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The main objective of this study is to identify the main determinants of groom price in marriage market in Ampara Muslim area. Identify the reasons behind groom price and sources are the specific objectives of this study.

### **Data collection**

Data for this study has been collected by participated interview method. Newly marriage couple in 2010 and 2011 and their parents have included to face to face interview. The list of marriage couple have taken from Muslim wedding registrar in each village. In that list, 40 families in each village namely, Sainthamarudu, Addalaichenai and Akkarappathu (altogether 120 families) have been selected conveniently by the researcher to this study. Researcher and assistants used open-ended questionnaires to obtain detailed descriptions including wedding, dowry, education, job, salary and family detail.

**Methodology**

Regression method and descriptive statistical method (Graph, mean and percentage) were used to analysis the data and Eviews statistical software has used to achieve this aim. This study is focusing to identify the main determinants of groom price in Ampara Muslim area. Components of dowry (Jewelry, paddy land, house and house land, vehicles and money) have been transforming to 2010 and 2011 current price.

The model to identify the main determinants of groom price is developed by following way,

$$GP = f(AD, MS_g, MS_{gf}, MS_b, NS_b, PQ_G, PQ_B)$$

$$GP = \beta_0 + \beta_1 AD + \beta_2 MS_g + \beta_3 MS_b + \beta_4 MS_{bf} + \beta_5 NS_b$$

$$+ \alpha_1 D_{1PQG} + \alpha_2 D_{2PQG} + \alpha_3 D_{3PQB} + \epsilon_t$$

Where D's are dummy variables for,

$$D_1(\text{groom}) = \begin{cases} 1 & \text{if Professional Qualifications of groom} \\ & (\text{octors, Engineers, Laweys,} \\ & \text{Accountan t, Lectures)} \\ 0 & \text{Bu sin ess man, foreign employee} \\ & (\text{who has only A/L, O/L \& less qualification}) \end{cases}$$

$$D_2(\text{Groom}) = \begin{cases} 1 & \text{if Professional Qualifications of groom} \\ & (\text{Taechers, Nurser, Police \& claricals}) \\ 0 & \text{Bu sin ess man, foreign employee} \\ & (\text{who has only A/L, O/L \& less qualification}) \end{cases}$$

$$D_3(\text{Bride}) = \begin{cases} 1 & \text{if Professional Qualifications of Bride} \\ & (\text{Taechers, Nurser, doctors,} \\ & \text{lawyers \& claricals}) \\ 0 & \text{Others (Temporary job or not doing job with} \\ & \text{A/L or O/L or Less Qualification)} \end{cases}$$

Where:

**GP:**Groom Price / Dowry, **AD<sub>g</sub>:** Age Different of bride and groom, **ED<sub>b</sub>:** professional qualifications of Groom, **ED<sub>g</sub>:** professional qualifications of Bride, **Y<sub>g</sub>:** Monthly salary of groom, **Y<sub>b</sub>:** monthly salary of bride, **Y<sub>bf</sub>:** Monthly income of bride father, **S<sub>b</sub>:** Number of sisters in bride

**Results and Discussion**

Today, families seek suitable husbands for their marriageable daughters frequently face crippling expenses with dowries amounting to very large proportions of their household assets. The following table (table – 01) indicates the correlation coefficient between dowry and other independent variables. Most of the variables are correlated with dowry payments / Groom price.

Table – 1, Correlation coefficient between groom price and other independent variables

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Coefficient of Correlation(Pearson)</b>
Age Different of Bride and Groom	0.673
Monthly Income of Groom	0.75
Monthly Income of Bride	0.109
Monthly Income of Bride father	0.532
Number of Sister to Bride	- 0.62

Large number of factors are determining groom price in study area. Regression method is utilized to identify the main determinants of groom price. When we use regression method we may expect Multicollinearity problem in survey data. Variance inflating factor is commonly utilize to identify the multicollinearity problem. Results are presented in Table – 02. According to this results multicollinearity is not a serious problem among independent variables.

