

# Transformation of Parents' Roles in Determining *Bōwō* in Hilizihōnō Village, Nias

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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to examine how the Nias ethnic group in Hilizihōnō Village views the evolving role of parents in deciding *bōwō* (bridewealth). The study employed a qualitative approach with a descriptive design, utilizing data collection methods that included observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation of informants' responses, all of whom were purposively selected. The findings reveal that shifts in parental roles are shaped by an interplay of internal family dynamics most notably, the transition toward more dialogical communication patterns alongside external factors such as economic conditions, educational attainment, modernization, and evolving socio-religious values. This transformation is characterized by a transition from hierarchical to more egalitarian and participatory family relationships. Furthermore, the criteria for determining *bōwō* (bridewealth) have shifted from a predominantly symbolic orientation toward more functional considerations, including the economic welfare of the couple and the principle of mutual agreement. Taken together, these changes reflect an ongoing process of cultural adaptation and reconstruction, through which the tradition continues to sustain its relevance and endure within an ever-evolving social environment.

**Keywords:** *Bōwō*, Parental Role, Transformation, Cultural Reconstruction, Nias Ethnicity



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## INTRODUCTION

Marriage is understood not only as the personal union of two individuals involved in a marital bond. It also serves as a fundamental social institution, binding two extended families together in a system of values, norms, and social order that has been passed down from generation to generation. As a social institution, marriage has a role far broader than simply a relationship between two people. This is because marriage is understood as the foundation for the formation of new social units that play a vital role in cultural reproduction and the sustainability of society's social structure.

The bond of marriage is not merely formal and legal, as recognized by state law and customary law. It also encompasses a profound emotional, spiritual dimension that connects people to transcendent beliefs and values. It also includes a rich cultural dimension that actively strengthens and strengthens the relationship between two family groups that may have different backgrounds, customs, traditions, and cultural symbols.

Marriage often serves as a site for social negotiation, reflecting and revealing the dynamics of power relations, kinship structures, and societal change. Therefore, marriage traditions are not static or frozen in a fixed, unchanging form. Instead, they undergo constant transformation and adaptation in line with changing social, economic, and cultural conditions, as well as the changing times that influence the communities they support. These changes can occur slowly and gradually, or rapidly in response to external pressures such as globalization, modernization, and technological advances. Therefore, marriage traditions reflect a society's ability to balance the preservation of ancestral values with the demands of contemporary life.

The dowry given by the groom to the bride, or what is known in the Nias ethnic group as *bōwō* (dowry), is one of the most central and inseparable components in the Nias ethnic marriage tradition. *Bōwō* (dowry) is not merely a customary obligation that must be fulfilled formally, but is a reflection of the noble values that have been passed down from generation to generation in the social and cultural life of the Nias ethnic group. The presence of *bōwō* (dowry) in the marriage procession is an important marker that distinguishes the Nias ethnic traditional marriage from other ethnic marriage traditions, while also reflecting the distinctive and unique cultural identity of the Nias ethnic community itself.

*The bride price* (*bōwō*) has symbolic meaning as a form of respect, affection, and recognition of the social status of the woman's family, in addition to its material value (Gulo & Telaumbanua, 2021; Lafau & Fitriani, 2023). Determining *the bride price* (*bōwō*) in the Nias customary system traditionally falls under the authority of the family, especially the woman's parents. They make key decisions based on social status, cultural values, and applicable customary rules (Savitri & Zalukhu, 2016).

Several recent studies have shown that the practice and customs of *bōwō* (dowry) among the Nias ethnic group have undergone significant changes, both in terms of meaning, value, and how they are implemented in modern social life. Several recent studies have shown that the practice of *bōwō* (dowry) among the Nias ethnic group has undergone a significant shift in meaning. Waruwu & Karlani (2024) and (Mendrofa, 2024) found that *bōwō* (dowry), which was originally seen as a symbol of affection and respect for the woman's family, has now tended to shift to an economic burden. This shift is driven by modernization, changes in educational orientation towards greater pragmatism, and changes in social structure. As a result, the value of *bōwō* (dowry), which was once based on customary agreements, is now more often determined by economic calculations, so that its spiritual meaning is slowly being replaced by transactional logic.

