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EXPLORING THE COMMERCIALISATION OF LOBOLA IN SOUTH
AFRICA

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ABSTRACT

Many South African customs are sometimes abused and excused to erode human dignity and reinforce corrupt tendencies. This demeaning behaviour often handicaps the social welfare of a society. In the South African context, the cultural practice of Lobola-a bride price paid to the bride's family for her hand in marriage appears to be one of the most exploited praxes. Scholars such as Sekudu (2019); Chireshe and Chireshe (2010) and Chabata (2014) aver that the identity of Lobola has shifted from a token of appreciation to a commercial activity. Thus, this quantitative paper sought to unveil the exploitation of Lobola for a fiscal advance from the South African context. The paper is undergirded by explanatory design and has relied on ten sampled women using quota sampling. Furthermore, the paper adopted the Lobola software calculator as an instrument for data collection and analytic technique whereas quantitative content analysis served as a method of data analysis. The study has found that the commercialisation of Lobola menaces African culture, deters social development, engenders reluctance to marry, and often fosters gender-based violence. This noted, the study has recommended the championing of the aboriginal purpose of Lobola in the modern day to re-essentialise it and eradicate the commercial undertones.

INTRODUCTION

The dispensation of modern practices in (South) African societies has occasioned a major shift of attitudes, perceptions, and identities, which often marginalise cultural systems. South Africa, like most societies in the world, is progressively adopting modern ideologies at the expense of cultural practices. Particularly, Lobola is gradually losing its aboriginal purpose in the modern world. It is one of the cultural practices that is condemned and threatened due

to its monetary connotations that are found to dishearten young couples from getting marriage (Sibisi 2021). Moreover, Sennott, Madhavan and Nam (2021, 1) add that “Lobola has always been a complex and contested practice that both reinforces gender inequalities and, at the same time, provides status to women and legitimacy to marriages.” Most people are becoming oblivious of African customs and ultimately adopt alien cultures that often entice them to, *inter alia*, sell their daughters at a price of R50 000 or more for Lobola on basis that their daughters are educated (Maphalala 2018). This nullifies the autochthonous meaning of Lobola that had been championed during pre-colonial times. Sekudu (2019, 1) opines that “over the years, there have been conflicting debates about what Lobola is and why this cultural practice should still be acknowledged.” It has become a controversial practice in the present day as its role and authenticity in society are questioned. Sekudu (2019) asserts that in some instances, Lobola has been reduced to some sort of transaction without really interrogating what is indeed at the core of Lobola in the first place. In addition, Chireshe and Chireshe (2010) postulate that the term Lobola, translated into English as a bride price, alludes to the buying of wives. The researchers above authenticate the observable mercantile undertones attached to the practice of Lobola. In line with the above, Chabata (2014, 12) concurs that today, Lobola is monetary and profit-orientated than honorary,

It is a system where the payment of Lobola has been transformed from being a mere cultural practice to a business venture, where the bride has a clear monetary value attached to her. It also depicts a situation where, because of the monetary value attached to the bride, payment negotiations are characterised by intense bargaining leading to the payment of a high fee – and is almost equivalent to the selling of a commodity on the open market.

Equally important, the commercialisation of Lobola has engendered dire consequences such as an appalling decline in marriages. This has ultimately stimulated the rise of cohabitation, rechristened ‘vat n sit’ relationships. According to Mphalala (2018), approximately 60% of couples in South Africa are cohabiting because they love each other but simply do not have the finances to start the marriage process. This researcher further postulates that when parents price their daughters at R50 000 because they possess higher qualifications, the young men say ‘no, this is too much’ and choose to not get married (Mphalala 2018). Moreover, the parents often state several reasons to justify the prices that the young men perceive as ‘too much’, “man’s rights to a woman’s childbearing capacity; rights to her sexual and domestic services; and permanent rights over her children” (Murray 1981, 120). However, Montle (2020) argues that it is reasons like the above that sometimes cause power struggles in marriages. This is confirmed by Chiwese (2016, 229) who finds that it is due to these sentiments often driven by financial greed that “women’s bodies are commoditised and they become the site complex interactions of patriarchy, power and politics.” For instance, a participant in Matope, Maruzani, Chauraya, and Bondai’s (2013, 195) said, “I paid ten cows... she does not work and I do everything for her like I do for my children so I discipline her now and then to remind her of her place.” The study is guided by these questions,

- Is Lobola still relevant today?
- Is Lobola a cultural practice or business transaction?

