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A PROBIT ANALYSIS OF BRIDEPRICE INFLATION IN THE ABUAKWA-TANOSO COMMUNITIES MARRIAGE MARKET IN THE KUMASI METROPOLIS OF GHANA

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ABSTRACT: *The paper used the probit model to explore the determinants of brideprice inflation in the Abuakwa-Tanoso communities' marriage market in the Kumasi Metropolis of Ghana. The results indicate that Christianity, modernity, educational status of the bride and no regulation governing the operations of the marriage market have greatly contributed to the rising brideprice inflation in these communities. Inflated brideprice payment as currently being practiced in the Abuakwa-Tanoso communities' marriage market can curtail the liberties of the bride to a large extent. Although high brideprice payment could be interpreted as an explicit recognition and valuing of women's productivity and contribution to marriage, the paper asserts that this serves to limit women's control over their bodies and could be link to the issue of increasing domestic violence abuse against female spouse because the women fear to return to their natal home because of their inability to repay the brideprice. The paper recommends that an appropriate authority be established to regulate the marriage market in the Abuakwa-Tanoso communities.*

KEYWORDS: brideprice inflation, Abuakwa-Tanoso, marriage market, female spouse, communities.

INTRODUCTION

Economists', unlike Anthropologists interest in the marriage market has been very recent, as most of the literature on marriage payments in economics follows the very recent seminal work of (Becker 1991). He developed the marriage market framework to analyse transfers at the time of marriage based on maximisation of utility. Men and women in the Becker's model both possess varying qualities (or potential incomes). Marriage in this model is analysed as a joint venture which provide a greater efficiency in production. The marriage market through the forces of demand and supply therefore assigns potential mates as well as the distribution among them. Optimal mate sorting demands that no potential mate can be made better off by matching with someone else or by not marrying at all. Thus, an optimal marriage market exhibits Pareto optimality by ensuring a positive mating separation, where high-quality men are matched with high-quality women and low-quality men are matched with low-quality women. This is in sharp contrast to the physics law of "like poles repels and unlike pole attracts."

Anthropologists' however, have long shown interest in the issue of marriage by conducting substantial ethnography research into the marital custom of societies. Their

empirical works have identified societies where the burden of marriage payments falls primarily on the groom's family resulting in the payment of brideprices, and those societies where the bulk of payments come from the bride's family resulting in the payment of dowries. Many of the societies which are recognised by anthropologists as practicing the custom of brideprice date as far back as 3000 BCE (Anderson, 2007) and include among other societies the ancient civilizations of Aztecs, Incas Egyptians, and Mesopotamians (Quale, 1988).

The ancient Arabians were also recorded to practice the custom of bride price and a valid marriage contract in Islamic law even requires the payment of brideprice for a marriage to be legal (Hughes, 1985). On the African continent, brideprice payments are mostly prevalent in the sub-Saharan Africa. This is evidenced by the fact that more than 90 percent of sub-Saharan African societies traditionally made such marriage payments (Murdock, 1967; Goody, 1973). The general empirical ethnography trend posited by anthropologists seems to suggest that paying of brideprice exits more frequently in primitive, tribal and often nomadic societies. The practice of brideprice payment in societies has tended to correlate with polygyny marriage arrangement, where men are dominant, culturally strong and tend to have more than one wife with the possibility of divorce at will, (Anderson 2007).

Among the Akan tribes of Ghana, payment of brideprice especially those in the Ashanti regional capital of Kumasi, can be large enough to affect savings patterns as well as the distribution of wealth for the would-be-couples. In 1998 for instance, the average brideprice payment in Abuakwa-Tanoso communities of the Kumasi metropolis was in the range of GH cedis 20. However, by the end of year 2008, the average brideprice payment in these communities has inflated to an average rate of GH cedis 200. The examination of the factors accounting for the inflated payment of brideprice in these communities in recent times is what this paper seeks to explore. The structure of the paper is now outlined. The unique dataset assembled for this research and its description are dealt with in the next section. This is followed by the empirical model and the methodology sections respectively. The penultimate covers the results and discussion section, and a final section put forward some conclusion, emphasising their implications for policy.