Furthermore, it was also revealed that the negotiation process in determining *the bōwō* (dowry) is now experiencing increasing complexity, involving various social actors with different interests (Lafau & Fitriani, 2023; Tampubolon et al., 2024). These findings indicate that changes encompass not only the meaning of *bōwō* (dowry) itself, but also the mechanisms and social relations that underlie and regulate the process of determining it.

However, previous studies have generally focused on the shifting meanings and negotiation processes of *the bōwō* (dowry). Meanwhile, research into the factors that influence the changing role of parents in determining *the bōwō* (dowry) remains very limited, particularly in the local context at the village level. However, changes in parental roles are important indicators for understanding the transformation of authority structures within families and the dynamics of intergenerational relationships in indigenous communities. Furthermore, modern anthropological research demonstrates that the interaction between modernization, education, religious values, and economic circumstances often reshapes power relations within families (Jones, 2017; Ronald & Baker, 2000).

The changing role of parents in determining *the bōwō* (dowry) in Hilizihōnō Village is interesting to study because it demonstrates a shift from absolute authority to a more democratic and participatory one. These changes indicate that society has changed economically and socially. They also demonstrate a shift in values, placing the happiness and freedom of the couple as the top priority in marriage. Therefore, it is crucial to examine the factors driving this shift in parental roles to understand how local traditions can survive and evolve in line with modernization.

Based on this explanation, this article is innovative because it examines the transformation of the *bōwō* (dowry) tradition from the perspective of the changing role of parents as key parties in customary decision-making, not just in terms of meaning or negotiation processes. This research specifically aims to examine how the role of parents changes in determining *bōwō* (dowry) among the Nias ethnic group in Hilizihōnō Village. This study is expected to advance anthropological studies, particularly those related to the dynamics of cultural change and power relations within families in indigenous communities.

## RESEARCH METHODS

To understand the factors that influence the changing role of parents in determining *the bride price* (*bōwō*) among the Nias ethnic community in Hilizihōnō Village, this study employed a qualitative approach

with a descriptive design. This qualitative approach was chosen because it explores the meanings, experiences, and social dynamics that occur within the community's cultural practices (Creswell & Creswell, 2023).

This research was conducted in Hilizihõnõ Village, Fanayama District, South Nias Regency. The location was selected based on findings that the village exhibited changes in the process of determining *the bõwõ* (dowry), particularly related to the shifting role of parents in customary decision-making. Furthermore, research informants were identified through purposive sampling, namely the selection of relevant informants who possessed knowledge and experience related to the traditions/cultures being studied. These informants included traditional leaders, religious leaders, parents of daughters, and the general public. Data obtained through purposive sampling were tailored to the research objectives (Sugiyono, 2022).

To obtain data, this study utilized participant observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. Observations were conducted to understand social practices in determining *bõwõ* (dowry). Interviews were used to explore informants' experiences and perspectives, and documentation complemented and validated field data. To enhance the validity of the research results, this combination of methods was used to triangulate the data (Miles et al., 2018).

Data reduction is carried out by selecting, summarizing, grouping, and focusing relevant information, so that the data collected from participant observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation can be understood in a more focused manner. After that, the data is presented in narrative form or specific categorizations so that patterns, themes, and relationships between emerging symptoms can be clearly seen. In the next stage, conclusions are drawn by comparing findings across data sources, reviewing results deemed important, and confirming the relationship of the findings to factors causing changes in the role of parents in determining *bõwõ* (dowry). This process is repeated several times to identify patterns, categories, and relationships related to the components that cause changes in the role of parents in determining *bõwõ* or dowry (Miles et al., 2018).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this section, the changing role of parents in determining *the bõwõ* (dowry) among the Nias ethnic group in Hilizihõnõ Village is discussed analytically within the framework of social and cultural change. This change is not only understood as a shift in practices over time, but also as a result of the interaction of various factors such as the dynamics of education, the influence of new values, changing patterns of relationships within the family, and increasing access to information from outside the community. Therefore, the presentation is directed at showing how parents negotiate old values with the demands of the times, both in the way they determine *the bõwõ* (dowry) and in the considerations that underlie it.

