

Research On the Normative Change of Chinese Rural Bride Price and The Improvement of Negotiation Strategies from The Perspective of Social Change

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Abstract: This paper mainly expounds the historical origin and derivative problems of bride price in rural China. Chinese bride price originally meant a beautiful custom. However, with the development of society, the material significance of bride price gradually exceeded the spiritual significance. By combining the emergence of this custom in China, we can explore its deep meaning and remove the distorted meaning given by today's society. In view of the historical and current development, we can find corresponding negotiation skills to reach reasonable bride price negotiation. Nowadays, many families in rural areas have contradictions and disputes due to bride price negotiation and may even cancel marriage. Our purpose is to rationalize bride price negotiation by using negotiation skills, so as to essentially help solve the economic burden caused by bride price in rural China, Population imbalance, pension hidden dangers and other problems. Moreover, this paper expounds the operability of the theory in combination with specific practice, and constantly adjusts the negotiation methods and processes in combination with the feedback given by actual cases, which can not only eliminate the absurd phenomenon of sky-high price bride price and promote marriage connection, but also implement China's people-oriented social atmosphere, promote family harmony and form a happy social atmosphere.

1. Introduction

Bride Price should have been an engagement gift for both men and women to get married in the future. Its original purpose is to repay the efforts of the women's parents to raise their daughters in women's families [1]. In other words, bride price is the gift for engagement. However, with the development of economy and the improvement of living standards. The Bride Price has gradually violated its original intention. In modern society, Bride Price has become an indispensable custom in some regions, which has been deeply integrated into every family. The standard for the combination of men and women may not include banquets or marriage certificate, but there must be a Bride Price.

Many females and their parents believe that they will not get married without the Bride Price, they even ask for outrageous Bride Price before marriage. That implies couples may be hindered by the Bride Price if men's families cannot afford [2]. What is even more exaggerated, there are different pricing standards for different regions, which seriously ignores the economic condition of different families. It is believed by the majority that modern Bride Price has become one of the main factors that makes them stressed, and they hope the Bride Price should be based on economic conditions of different families, definitely not the following trend, which brings a series of unforeseen problems. For example, Firstly, many couples break up because of the sky-high Bride price. Secondly, due to comparisons, Bride Price has become higher and higher as time goes by. Last but not least, people are ranked into different levels, people would only consider their consorts within the same level.

It is known that; the payment of the bride price mainly comes from the savings of the man's parents. Many families have to spend years of savings to pay for their sons' marriage. As a result, the circumstances of many families have undergone tremendous changes before and after the marriage. Nowadays, the prevalence of sky-high Bride Price in rural areas has put some families in debt. Many families have adopted more diversified methods to collect high Bride Price. In addition to their own family savings, part of the money for the bride price comes from loans, borrowings, and even usury. These Bride Price collected in various ways often make disputes and contradictions more complicated and serious—social pressure and burden. The group of men who cannot afford the high bride price will be left over and discussed by others. Their feelings and spirits will be hurt, in some more serious case, they may start to abandon themselves after a period of time, and they will lose faith in their lives, because apart from the cost of living continues to increase, the cost of marriage increases as well. The possibility for them to eventually embark on the path of crime tends to rise, which will be harmful to the society.

Due to the previous discussion, it is extraordinarily necessary to have a collaborative negotiation about the Bride Price before marriage.

Zhou has mentioned that people in rural China spent only 600 RMP in the last century. In 1995, the cost of Bride Price rose to 8000 or even 10000, but after year 2000, the amount of Bride Price rose to 10000 to 20000[3]. Zhou stated that the reason why the amount of Bride Price is becoming higher and higher is that with the development of economy, the number of immigrants is increasing. Due to Chinese different cultures. The amount of Bride Price is different in different regions, but the price only takes higher ones rather than lower ones, and this precisely explains the rising Bride Price [4].