The Model Underpinning The Study

This study is underpinned by the Three Cultures Model. According to Blankson (2011,3), the Three Cultures Model pioneered by Gardenswartz, Rowe, Digh and Bennett (2003) is predicated on the notion that people often find it difficult to distinguish between cultural norms and personality differences. The aggravating ignorance towards the purpose of Lobola enkindled the commercialisation of this cultural practice. Samuriwo (2008,1) posits that Lobola “is central to the institution of marriage in many Southern African nations [and] primarily it is seen as a tool that cements to family ties and provides specific identities to men, women and children.” Therefore, the Three Culture Model becomes pertinent to the study as it uncovers “the transformation from a communal to a private transaction [which] is one of the many signs that payment of bride price has spiralled out of the control of culture” (Mangena & Ndlovu 2013, 476). Moreover, the Three Cultures Model demonstrates the existence and inter-relationship of three cultural dimensions, namely national culture, organizational culture, and personal culture. Gardenswartz, Rowe, Digh and Bennett (2003, 65) define the aforementioned trio, starting with National culture “as the shared understanding that comes from the integration of beliefs, values, attitudes, and known behaviours that have formed the heritage of a nation-state”; organizational culture “as the integration of an institution’s widely shared beliefs and values and its guiding philosophy as frequently espoused in its vision, mission and value statements;” and, personal culture” as the integration of an individual’s traits, skills and personality formed within the context of his or her ethnic, racial, familial and educational environments.” This noted, the model aids the researcher to comprehend the shift of meaning of Lobola from the pre-colonial African times to the modern-day. Thus, Blankson (2011, 3) states that the Three Cultures Model provides a framework for cultural, environmental, social and organisational issues.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Lobola negotiation is an ancient tradition where a man pays a number of cattle or the amount of money desired by the family of his fiancé for her hand in marriage (De Swart, 2014). However, Mathabo (2019, 1) argues that the meaning of Lobola is complex and it is often misinterpreted, misunderstood, and overlooked because, in pre-colonial African times, Lobola “was offered with a cow because of how people lived but today the offering is in the form of money...words such as payment should not be used, Lobola is an offering.” Furthermore, Lobola has and is still an important African cultural practice that distinguishes African identities from others. It has been meant to strengthen appreciation, respect and honour in marriages (Montle, 2020). Moreover, Lobola aimed to forge a solid union between the bride and bride-groom families. Shope (2014, 71) asserts that “In the past, Lobola forged a relational bond among families...it celebrated the addition of the woman into the husband’s family and most rural women perceive Lobola as very good for them because it creates a great friendship”. Thus, a participant in Shope’s (2006, 67) argues that Lobola signifies respect for an African woman,

Lobola is here to stay. If you don't pay Lobola you don't respect your wife. But if you do pay Lobola for your wife, you respect her and then you don't easily say go away. You understand where this person comes from and then how she is linked to you and then the meaning of her to be in your house with you. So that's why you start to respect the Lobola. You give your wife respect if you pay Lobola.

In pre-colonial times, Lobola assumed a position as the cornerstone of marriage, hence couples that declare themselves husband and wife without having undergone the process of Lobola are stigmatised by Africans that still cherish cultural practices. Furthermore, the meaning of Lobola experienced a shift when colonialists injected Africa with modern practices. Thus, Shope (2006, 64) perceives marriage as an “enduring custom that offers insight into past and present gender and power relations and it has survived colonial and missionary cultural attacks and changing economic and political structures.” Today, Murray (1981, 17) notes that “Lobola is a means for elders to be able to make claims on the next generation – specifically, the earnings of potential sons-in-law.”