As a starting point, understanding the characteristics of the informants who serve as sources of research data is crucial. It is assumed that social background can be a factor influencing their perspectives on changes in *bõwõ* (dowry) practices. Differences in age, life experience, education level, occupation, and informant position within the family or community structure can lead to variations in how they assess traditions and the changes that occur. Through information from informants, this research can capture the extent to which change is viewed as normal, needs to be maintained in some form, or is perceived as shifting values that have been considered important.

Informant profiles are presented in Table 1 as a basis for a more focused reading of the research findings. The table provides a concise overview of the informants' social backgrounds, enabling readers to understand the context of each perspective. Therefore, the description of parents' role in determining *the bõwõ* (dowry) does not stand alone but is supported by relevant data and understood according to the characteristics of the research participants, ultimately helping to explain the socio-cultural changes taking place in Hilizihõnõ Village.

Table 1. Informant Profile

No	Informant Name	Age (Years)	Gender	Last education
1	K. Daliwu	49	L	S1
2	T. Bawaulu	76	L	No school
3	S. Nehe	68	P	No school
4	H. Wau	75	L	No school
5	S. Harimao	69	L	No school
6	S. Sihura	54	L	JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL
7	M. Sihura	47	P	Elementary School
8	S. Zebua	28	L	S1
9	N. Duha	64	L	No school
10	S. Laia	41	P	S1
11	F. Nehe	24	L	S1
12	H. Nehe	29	L	S1
13	D. Lase	30	L	S2
14	B. Bali	80	L	No school

The informants in this study were predominantly adults and elderly, with varying educational levels, ranging from no schooling to university. The diverse characteristics of the respondents, as listed in Table 1, demonstrate that views on the practice and determination of *bōwō* (dowry) do not arise from a single generational background, but rather are the result of a confluence of different life experiences. On the one hand, older groups generally still strongly adhere to traditional values and refer to knowledge passed down through generations. On the other hand, groups with formal education tend to be more open to new perspectives influenced by learning processes, information, and the flow of modernization.

From an anthropological perspective, the heterogeneity of these actors indicates the existence of multiple perspectives within the cultural system, meaning that no single perspective is completely dominant (Eriksen, 2023). Differences in age, education, and experience give rise to discussions, negotiations, and reinterpretations of values within social practices. In this context, decisions regarding the determination of *the bōwō* (dowry) can be understood as a process involving dynamic socio-cultural considerations, whether through family discussions, the influence of traditional figures, or rational considerations based on learned knowledge. Therefore, the changing role of parents in determining *the bōwō* (dowry) cannot be interpreted as simply a direct individual change, but rather as a consequence of complex social interactions between tradition and modernity, as well as between diverse perspectives that develop within the community.

### Changes in Relationships and Communication Patterns in the Family

The changing role of parents in determining the dowry (*bōwō*) is closely related to the evolving dynamics of relationships within the family. These changes are particularly evident in the communication patterns between parents and children. This shift shifts from one-way communication to a more dialogical one, from direct instruction to an approach that takes children's opinions and needs into account. Furthermore, this shift shifts from traditional methods to discussions oriented toward shared understanding. Through these changes in interaction, decisions previously predominantly determined by parents shift to a process that involves children more actively, both in the form of expressing considerations, negotiating options, and adapting rules to suit the circumstances.