Table – 2 Identify the Multicollinearity Problem

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Value of VIF</b>
Age Different of Bride and Groom	1.1
Monthly Income of Groom	1.1
Monthly Income of Bride	1.6
Monthly Income of Bride father	1
Number of Sister to Bride	1.2
Educational Qualification of Groom (D1)	1.4
Educational Qualification of Groom (D2)	1.3
Educational Qualification of Bride	1.6

Data collected in a survey to identify the determinants of groom price are analyzed by regression method and results are presented in Table 03

Table - 3, Determinants of groom price

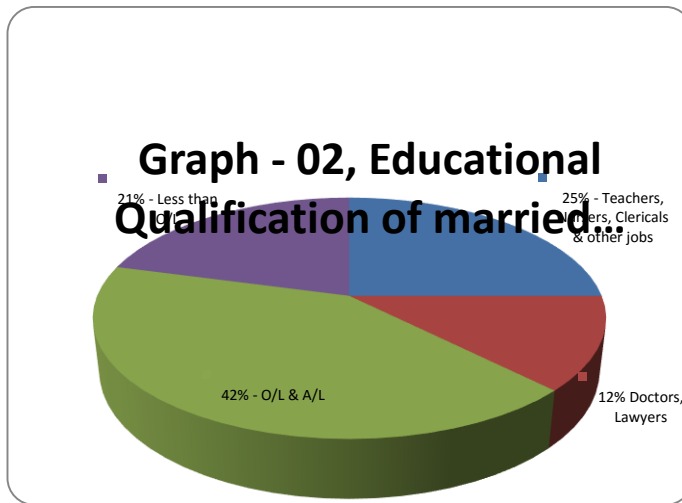
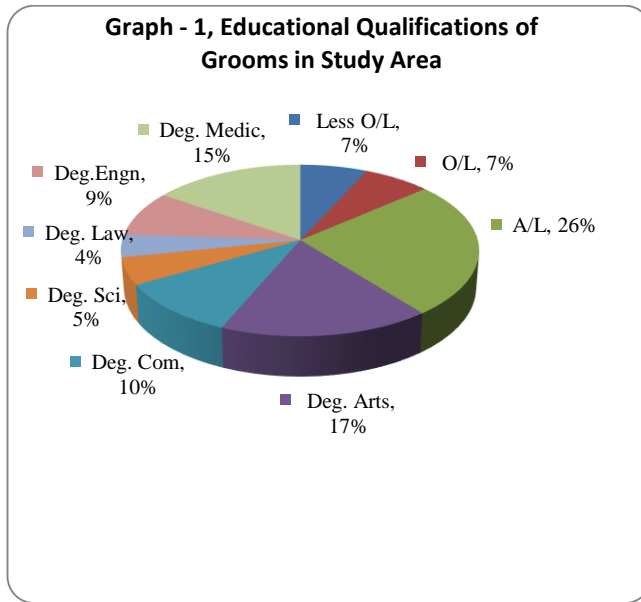
Dependent Variable – Groom price / Dowry		
Variables	Coefficient	Probability
Constant	27.95	0.025**
Age Different of Bride and Groom	2.33	0.030**
Monthly salary of Groom	12.18	0.012**
Monthly Salary of Bride	11.2	0.520
Monthly Income of Bride father	32.88	0.271
Number of Sister to Bride	- 5.34	0.041**
Professional Qualification of Groom (D1)	8.58	0.000*
Professional Qualification of Groom (D2)	2.023	0.093***
Professional Qualification of Bride (D3)	8.08	0.125
Adjusted R-Square	0.53	
DW Statistics	1.93	

Where \* - 1 % level of Significant, \*\* - 5 % level of Significant and  
\*\*\* - 10 % level of Significant

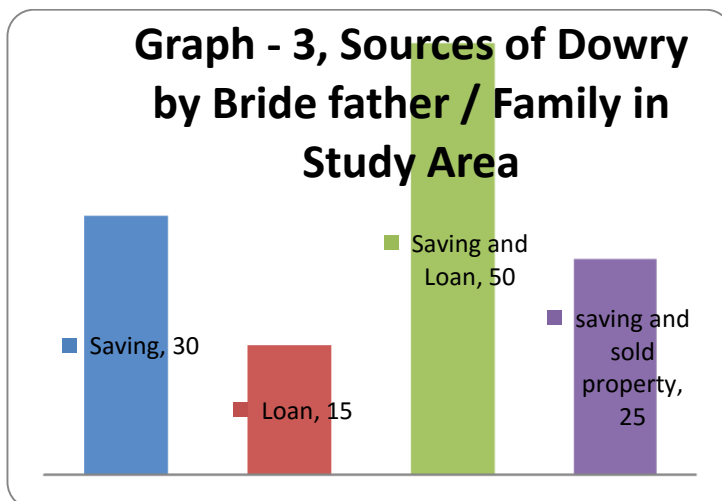
According to the empirical results presented in the table – 03, Adjusted R-Square 0.53 is quite good for the cross sectional data. The determinants professional qualifications of groom (D1), namely, Doctors, Lawyers, Engineers, Accountants and Lectures, is highly significant with 1 % level to determine groom price in Ampara Muslim area. Other kind of professional of groom who are doing government job (D2), namely, Teachers, Nurses, Police and Clerical Job, are highly significant with 10 % level to determine groom price in Ampara Muslim area. Likewise, monthly salary of groom, age different between Groom and Bride and number sisters of bride are highly significant with 5 % level to determine groom price in Ampara Muslim area. However, professional qualification of bride, monthly income of bride father and monthly salary of bride are not highly significant to determine groom price an Ampara Muslim area.