Lobola in the modern-day South Africa

Lobola is a cultural practice that has been the pride of African black parents for many decades (Baloyi 2016). Today, it has become a divisive issue in South Africa. This is because of the overarching rise of commercial connotations during the process of the negotiation of Lobola. Furthermore, Lobola negotiations can be “culturally varied, long and complex, and involves many members from both the bride and the groom's extended families” (Robyn 2012, 10). It depends on tribal assumptions. For instance, in the Sotho tribe, Lobola is referred to as Mahadi, Rooru in Shona, Magadi in Setswana, Lovola in Xitsonga and Mamalo in Tshivenda. Similarly, the tribes above in most cases prefer the uncles of the bride to be to the head or be an important part of the negotiations. Forbes (2019, 1) outlines the full-blown process of Lobola,

The uncles and aunts of the groom handle the Lobola negotiations, which are formal and follow a set of rules that differ between various tribes and cultures. The first amount to be paid is usually ‘pulamolomo’. This is where the groom’s family pays an amount to the parents of the bride to open the marriage discussion. This amount is separate from the actual Lobola price. In the Xhosa culture, failure to pay what has been asked for could lead to the bride’s family practising ‘theleka’, withholding of a future bride by her father from her boyfriend to compel him to pay what is owed. There is no right amount for Lobola. Amounts are determined by the bride’s family after intense negotiation. The value of the bride is determined by her education, job title or even level of income and whether she has children. Cattle is used as currency, and after agreeing on the number of cattle, families will agree on the price of one cow. The final fixed amount is determined from there. There is still an exchange of gifts which needs to take place. These gifts could be blankets, pots, coats, shoes, head scarfs or other agreed-upon items.

In most cases, the desired amount for Lobola is found to unsettle many couples who are unable to afford it. Baloyi (2014, 136) notes that Lobola is one of those customs that some people are trying to forget and destroy by their own neglect. Moreover, in the Weekend Witness newsletter (2019), a woman who requested to be anonymous claims that without Lobola a marriage is invalid and if Lobola was not such a big deal, many couples would be married,

As a young couple we feel that Lobola robs young families of the chance to raise their children together and making collective decisions regarding the upbringing of their children. Most kids born out of wedlock, especially in our black communities, are raised by their grandparents or single parents since a young woman is culturally not allowed to cohabit prior to Lobola negotiations. Between paying school fees, saving for future education, investment policies, car insurance, rent and many other monthly expenses, it is a financial strain to come up with R60 000 for Lobola and still be able to set aside around R30 000 for gifts. We see it fit to invest towards our future at this stage, to build a home for our girls and then worry about the rest later.

The argument above raises the question, what is the right amount to pay for Lobola? There are several qualities that often surface in determining the Lobola that a woman is worth. This includes her level of education, employment status and whether she was found with a child from another man or not. In most cases, a well-educated woman is priced higher as it is believed that her parents made financial sacrifices and efforts to ensure that she receives an education. Dlanga (2010, 1) confirms that “in some families, the price of an educated girl is higher, but in other families, the girl’s level of education makes no difference to the price.” Furthermore, Baloyi (2016, 5) asserts that “it is unacceptable to demand more Lobola because the woman has attended a very good school or is educated. Families would not accept less Lobola when a highly educated man marries a woman who is not so highly educated.” According to a survey with 1809 respondents run by a South African wedding website, The Wedding Anthem (2019), found that almost two-thirds of respondents (62%) said that a reasonable amount for Lobola was R10 000 or less; 21% said that between R10 000 and R25 000 was reasonable; 11.1% said that a range between R25 000 and R50 000 was acceptable; and 5.8% were happy to spend more than R50 000. One of the respondents in this research who paid R 60 000 for Lobola from his savings noted that If the woman decided to leave him one day, she will leave him with a debt. Moreover, for a woman who already had a child with another man, the Lobola negotiations become complicated. There is this Northern Sotho expression, *O e gapa le namane* (He is taking the cow with its calf). This means that if a man finds love and wants to marry a woman who already has a child with another man, then he must take her with that child. This means the Lobola must include both the mother and the child, which makes the Lobola twice higher. However, others believe in this expression, *O wele letswele* (Her breast has already fallen) which means a woman to be married with another man’s child should not be paid a high Lobola. Dandla (2011) asserts that most men would not marry a woman with a child especially between the ages of 18-35.