In this regard, through the data in Table 2, we can see the relationship between changes in family relations, parent-child communication patterns, and how the process of determining *the bōwō* (dowry) has transformed over time.

**Table 2. Factors Causing Change**

No	Factor Theme	Description of Findings
1	Changes in the couple's communication patterns	The prospective bride and groom now discuss first before the traditional process
2	The influence of religious/spiritual values	Determining <i>the bōwō</i> (dowry) prioritizes affection and religious values
3	Education and modernization	Education makes the younger generation more rational and brave in expressing opinions.
4	Democratization in the family	Parents are no longer authoritarian, but rather give children space to make decisions.
5	Economic conditions	Determination of <i>the bōwō</i> (dowry) is adjusted to the economic capabilities of the couple
6	Changes in social perspective	Society is more flexible and adaptive to changes in customs
7	Children's financial independence	Children who bear the costs of the wedding are more dominant in the decision
8	Access to information	Information from education and the environment influences thought patterns.

One of the main components influencing the changing role of parents is the change in communication style, as shown in the data from Table 2. Previously, communication within the family tended to be one-way: parents held full authority and children simply received direction without much opportunity to express their opinions. This pattern led to decisions being made unilaterally, leaving children more as followers than as participants.

Power relations within families have shifted from a hierarchical pattern, where parents held complete control, to a more egalitarian pattern, a relationship characterized by greater equality and mutual consideration. In a hierarchical pattern, family decisions are generally determined by parental authority, with little room for other family members. However, in an egalitarian pattern, authority is no longer entirely centered on parents, but rather is negotiated through discussion, consideration of needs, and agreement among family members. This change demonstrates a transformation of power relations toward a more dialogical one, allowing family members, including children or younger members, the opportunity to express their views and participate in shaping family decisions.

Furthermore, the finding that younger family members are more frequently involved in family decision-making reinforces the notion of changing social values within the family. This increased involvement reflects a shift from the value of mere obedience (adhering to the decisions of those with authority) to the value of participation (taking part, providing input, and influencing decisions). Through this participation, the family becomes not only a space for socialization but also an arena for practicing democracy on a small scale, where open communication and mutual respect are essential principles. Thus, this transformation not only changes the way families function but also changes how authority is interpreted and how power relations are constructed in everyday life, consistent with the findings of Killen & Smetana (2022) and Ronald & Baker (2000).

Next, the findings that show a comparison between aspects that have experienced changes in practice from the past (traditional) and the present are shown in Table 3.

**Table 3. Comparison of the Tradition of Determining *Bōwō* (Dowry) in the Past and Present**

Aspect	Before	Now
Decision maker	Parent	Child + parent
Communication patterns	One Way	Two-way (dialogue)
Function of <i>bōwō</i> (dowry)	Social status	Agreement & love
Core values	Honor	Happiness
Nature of the decision	Absolute	Democratic
Consideration	Customs	Custom + economy + education
Role of children	Passive	Active
The role of parents	Dominant	Supporters

Table 3 shows a shift in power relations within the family from a hierarchical pattern to a more egalitarian one. In a hierarchical pattern, decision-making authority is generally concentrated in the hands of parents, thus other family members tend to have limited space to participate in expressing aspirations and arguments. Conversely, in a more egalitarian pattern, parents no longer play the sole role of decision-makers but rather act more as facilitators, directing the family negotiation process. This is in line with the fact that authority in modern families tends to shift from unilateral control to a negotiation process that involves children as active parties in decision-making (Smetana & Rote, 2019). Furthermore, from a social change perspective, modernization encourages a transformation of values from obedience to authority to individual participation and autonomy within the family. As a result, family relationship patterns are changing (Ronald & Baker, 2000).