The majority of articles study how the problem of Bride Price is formed and the real definition of the Bride Price. For example, Bride Prices are often not paid voluntarily by the parties, and the marriages of men and women are the additional conditions, but what is really paid voluntarily is that one of them grants it voluntarily without people and additional conditions by definition. Additionally, articles show that the Bride Price is also different from directly asking for property through marriage [5]. Asking for property through marriage means that men or women use marriage as a chance to earn benefits which means the marriage is a prerequisite. In reality, half of the cases are that women asking for a certain amount of property in southern China. Actually, asking for property through marriage is prohibited by law, however, the Bride Price has not been banned.

As research have been done, the analysis gap would be how both families negotiate about the bride price. This article is going to discuss about how the negotiation is made before the marriage. Firstly, the article will give a brief illustration of Bride Price background, such as describing what the bride price is. Secondly, will demonstrate the influences on society, both positive and negative effects will be revealed. Thirdly, methods for researching will be shown, which are the approaches for doing this research. Fourthly, how to make the negotiation is considered to be the most important factor. Last but not least, a practical application that is a real case will be shared.

2. Method

2.1 Literature analysis method

There are several different methods that have been used when doing this research.

Firstly, most of the information is collected online though official website, articles posted on journals, on-line investigation. According to the survey data of Shandong University, 95% of marriages have disputes over bride price. The result of disputes is one party compromise or direct breakup between men and women, which implies the importance of proper negotiation.

Secondly, a practical survey about “Are people willing to negotiate the Bride Price in real life” is made, which is the second approach for the research. The survey shows that 73.5% of people are willing have a negotiation, and the rest of them are not. Because they believe a negotiation would be even more destructive to the relationship than accepting a Bride Price, they are not happy with. As can

be seen the percentage of people who are willing to have a negotiation is exceedingly huge. And this implies the important of studying the Bride Price negotiation.

2.2 Interview

Last but not least, we used the negotiation skill to help one of our friends, and it worked really well. My friend is having the bride price problem right now, she and her boyfriend are having a big fight over the bride price because of different opinions. The bride's family wanted the groom's family to buy a house with full payment, and the groom's family wanted the bride's family to buy a car with full payment, but neither of them had enough money to pay the loan for the house and car. After I learned all the information, I found out that my friend's family wanted a house because they didn't want stress the bride out to pay the loan later. Likewise, the groom's family wanted a car because they didn't want the inconvenience of picking up the kids from work or home later. If the kid's kindergarten and elementary school are far from home it means that kid needs to take public transportation, which is dangerous somehow. After I explain the collaborative negotiation, the TTT Grid and all the approaches, I told my friend that your conversation should not be too aggressive, it is not good for your relationship. You could negotiate and come up with a mutually satisfactory solution. For example, you can choose a house where you can walk to the kindergarten and elementary school, in which circumstance a car is not really necessary and can be considered later. If it is acceptable to buy a car afterwards then you can pay for the house with full payment together, the groom can give 60% and the bride can give 40%, so that the needs of the bride's family can be satisfied and there will be no pressure in the future. My friend totally agreed with my solution and told both families, and everyone was satisfied.

3. Results

3.1 The historical evolution of China's rural bride price norms from the perspective of social change

In the conclusion of old marriage in China, it was customary to give each other dowry and bride price when the marriage agreement was preliminarily reached [6]. This kind of dowry and bride price are commonly known as "bride price". For some time after the founding of new China, this kind of bride price was criticized and once abolished, but they always existed tenaciously among the people.

For modern society, as for the mode of expression, at the engagement ceremony, the man's family would give the woman a "bride price" composed of items with festive meaning in the name of the engaged man [7]. After receiving the bride price, the woman's family will also give the man property of equivalent value, which is called "return gift". When the woman gets married, her mother's family will add multiple times of property on the basis of bride price, which is called "dowry" when the woman gets married to her husband.

3.2 Analysis on influencing factors of sky-high price bride price in rural China

But as time passes by, in some regions and families, bride price has been given too much material meaning, and even become a heavy burden and lose its original meaning [8]. Especially with the reform and opening up, the bride price began to be distorted by rural weddings. It deviated from its original meaning and rose again in rural areas. The amount of bride price is increasing every year, especially in some rural areas of Hebei, Shandong and Henan. Thousands of bride price are very common, so the evil custom of "sky high price bride price" appears.