Effects of commercialising Lobola

The commercialisation of Lobola appears to have engendered reluctance to get married. This is evinced by the rise of *vat-en-sit* or cohabitation. Zwane (2016) notes that an increase in the number of *vat-en-sit* relationships has contributed to fewer people getting married in South Africa. Therefore, amongst the factors contributing to this crucial issue is Lobola as most couples argue that is becoming too expensive. Forbes (2019) states that despite ulterior motives, marriage is expensive because after it has been paid, the couples still desire a traditional or white wedding. Therefore, *vat-en-sit* seems to be a solution for couples that love want to stay together but cannot afford to pay Lobola. Baloyi (2016, 5) affirms that “many young people prefer staying together unmarried for a long time; perhaps only when they have given birth to children do they start thinking of legitimising their unions.” This *Vat-en-sit* compromises religious principles such as the forbidden sex before marriage. In line with the bible, Lobola is the initial process towards marriage and if it is not paid, the union is declared invalid. Moreover, the Recognition of Customary Marriages, 1998 (Act 120 of 1998) (RCMA) has the following prerequisites to qualify a marriage under customary law,

- Consensus - Historically, consensus was sought between the families of the prospective bride and groom’s families. Since 2008, the RCMA states that consensus is required only between the individuals, and not their families.
- Age Requirements - According to customary law, no specific age requirement exists however, the RCMA includes a minimum age requirement of 18.
- Lobola - A customary marriage, under the RCMA, is valid on the agreement to pay Lobola and does not require the payment of Lobola
- Transfer of the Bride - The transfer of a bride is another requirement for the validity of a customary marriage. The RCMA does not specifically regulate this custom and is dealt with on an ad-hoc basis.
- Absence of Common Law Marriage - Two parties in a monogamous customary marriage can enter into a common law marriage, but not vice versa.
- Prohibited Degrees of Relationship - In the past, each community had their own rules about prohibited relationships. These rules have evolved over the years. The RCMA states that these prohibited relationships are regulated by customary rules.

METHODOLOGY

This study utilised a quantitative explanatory design to unveil the transition of the meaning of Lobola from being a cultural practice meant to show appreciation and honour to become a money-making tactic. The explanatory design aims to clarify the why and how questions of the study based on the relationship between the variables if not the studied situation. In an effort to unveil the transition of the meaning of Lobola, the study provides clarity on how Lobola shifted from its original purpose to a commercial activity. The study used a quantitative content analysis as a method of data analysis. Content analysis is a method of analysing the contents of given data in which textual,

visual or aural material are systematically categorised (Kumar, 2014). Furthermore, a Lobola software calculator was adopted as an analytic technique and instrument for data collection. Robert Motsaneng created this software in 2014. On IOL newsletter, Motsaneng (2014) notes that “well the app gives an estimate of how much dowry you would be worth. The aim of this software is to be playful and give a roundabout figure for anyone above the age of 18. It is quite comical in its presentation with a monetary value also represented as cows.” The participants of the study were selected through the quota sampling technique. Quota sampling is a convenient sampling technique that allows the researcher to select a sample based on some noticeable features such as gender or race of the study population (Kumar, 2014). Eight women were sampled from Tubatse circuit who are yet to be married and unemployed. The software uses variables such as age, qualification and employment status, and the sampled women are chosen based on characteristics. It will estimate the bride-price for the selected participants.