Data Source

This study exploits data obtained in a unique survey conducted by the author among randomly married individuals who reside in the Abuakwa-Tanoso communities of the Kumasi metropolis for the period October-December, 2008. A total of 275 individuals were interviewed using a structured questionnaire. The responses of 15 respondents were excluded as they could offer no meaningful responses, leaving a sample size of 260 individuals, made up of 168 males (65%) and 92 females (35%) individuals.

Empirical Model

The empirical model estimated in this paper is largely underpinned by some of the theoretical considerations already outlined. In addition, it is also guided by the consideration that inflation in the brideprice payment in these communities are

influenced by certain factors. Hence, a very general model of the brideprice inflation in these communities for this paper is expressed as follows:

BRIDEPRICEINFLATION = f(EDUCATION, NONMONITORED,MODERNITY, CHRISTIANITY).

The apiori expectations are that:

∂*BRIDEPRICEINFLATION/*∂EDUCATION>0,

∂*BRIDEPRICEINFLATION/*∂MODERNITY>0,

∂*BRIDEPRICEINFLATION/*∂NONMONITORED>0,

∂*BRIDEPRICEINFLATION/*∂CHRISTIANITY>0,

And hence:

$\text{prob}[\text{bridepriceinflation}_i=1] = \Phi(\alpha_0 + \alpha_1\text{education}_i + \alpha_2\text{nonmonitored}_i + \alpha_3\text{modernity}_i + \alpha_4\text{christianity}_i$

where i = 1, …..260, and $\Phi(\cdot)$ denotes the cumulative distribution function operator. EDUCATION is a dummy capturing the respondent's thought on whether the respondent think the formal education status of the bride contributes to the brideprice payment inflation in recent times or not, NONMONITORED is a dummy capturing whether the respondent's thought on whether the lack of monitoring by any governmental or local authority in the payment of bride price in the Abuakwa-Tanoso communities plays a major role in brideprice inflation in recent times or otherwise, MODERNITY is a dummy capturing whether the respondent think the modern influences like 'influx' of male Ghanaians abroad referred to in the local parlance as 'burgers' 'invading' the domestic marriage market have contributed to brideprice inflation in recent times or not, and CHRISTIANITY is a dummy capturing whether the respondent think the practice and the professing of the Christianity faith have contributed to brideprice inflation in recent times. This is against the background that most Christian parents prefer receiving the payments of the brideprice in the form of bulk cash rather than in cash and in kind. $\text{BRIDEPRICEINFLATION}_i$ is a binary dependent variable in this application, which assumes a value of either one or zero depending on whether or not a respondent considers brideprice payment has inflated in recent times in the Abuakwa-Tanoso communities.

METHODOLOGY

The discrete (bridepriceinflation) dependent variable in this application assumes a value of either one or zero depending on the response provided by the respondent. Discrete variables can either be binary, which possess only two possible values or outcomes, or multinomial, which in any case possesses a finite more than two number of distinct possible outcomes. Most of these discrete variables are referred to as qualitative variables measuring a qualitative feature, student residential status on campus, gender, and one's political affiliation. The characteristics of any discrete variable mostly dictate the methods available for model solution. Applied Social Statisticians mostly recommend the probit model or the latent variable approach as the more common approach to specification of discrete choice models. The probit model opted for this paper is underpinned by reference to some underlying unobservable continuous latent propensity dependent variable, $y_i^* \in (-\infty, \infty)$ and y_i^*:

$$y_i^* = \mathbf{x}_i'\boldsymbol{\beta} + u_i \qquad i = 1,.....,n \qquad [1.1]$$

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and $u_i \sim N(0, \sigma^2)$, $y_i^* \sim N(\mathbf{x}_i'\boldsymbol{\beta}, \sigma^2)$. [1.2]

Whilst y_i^* cannot be directly observed, a binary outcome y is observed such that