This transformation aligns with the findings of Smetana & Rote (2019), who stated that families in modern society are undergoing a shift toward more participatory relationships. Within this framework, changes in communication are understood as a factor influencing not only the decision-making process but also the authority structure within the family. These changes in communication are evident in the increasing practice of deliberation and deliberation, for example, when decisions regarding education, the division of domestic roles, or life choices are no longer made unilaterally, but rather through an exchange of considerations between parties. Consequently, authority structures tend to become more dynamic and less centralized in a single figure, as decision-making roles can shift depending on the context, competence, and contributions of each family member.

This change can be understood as a form of cultural adaptation to individual psychological needs based on Malinowski's functional theory. Based on the functionalist perspective, every element of culture undergoes adjustments to meet basic human needs, both biological and psychological (Malinowski, 2014).

The younger generation's need for recognition, involvement, and freedom in making life choices is realized through changes in communication patterns within the family. Studies on parent-child relationships also show that more open and dialogic communication helps children develop greater independence, as it allows them to actively participate in family decision-making processes (Wang et al., 2024). Furthermore, increased parental support for children's autonomy correlates with increased independence, decision-making skills, and better social adjustment in children (Rejaän et al., 2024).

Therefore, changes in the role of parents should not be viewed as a weakening of family function. Rather, these changes represent adjustments that allow families to continue to fulfill their primary functions more adaptively. In this context, the family continues to function as a social institution that maintains balanced relationships among its members, but through more participatory and responsive interaction patterns that address the development of the individuals within it.

## Transformation of Cultural Values and Belief Systems

In addition to changes in family relationships, shifts in parental roles are also influenced by the transformation of cultural values and belief systems that have developed in society. As views on education, parenting, and gender roles change, so too does the family's orientation in decision-making. Furthermore, societal beliefs, such as those related to child success norms, parenting responsibilities, and ways to instill moral values, also contribute to shaping parents' considerations in determining parenting patterns and daily practices. Table 4 below shows in more detail how these changes are reflected in the shifting considerations in determining *the bōwō* (dowry).

**Table 4. Considerations in Determining *Bōwō* (Dowry)**

Factors to Consider	Before	Now
Social status	Dominant	Secondary
Economic capacity	Less noticed	Very attentive
Education	Not important	Important
Love couple	Not the main thing	Main
Religious values	Not dominant	Dominant

Table 4 shows that the criteria used to determine *the bride* price (*bōwō*) have changed significantly. While previously *the bōwō* (dowry) focused on symbols of social status and family honor, it is now more influenced by economic factors, affection, and mutual agreement.

This change aligns with anthropological research on dowries, or marriage gifts, which suggests that dowry gifts serve as a symbol of prestige, honor, and legitimacy of family relationships in traditional societies (Anderson, 2007). However, their meaning tends to become more pragmatic in societies undergoing social and economic change. This occurs because negotiations take into account both emotional bonds and the economic capabilities of the couple (Dalmia & Lawrence, 2005; Kabeer, 2019; Tampubolon et al., 2024). Therefore, it is understandable that *dowry* is no longer solely a function of social status. Instead, it has shifted to become a mechanism for reaching agreements that are more flexible and appropriate to a more modern social environment.

Furthermore, this change indicates a shift in values from a symbolic orientation to a functional orientation. While previously *the bōwō* (dowry) functioned primarily to maintain symbolic meanings, it is now *viewed* more as an instrument that serves social and practical functions in family life. These results support the research of Waruwu & Karliani (2024) which states that *the bōwō* (dowry) is no longer interpreted solely as a symbol of honor, but also as a financial burden that needs to be adjusted to real conditions. This adjustment reflects rational considerations, particularly related to economic capacity, without necessarily eliminating the meaning of family relationships and honor; it simply shifts the emphasis.

Religious values also play a significant role in this dynamic of change. All informants in this study are Christian, so the value of love forms the basis of family decision-making. In this context, the practice of *bōwō* (dowry) is not viewed merely as a social tradition, but also as a practice that must align with moral teachings and spiritual values. This aligns with studies by Mendrofa (2024) and Sunggu et al. (2023), which emphasize that religious values contribute to shaping more humanistic social practices, emphasizing respect, care, and the well-being of interfamily relationships.