RESULTS

This section presents results from the Lobola calculator. Women from Tubatse circuit who are to be married are the participants in this study. The Lobola app calculator generated Lobola price worth for these participants in contingent with their responses. Thus, the responses from eight participants are categorised according to quantitative content analysis as follows,

Participant 1, Lobola for a woman with a higher education qualification, no child and additional qualities

What is your highest qualification?	Below matric	Matric	Diploma	Degree	Above degree
Are you a virgin?	Yes	No			
How many children do you have?	None	1	2	3 or more	
How many boyfriends did you have in the past?	0-5	6-10	10-15	16 or more	
Have you been married before?	Yes	No			
What is your employment status?	Job		Unemployed	Student	
Do you own a car?	Yes	No			
Do you own a house?	Yes	No			
	Yes	No			

Can you cook?			
Relate your performance in the bedroom	It's not my thing I make him scream		I am good shame!
Are you a socialite?	Yes		
Are you from a family of royalty	Yes		
Are you planning to be a housewife?	Yes		
Do you make more money (income) than your boyfriend?	Yes		
Are you gonna ask for your hair money	Yes		
Do you drink?		I'm a light/occasional drinker	I get sloshed

The participant above is in possession of a degree, several additional qualities and has no child, and according to Lobola app calculator, if she is to be married in this state, score from the quiz above is 37 points and this means that her estimated worth for Lobola is R33 000.

Participant 2, Lobola for a woman with a higher education qualification, has a child and additional qualities

What is your highest qualification?	Below matric	Matric	Diploma	Degree	Above degree
Are you a virgin?	Yes	No			
How many children do you have?	None	1	2	3 or more	
How many boyfriends did you have in the past?	0-5	6-10	10-15	16 or more	

Have you been married before?	Yes	No		
What is your employment status?	Job		Unemployed	Student
Do you own a car?	Yes	No		
Do you own a house?	Yes	No		
Can you cook?	Yes	No		

Relate your performance in the bedroom	It's not my thing		I am good
	I make him scream	I'm dangerous!!!Ingozi!	shame!
Are you a socialite?	Yes		
Are you from a family of royalty	Yes		
Are you planning to be a housewife?	Yes		
Do you make more money(income) than your boyfriend?	Yes		
Are you gonna ask for your hair money	Yes		
Do you drink?		I'm a light/occasional drinker	I get sloshed

The respondent above is in possession of a diploma, has a child and some additional qualities, and according to Lobola app calculator, if she is to be married in this state, score from the quiz above is 36 points and this means that her estimated worth for Lobola is R30 000.

Participant 3, Lobola for a woman with a degree, child and additional qualities

What is your highest qualification?	Below matric	Matric	Diploma	Degree	Above degree
Are you a virgin?	Yes	No			

How many children do you have?	None	1	2	3 or more
How many boyfriends did you have in the past?	0-5	6-10	10-15	16 or more
Have you been married before?	Yes	No		
What is your employment status?	Job		Unemployed	Student

Do you own a car?	Yes	No		
Do you own a house?	Yes	No		
Can you cook?	Yes	No		
Relate your performance in the bedroom	It's not my thing I make him scream	I can do the basics I'm dangerous!!!Ingozi!	I am good shame!	
Are you a socialite?	Yes	No		
Are you from a family of royalty	Yes	No		
Are you planning to be a housewife?	Yes	No		
Do you make more money(income) than your boyfriend?	Yes	No		
Are you gonna ask for your hair money	Yes	No		
Do you drink?	No	I'm a light/occasional drinker	I get sloshed	

The participant above holds higher qualification, degree, several additional qualities and has a child, and according to the Lobola app calculator, if she is to

be married in this state, the score obtained from the quiz above is 37 points and this means that her estimated worth for Lobola is R33 000.

Participant 4, Lobola for a woman with a degree, no child and additional qualities

What is your highest qualification?	Below matric	Matric	Diploma	Degree	Above degree
Are you a virgin?	Yes	No			
How many children do you have?	None	1	2	3 or more	

How many boyfriends did you have in the past?	0-5	6-10	10-15	16 or more
Have you been married before?	Yes	No		
What is your employment status?	Job		Unemployed	Student

Do you own a car?	Yes	No
Do you own a house?	Yes	No
Can you cook?	Yes	No

Relate your performance in the bedroom	It's not my thing	I can do the basics	I am good shame!
	I make him scream	I'm dangerous!!!Ingozi!	
Are you a socialite?	Yes	No	
Are you from a family of royalty	Yes	No	
Are you planning to be a housewife?	Yes	No	
Do you make more	Yes	No	

money(income) than your boyfriend?				
Are you gonna ask for your hair money	Yes	No		
Do you drink?	No	I'm a light/occasional drinker	I get sloshed	

The participant above holds a degree, several additional qualities and does not have a child. According to Lobola app calculator, if she is to be married in this state, the score obtained from the quiz above is 38 points and this means that her estimated worth for Lobola is R35 000.