Combined with China's national conditions, the reasons for the emergence of sky-high price bride price are divided into three main reasons. Firstly, people's comparison psychology is becoming more and more important. In the past, simplicity and kindness were synonymous with rural people. Although most rural people are also simple and kind now, with the continuous development of social economy, there is more psychological comparison between rural people. Because the social scope in rural areas is very small, if other people's daughters get married with more bride price than their own family, they

will feel that they will lose their dignity. In this way, with the passage of time, the bride price market has gradually evolved into a trend of "sky high price bride price" [9].

Secondly, the proportion of men and women is unbalanced, and there are fewer and fewer rural girls. In the 1970s and 1980s, China was also at the time of the strictest family planning policy. Moreover, family planning only allows each family to have only one child, which makes many rural families feel anxious. In the past, our country paid attention to more children and more happiness. Especially every family wants to have a son, which leads to fewer and fewer rural girls. When these sons get married, there are not only few girls, but also very demanding. This is also the reason for the spread of "sky high price bride price"

Thirdly, there are the traditional thought of valuing men over women. Up to now, there are still many rural areas, and some older farmers still have a serious traditional idea of "son preference" in their hearts. And that is, since the last century, because every family has the idea of "son preference", generally every family wants to have a son, and it has taken a lot of effort to have a son, and the birth rate of girls has also declined sharply since then. "Rare things are expensive" is the eternal market law. The social status of women is higher and higher, so they occupy the initiative in the issue of bride price.

3.3 Analysis of problems caused by sky high price bride price in rural China

The sky-high price bride price has undoubtedly caused many problems. Next, I will elaborate from four aspects.

First of all, it will hinder rural economic development. In terms of the current domestic economic development strategy, its purpose is to promote targeted poverty alleviation through "Rural Revitalization" measures and achieve the goal of balanced urban and rural development. However, the emergence of sky-high bride price makes many rural families become poor families because of marriage, and the dream of well-off has become a goal that many families can't reach [10]. Some poor families will be even poorer because of the high price of bride price. These will become difficult problems in the current poverty alleviation work and increase the difficulty for the Party committee and the government to extricate themselves from poverty.

Secondly, rural families are heavily indebted because the bride price is mainly paid from the savings of the man's parents. Many families have to spend years of savings to pay the soaring price of bride price for their son's marriage, so that the family circumstances of many families have changed greatly before and after marriage. Nowadays, the prevalence of sky-high price bride price in rural areas makes some families heavily in debt.

Thirdly, the problem of leftover men is prominent. Leftover men generally refer to unmarried adult men. Under the situation of increasing bride price, rural young men, as the week in the mate selection gradient in the marriage market, marriage has become their heart disease. Therefore, there are a large number of leftover men who are at marriageable age but have not found a suitable partner and are free from marriage and family in rural areas. As an involuntary unmarried group, when the number of remaining men accumulates to a certain extent, it will inevitably become a potential factor disturbing rural social stability and hindering rural development.

Last but not least, it will cause hidden danger of pension. The high debt brought by the sky-high bride price should have been borne by the man's family members, but the reality is that most of the man's parents bear it alone. This puts a heavy financial burden on the parents who should have enjoyed the happiness of their family and spent their old age in peace. It was originally thought that the completion of the son's marriage represented the end of the task as a parent, but in reality, it was the final node to help pay off the debt. Although they are old, they still need to rely on hard work to repay a large number of marriage foreign debts. Many parents only pay off the debts owed by their son's marriage all their life, which seriously squeezed the pension space of their parents, resulting in the lack of guarantee of pension quality.