Based on Malinowski's functionalist perspective, the changes that occur show that culture does not essentially lose its function, but rather experiences adjustments in form according to the needs of society. (Malinowski, 2014) The *bride* price (*bōwō*) continues to function as a means of maintaining social relations and family harmony, but its form and implementation have become more adaptive. In other words, the bride price (*bōwō*) remains a social mechanism for maintaining attachment and harmony, only now it is more responsive to emotional needs (love and attachment) and spiritual needs (religious values), while also taking into account the family's economic situation.

## The Influence of Socio-Economic Structure and Modernization

External factors are also influenced primarily by the socio-economic conditions of society and the flow of modernization. To identify the types of factors at play, Table 5 below presents a classification of internal and external factors.

**Table 5. Classification of Internal and External Factors**

Types of Factors	Factor	Source
Internal family	Couple communication	Children & parents
Internal family	Emotional relationship	Parent
External social	Education	Environment
External social	Modernization	Public
External culture	Religion	Church
External economics	Economic conditions	Social reality

Table 5 shows that external variables such as economics, education, and modernization contribute significantly to changes in parental roles. This means that the transformations occurring in parental role practices and orientations do not arise solely from internal family dynamics but are also influenced by broader social circumstances. In this context, cultural shifts can be understood as a response to structural pressures from society, including changing norms, job demands, and evolving perspectives within the family's environment. Furthermore, these changes can also lead to "adjustments" within the family due to differing views between generations regarding how to educate, manage the household economy, and interpret parental responsibilities.

In the context of family sociology, changes in family practices are understood as the result of a complex interaction between internal family dynamics and broader social transformations. Giddens' (1986) structuration theory asserts that social practices are formed through reciprocal relationships between agents (individuals/families) and social structures. Furstenberg (2019) demonstrates that family dynamics develop gradually through adaptation to social, economic, and cultural changes. Internal dynamics encompass role arrangements, parenting patterns, and relationships between family members, while social transformations encompass shifts in economic conditions, urbanization, and developments in the education system, ultimately driving families to adjust their decision-making patterns, including the division of parental roles.

These internal dynamics can include how families organize roles, parenting patterns, relationships between family members, and changes in family goals or strategies in responding to daily challenges. At the same time, social transformation encompasses various structural changes such as shifting economic conditions, urbanization, and developments in the education system. As these factors increase, families tend to adjust their decision-making patterns, including the division of parental roles, to align with the new needs emerging in society (Furstenberg, 2019).

Furthermore, research on family change in a global context demonstrates that family systems continually adapt to structural pressures. Changing social and economic values often lead to new ways of understanding parental responsibilities, family relationships, and the forms of support provided within the household (Amato, 2000). In many societies, modernization and increased access to education can lead to changes in family orientations, such as career priorities, child-rearing practices, and expectations for the quality of family life. Consequently, changing family patterns can have a direct impact on the quality of life and relationships within the family, both through changes in socioeconomic opportunities and through adjustments in the norms and values that govern family life (Furstenberg, 2019).

In this context, the shifting role of parents in determining *the bōwō* (dowry) can be understood as an adaptive response to structural dynamics that influence broader social life. This means that these changes are not only about changes within the family, but also a consequence of changes in the social environment that reshape family practices through varying demands, opportunities, and constraints over time. Therefore,

understanding the shifting role of parents requires placing it within the framework of the reciprocal relationship between internal family dynamics and social changes occurring outside the family.

Research findings show that the majority of the Hilizihōnō village community faces limited economic conditions. This situation forces families to be more careful in planning their daily needs and making socio-cultural decisions related to spending. As a result, communities tend to modify their *bōwō* (dowry) practices to avoid becoming too heavy an economic burden. In other words, cultural practices that previously followed certain patterns must be reviewed so that they can continue to be implemented without disrupting household financial stability. In this context, it can be indicated that a community's material condition is always linked to cultural practices (Gudeman, 1986; Hornborg, 2024). Therefore, changes in determining *bōwō* (dowry) can be seen as an adaptation strategy: families adapt rules and practices deemed important to the economic realities they face, so that socio-cultural goals can still be achieved realistically.