$y = \mathbf{1}(y_i^* \geq 0)$ and $\mathbf{1}(y_i^* \geq 0)$, is the indicator function taking the value of 1 if the condition in the parentheses is satisfied and 0 otherwise. Thus if the latent dependent variable equals or exceeds zero, the event occurs and if not, the event does not occur. In assuming *u* as normally distributed, the parameters of [1.1] are scaled to force the variance of *u* to unity generating:

$\Phi(\mathbf{x}_i'\boldsymbol{\beta})$ [1.3]

Where $\Phi(\cdot)$ is the notation defining the cumulative distribution function for a standard normal random variable. The estimated probit coefficients are then interpreted by reference to their effect on the standardised probit index.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The probit regression analysis was performed using the STATA (version 10) statistical software package. Table 1 reports the marginal effects of the probit estimates for the determinants of bride price inflation in the Abuakwa-Tanoso communities' marriage market.

Table 1: Probit marginal effects for brideprice inflation in the Abuakwa-Tanoso marriage market.

Variable	marginal effects	Standard errors
Christianity	0.1647847*	(0.0555347)
Educational status	0.2744961*	(0.0658367)
Non-monitoring	0.3070298*	(0.053058)
Modernity	0.3739985*	(.0605429)
McFadden's Pseudo R^2	0.48	

* denotes statistical significance at the 0.05 level
White (1980) standard errors are reported in parentheses

The McFaddens's Pseudo R^2 provides a high measure of 0.48 of goodness of fit of the model to the data. All of the included variables are also found to be statistically significant at a conventional level with the anticipated signs. The estimated marginal effect for Christianity implies that a bride coming from a Christian home on average and ceteris paribus leads to brideprice inflation by 16%. This is so because in recent times, most Christian families prefer converting all the traditional demands making up the bride price value into cash instead of receiving them both in cash and in kind. For example, the traditional demands for an alcoholic drink as part of the bride price are mostly converted into cash before it is accepted by the bride's Christian family. Educational status of the bride on average and ceteris paribus leads to brideprice inflation by 27%. This is due to the fact that in recent times, would-be- brides might have had enough access to formal education. Parents therefore demand an increased payment of brideprice as a compensation of the investment in the human capital of their daughters. The lack of any governmental or traditional authority to regulate the payment of brideprice in the Abuakwa-Tanoso suburbs has also contributed to the brideprice inflation in the Abuakwa-Tanoso suburbs. Non-monitoring of the payment of bride price by any authority whatsoever, on average and ceteris paribus has led to brideprice inflation by 31%. Marriages in the olden times were contracted between families who have close social and economic ties. In recent times however, marriage contracts and brideprice payment are influenced by many modern considerations among which are the 'influx' of grooms who reside abroad. The form of marriage where the groom is outside of the country is known in the local parlance as 'burger's marriage'. The 'burgers-effect' as a result of 'burgers marriage' has also contributed significantly to the brideprice inflation in Abuakwa-Tanoso suburbs marriage market. The 'burger's effect' arising out of modernity practices on average and ceteris paribus has led to the bride inflation by 37 percentage points in the Abuakwa-Tanoso communities marriage market.

CONCLUSION

This study interest in brideprice payments partly stems from its potential to affect the wealth distribution across generations and families. Finding from this study indicates rising brideprice inflation in the Abuakwa-Tanoso communities' marriage market. Inflated brideprice payment as being practiced in the Abuakwa-Tanoso communities' marriage market can curtail the liberties of the bride to a large extent. In theory, high brideprice payment could be interpreted as an explicit recognition and valuing of women's productivity and contribution to marriage (Anderson, 2007). In reality however, it often serves to limit women's control over their bodies. (Ansell, 2001) linked the issue of payment of high brideprice to domestic violence abuse due to the women's fear of returning to their natal home without being able to repay the brideprice From the study, the rising brideprice inflation in the Abuakwa-Tanoso communities marriage market is as a result of some identifiable factors. Hence a more systematic data collection is needed regarding the magnitude of the brideprice inflation so that an appropriate authority could be established to regulate the marriage market in these communities. Conducting an empirical study on the whole Kumasi metropolis marriage market to examine the factors responsible for the brideprice inflation was not pursued and remains an agenda for future research.

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