4. Discussion

For this current phenomenon in the countryside, we have come up with some better improvement plans. The most important thing in this is how to conduct consultation. In order to have a good negotiation we first need to confirm what type of negotiation we have for the bride price. For example, we already know that there is a negotiation between a distributive negotiation and a cooperative negotiation, and it is obvious that the negotiation between the bride price must be a cooperative one. Because the dower is not only a transaction of money or other property, but also a wish of the two families of origin for a new family. Therefore, after we confirm that this is a cooperative negotiation, things become easier.

We think the first problem and the third problem can be solved together, that is, the two major points that hinder the economic development of rural areas and highlight the problem of leftover men. The state can give certain subsidies to newlywed couples settled in poor areas, but only if it is ensured that one of the settlement areas is rural and the second that the male family really does not have the strength to pay the bride price. In this way there are more new forces appearing in the countryside will promote the economic development of rural areas, especially newlywed couples. Because there are subsidies will also be more girls' parents agree to marry their daughters to rural families. We believe to change this phenomenon at the root, we need the support of the state, especially the economic policy.

For the second problem, which is about money issue. We suggest both families to use a method called the TTT Grid. This method is simple: first find out what you want most, such as a house, a car or money, or something more varied. After you first identify and write down all the things you want, you then do a sorting of these things, such as what you want first, the first thing you think of is a car, or the first thing you think of is a house, rank them in order of most important to least important, this is the second point. Next there is a third point, after each of these points write why you want this thing, for example, you want a house, so why do you want a house, because you want to have a stable home in the city, or you want to not need to go to the life of running for rent? Or maybe you want to give your children a schoolhouse, so that they can have a guarantee in their studies in the future? So if the house, do you want to pay in full or take out a loan, do you want the other party to pay or do you want to pay together and what are the reasons? You need to write down each of these things, because whether you want a house, or you want a house with a loan, or you want a house that both people pay back together, these things are really just your surface statement of your needs, but why you need these things is what you are really interested in, and this is what you really deserve should be considered and is something that both families can negotiate later. After both families have succeeded in having their own form, after both families have known what they need and why they need it, then we can have an effective and peaceful negotiation that both sides can negotiate amicably. Because we know each other's interests where each other's true purpose, so that we can better meet. For example, if you want the thing that is first on your list, but the thing that is not in line with the other family's perceptions but is only fourth and fifth or even later on the other family's list, then that means that the thing is the thing that the other family can step back from, but it is the thing that you need most. Similarly, if the other family insists on something in first or second place, and this thing although your family mind but his ranking is very back or even not enough to mention, then this thing can be regressed by your family. Thus, when both families have made some concessions and met the other family's primary needs, a perfect negotiation has been reached.

For the last problem of retirement hazards, it can actually be solved in the previous scheme, and this factor can also be taken into account when using TTT Grid. For example, if parents are concerned that their pensions will not be sufficient to support them in their old age, they can ask the newlyweds to provide a certain amount of assistance after they reach a certain age. Or if they are not required to pay for their daily living expenses but are required to pay for expenses other than health insurance in the event of a serious illness.

5. Conclusion

5.1 Conclusion of our key findings

Combined with the negotiation skills learned in the business negotiation course, we can easily trace the root of the bride price problem, find deep problems, and help both families control the bride price within a reasonable range, so as to solve the economic problems, population problems and pension problems derived from rural areas.

5.2 Research significance

In today's society, marriage has become an indispensable part of every family, and bride price is the most necessary thing to reach an agreement. If we can reasonably finalize the bride price, we can not only abandon the bad habit of sky-high bride price, but also promote family harmony between the two sides, reduce financial pressure, reduce the rural pension problem caused by the imbalance between men and women, and have a positive impact on the society.

5.3 Limitations

However, this study also has limitations. Due to the cultural differences in different rural areas of China and the particularity of each family, we can only do research and investigation based on the situation of most families. Moreover, this study is lack of use primary data and mainly uses secondary data.

5.4 Future studies

In the future, we will combine more special cases to find the similarities between different family bride price disputes and give negotiation skills more in line with the background of the times in combination with the continuous changes of China's national conditions. At the same time, we will also obtain primary data through survey and interview.

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