These empirical findings are very noticeable in study area. If the groom has higher level of professional qualification with higher monthly salary, he will be a very demandable item in the marriage market. Bride family is ready to buy him with any amount of price in the market. On the other hand, if the bride has higher level of professional qualification with higher monthly salary, she will not be a demandable item in the marriage market. Most of the grooms are ready to marry her, but they are not ready to reduce their price (Dowry). The empirical investigation indicate that amount of dowry giving to groom is approximately 200 times greater than bride's fathers monthly income. Similarly, most of the grooms are willing to marry, when the bride does not have any sisters or less number of sisters. If this situation continued, this may create economic crisis and social imbalances. Similarly in Islamic Shareeah, the responsibility of monitoring the family is enforced to groom or husband.

Results presented in the Pie chart in the study area indicate that a large amount of groom and bride are well educated. However, grooms are sound educated than bride. Graph – 01 and graph – 02 indicate these results. 52 % of the poor or middle income family women who did soon after only O/L examination and A/L examination, had gone to middle east countries to earn money for their wedding and collect dowry.



Most of parents or family members of Bride have started to collect dowry when the girl born, like wise nearly 20 years or 25 years or in other words their life time, they have to collect dowry for their daughters' wedding. The sources of dowry by the bride family have been collected in the study area is presented in the following graph. The Pie chart indirectly support that dowry is positively persuade for human capital formation for Muslims in Ampara district.



As we discussed above, the majority of the grooms are well educated and they are very good in economic side. However, all most all have obtain dowry from bride side. The researcher tries to identify the reasons behind the dowry in study area. Responds are bellow,

- To protect and provide security to bride in future (70 %)
- Customs (30 %)
- Forced by parents (25 %)
- To manage wedding cost (40 %)
- To develop self economy in future (50 %)
- Less income (15 %)
- Parents' properties are not distributed according to Islamic law<sup>14</sup> (30 %)

#### **Economic Impact of Groom Price**

Large amount of money are transferring to groom by the bride side during the wedding. These money transfers are not included in the national income accounting. Similarly, most of the parents are getting loan to give groom price. This loan must affect his and his families well being of life and welfare, his own economic development and some time he may depends to others who have given loan to him. Though substantial amount of groom price will be use for economic development, the large volume of saving are devoted to the building of houses. Houses are main component of dowry and nearly 4 million to 7 million of money is spend to this. This may damage the capital investment. Also, society's income inequality may be increase. Richer may become richer and poor may become poor. On the other hand, social status of women may damage. However, dowry positively influences on education and foreign employment of female.

#### **Suggestion**

Though the dowry payments positively influences on human capital formation, it has several harmful impact on economic - social conditions. Therefore, it should be

<sup>14</sup> Islamic property Law: 1/3 for girls and 2/3 for boys



eradicated from the Muslim society in Ampara district. Therefore, the following ideas can be implemented to eliminate dowry from the society.

- Islamic property law can implement to distribute parents wealth and property to their children.
- Intervention Programme can be planned to rise awareness at micro and macro level for unmarried GIRLS & BOYS
- The study of Dowry / Groom price is a complicated one large volume of study can be undertaken considering various issues.
- A comparative study could be planned to cover all area with other society by taking wider sample

### **Conclusion**

Today, most of the families are struggling to find appropriate partner for their marriageable daughters. Frequently they need to pay huge price to buy suitable husband for their marriageable daughter. This study is focusing to identify the main factors to determine dowry or groom price in the marriage market in Ampara Muslim area. Regression method is used to achieve this aim. Professional qualification of groom, his monthly salary, age difference between bride and groom and number of sisters for bride are found as main factors to determine groom price in the marriage market in Ampara Muslim area.

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