Participant 5, Lobola for a woman with no degree, has a child and additional qualities

What is your highest qualification?	Below matric		Diploma	Degree	Above degree
Are you a virgin?	Yes				
How many children do you have?	None		2	3 or more	
How many boyfriends did you have in the past?		6-10	10-15	16 or more	
Have you been married before?	Yes				
What is your employment status?	Job	Career driven	Unemployed		
Do you own a car?		Yes		No	
Do you own a house?		Yes		No	
Can you cook?		Yes		No	
Relate your performance in the bedroom	It's not my thing	I can do the basics		I am good shame!	
	I make him scream	I'm dangerous!!!Ingozi!			
Are you a socialite?	Yes	No			
Are you from a family of royalty	Yes	No			

Are you planning to be a housewife?	Yes	No		
Do you make more money(income) than your boyfriend?	Yes	No		
Are you gonna ask for your hair money	Yes	No		
Do you drink?	No	I'm a light/occasional drinker	I get sloshed	

The participant above does not have a degree but only matric, degree, several additional qualities and has a child, and according to Lobola app calculator, if she is to be married in this state, the score obtained from the quiz above is 31 points and this means that her estimated worth for Lobola is R20 000.

Participant 6, Lobola for a woman with no degree, no child and additional qualities

What is your highest qualification?	Below matric	Matric	Diploma	Degree	Above degree
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Are you a virgin?	Yes	No		
How many children do you have?	None	1	2	3 or more

How many boyfriends did you have in the past?	0-5	6-10	10-15	16 or more
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Have you been married before?	Yes	No		
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What is your employment status?	Job	Career driven	Unemployed	Student
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Do you own a car?	Yes	No	
Do you own a house?	Yes	No	
Can you cook?	Yes	No	
Relate your performance in the bedroom	It's not my thing	I can do the basics	I am good shame!
	I make him scream	I'm dangerous!!!Ingozi!	
Are you a socialite?	Yes	No	
Are you from a family of royalty	Yes	No	
Are you planning to be a housewife?	Yes	No	
Do you make more money(income) than your boyfriend?	Yes	No	
Are you gonna ask for your hair money	Yes	No	
Do you drink?	No	I'm a light/occasional drinker	I get sloshed

The participant above does not have a degree but only matric, degree, several additional qualities and has no child, and according to Lobola app calculator, if she is to be married in this state, the score obtained from the quiz above is 32 points and this means that her estimated worth for Lobola is R23 000.

Participant 7, Lobola for a woman with no matric, has a child and additional qualities

What is your highest qualification?	Below matric	Matric	Diploma	Degree	Above degree
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Are you a virgin?	Yes	No		
How many children do you have?	None	1	2	3 or more
How many boyfriends did you have in the past?	0-5	6-10	10-15	16 or more
Have you been married before?	Yes	No		
What is your employment status?	Job	Career driven	Unemployed	Student
Do you own a car?	Yes		No	
Do you own a house?	Yes		No	
Can you cook?	Yes		No	
Relate your performance in the bedroom	It's not my thing	I can do the basics	I am good shame!	
	I make him scream	I'm dangerous!!!Ingozi!		
Are you a socialite?	Yes	No		
Are you from a family of royalty	Yes	No		
Are you planning to be a housewife?	Yes	No		
Do you make more money(income) than your boyfriend?	Yes	No		
Are you gonna ask for your hair money	■	No		
Do you drink?	No	I'm a light/occasional drinker	I get sloshed	

The participant above is below matric, has a child and additional qualities. According to Lobola app calculator, if she is to be married in this state, the score obtained from the quiz above is 27 points and this means that her estimated worth for Lobola is R 10 000.