Furthermore, education and modernization also play a significant role in changing societal perspectives. Younger generations with access to higher education generally develop a more rational, reflective mindset, and are open to alternatives in carrying out social roles. They tend to consider the benefits, efficiency, and long-term impact of a practice, rather than simply maintaining traditions as they are. This aligns with the modernization theory proposed by Ronald & Baker (2000), which states that social change drives a shift in values from more traditional to more rational ones. As society becomes more exposed to information through education and technological developments, the standards of "what is considered right" or "what is considered appropriate" in cultural practices also shift.

Furthermore, according to the functionalist perspective, the changes that occur demonstrate that cultural systems have the ability to adapt to maintain social stability. Functionalism believes that culture will continue to adapt to meet the needs of society. (Malinowski, 2014). When customary practices are not adapted to changing social and economic conditions, they can potentially lose their relevance and be abandoned, replaced, or modified. Therefore, tradition is not always static; it can actually change form to maintain its function in modern social life. The changing role of parents shown in Table 5 can be interpreted as a community effort to maintain social order and family continuity amidst increasingly complex environmental changes.

### Cultural Adaptation in a Functionalist Perspective

Overall, the research findings show that changes in parents' roles in determining *the bōwō* (dowry) do not occur suddenly, but rather are the result of a complex interaction between elements within the family and elements originating from outside the family. Internal factors within the family, dynamics such as understanding, experience, and values passed down from parents to children play a role in shaping their perspectives on the practice of *bōwō* (dowry). Meanwhile, external societal factors, such as changes in lifestyle, socio-cultural demands, developments in knowledge, and increasingly diverse environmental influences also contribute to adjustments in this practice.

Changes in the practice of determining *the bride price* (*bōwō*) in research on bridewealth or bridal wealth are not only influenced by the overall internal family relations but also by broader structural factors. Specifically, changes in social values, reflected in shifts in society's views on the institution of marriage, gender relations, and the significance of the bride price in an economic context, also contribute to the transformation of this practice. Furthermore, family economic conditions (e.g., changes in income levels, rising living costs, and variations in financial capacity) encourage adaptations to the amount and form of the bride price to align with the material realities faced.

Furthermore, the process of modernization plays a role through changes in social interaction patterns and negotiation mechanisms between families. This is understandable because wider access to information, education, and diverse cultural perspectives has given rise to more deliberative forms of agreement and opened up more varied considerations in determining the dowry (*bōwō*), as discussed in this study. Therefore, in this context, the mechanism for determining *the bōwō* (dowry) is no longer entirely deterministic by tradition, but is increasingly determined by the interaction between cultural norms and contextual demands.

Several studies have also shown that increasing economic pressures and changing individual preferences are important factors facilitating the transformation of dowry practices across societies. Individual preferences can be shaped by social experiences, socialization processes through education, and the influence of changing

norms that emphasize flexibility in family and marital relations. When couples and families view the dowry as part of a social negotiation that influences the sustainability of the household, the dowry determination process tends to shift toward mechanisms that are more responsive to the needs and capabilities of the parties. This implies increased flexibility in dowry determination, both in terms of quantity, variety of components, and timing of delivery. The practice then becomes more oriented toward mutual agreement between the parties involved, as demonstrated in previous research (Anderson, 2007; Lowes & Nunn, 2018; Voena et al., 2019).