Participant 8, Lobola for a woman with no matric, no child and additional qualities

What is your highest qualification?	Below matric	Matric		Diploma	Degree	Above degree
Are you a virgin?	Yes	No				
How many children do you have?	None	1		2	3 or more	
How many boyfriends did you have in the past?	0-5	6-10		10-15	16 or more	
Have you been married before?	Yes	No				
What is your employment status?	Job	Career driven		Student		
Do you own a car?	Yes	No				
Do you own a house?	Yes	No				
Can you cook?	Yes	No				
Relate your performance in the bedroom	It's not my thing	I can do the basics	I am good shame!			
	I make him scream	I'm dangerous!!!Ingozi!				
Are you a socialite?	Yes	No				
Are you from a family of royalty	Yes	No				

Are you planning to be a housewife?	Yes			
Do you make more money(income) than your boyfriend?	Yes			
Are you gonna ask for your hair money		No		
Do you drink?		I'm a light/occasional drinker	I get sloshed	

The respondent above is below matric, with no child but has additional qualities. According to the Lobola app calculator, if she is to be married in this state, the score obtained from the quiz above is 28 points and this means that her estimated worth for Lobola is R 10 000.

SUMMARY OF THE RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This quota sampled study utilised eight women from the Tubatse circuit to estimate their bride-price worth according to qualities stipulated by the Lobola app calculator. The table below presents the summary of the results and the discussion will follow.

Woman type	Qualification	child	Lobola worth
Independent	Diploma	No	R33 000
independent	Diploma	Yes	R30 000
Independent	Degree	No	R35 000
Independent	Degree	Yes	R33 000
Dependent	Matric	No	R23 000
Dependent	Matric	Yes	R20 000
Dependent	Below matric	No	R10 000
Dependent	Below matric	Yes	R10 000

Dataset, Summary of the results

The dataset above explicitly unveils the transition of the meaning of Lobola from being a cultural practice to be a money-making tactic. It is out of the context of these results that Lobola indeed is no longer a show of appreciation and honour rather a money-making tactic if not a business transaction. The dataset above shows that independent women, have a qualification, and are career-driven their expected Lobola price is higher than those who are dependent and do not have qualifications. Additionally, the transition of the Lobola also influences the issue of a child; in the current society, a woman with a child is worth lesser than the one who does not have a child. This is contrary

to the ancient ideology that a woman with a child is worth much Lobola price because the child serves as a sign for her ability to conceive. For instance, the results above show that a woman with a diploma without a child is worth R33 000 which is more than the price of a woman with a diploma and a child, R30 000. This is also seen in the women with degrees and matric certificates in which their difference is based on children, those who do not have children worth more than those who have them. However, women without matric certificates appear to be worth lesser Lobola price, regardless of whether she has a child or not, as compared to the ones who have matric or higher educational qualifications.

Drawing from the guiding questions of this study, ‘is Lobola still relevant today? Is Lobola a cultural practice or business transaction?’ It is clear from the results that the meaning of Lobola has shifted from its original purpose to a commercial activity as the findings show that a woman with a qualification who will not depend on her husband financially, her expected Lobola price has to be higher than the one without qualification. Hence, the original meaning of Lobola in the present era is moulded.

CONCLUSION

This article has sought to unveil the abuse of Lobola for financial gain in the South African context. It has examined the commercialisation of Lobola as a menace to the decline of marriages in the present day. This ordeal has enkindled religiously condemned practices such as *vat n sit*. Thus, Lobola does possess the same validation it did during the pre-colonial times. Baloyi (2016) postulates that for many years Westerners have argued that the paying of Lobola should be stopped; and it is argued that this view is the result of missionary thinking that has demonised black culture. Lobola is an essential African identity and its demise would impact on the African cultural heritage. This noted, the stigma revolving around Lobola does not only threaten the institution of marriage but the African culture. Therefore, this necessitates a clarion call for the revival of the aboriginal cultural meaning of Lobola and the detachment of the commercial undertones.

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