In this regard, the changing role of parents in determining *the bōwō* (dowry) can be understood as a result of the dynamic relationship between internal family values and external structural pressures. Although parents continue to function as a buffer of norms, social authority, and cultural legitimacy in the dowry determination process, the strategies they employ tend to adapt in response to changing socio-economic conditions and shifting normative expectations. This adjustment can be seen in the reformulation of considerations regarding the size of the dowry based on financial capacity, the involvement of the couple's aspirations, and the parents' ability to articulate tradition so that it remains acceptable within the changing social configuration. Therefore, the transformation of parents' roles does not merely mean a weakening of tradition, but rather reflects a gradual process of cultural reconstruction that is influenced by broader social dynamics.

The transformation of parental roles in this study is not understood as a weakening of tradition, but rather as the emergence of a gradual process of cultural reconstruction influenced by broader social dynamics. Changes in practices, such as dowries or wealth in marriage, in the anthropology of marriage are understood as a continuous negotiation process between traditional values and modern socio-economic demands, so that traditions are not lost but instead undergo adjustments in form and meaning.

Furthermore, several studies on families have shown that parents do not always rigidly uphold certain values but rather tend to adapt to social changes for the benefit of their children. This adaptation is particularly evident in aspects of education, income, and marital happiness. In anthropological studies of marriage, family negotiation processes that consider the socioeconomic conditions and well-being of the younger generation often impact changes in dowry practices or bridal wealth (De Genova, 2017; Lowes & Nunn, 2018; Voena et al., 2019).

Furthermore, studies also indicate that families play an active role in reinterpreting traditions to keep them aligned with contemporary needs. Thus, parents not only function as guardians of tradition but also act as agents who adapt cultural practices according to changing social conditions and children's aspirations (Bourdieu, 2013; Fortunato et al., 2006; Goody & Tambiah, n.d.). Therefore, the changing role of parents in determining *the bōwō* (dowry) can be understood as an adaptive cultural reconstruction, not as a form of decline or "degradation" of tradition.

Based on Malinowski's functional theory perspective, the changes that occur cannot be understood as cultural dysfunction that damages the social system, but rather as a form of cultural adaptation to meet the new needs of society (Malinowski, 2014). This means that although the form and mechanism of determining *the bōwō* (dowry) have been modified, *the bōwō* (dowry) still carries out its main function in maintaining social order, strengthening relationship ties, and maintaining harmony within the family. In this context, parents play a role as parties who negotiate the suitability of cultural practices with developing social conditions, so that the practice of *bōwō* (dowry) remains relevant and acceptable in everyday life.

This demonstrates that culture is dynamic and constantly transforms with the times, without losing its essential meaning. Therefore, cultural sustainability is not solely determined by its unchanging form, but rather by its ability to adapt and maintain its social function to remain beneficial to society (Eriksen, 2023).

## CONCLUSION

Based on the research results, it can be concluded that the changing role of parents in determining *the bōwō* (dowry) among the Nias ethnic group in Hilizihōnō Village is the result of the interaction between internal family factors and broader external factors, such as economic conditions, education, modernization, and changes in social and religious values. Family relationship patterns that were previously hierarchical have changed to become more egalitarian and participatory. Parents are no longer the sole decision-makers, but act as facilitators in the family negotiation process.

Furthermore, changes in the considerations for determining *the bōwō* (dowry) demonstrate a shift in values from a symbolic orientation, which emphasizes social status and honor, to a more functional orientation, such as the well-being, economic capacity, and happiness of the couple. From a functionalist perspective, this shift indicates a cultural adaptation and reconstruction that allows the practice of *bōwō* (dowry) to remain alive in the community.

In line with these findings, communities and traditional leaders must continue to develop more flexible *bōwō* (dowry) practices without eliminating their important values as a representation of kinship and social relations. Furthermore, the process of determining *bōwō* (dowry) requires a more open discussion between parents and the younger generation. This is necessary to create a balance between maintaining tradition and meeting contemporary needs. To enhance their understanding of cultural transformation in modern society, future researchers should investigate the dynamics of changes in customary marriage practices in a broader context, both comparatively across regions and using more diverse theoretical approaches.

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