

Psychosocial Developmental Factors Associated With Teenage Maasai of Transmara in Kenya

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ABSTRACT:

The study describes the psychosocial developmental factors associated with the teenage Maasai of Transmara in Kenya. The study was *ex-post facto* in approach and utilised a descriptive survey research design. This research was carried out among the three clans of the Maasai people living in Trans Mara in Narok County, namely; the *Ilmoitanik*, *Isiria* and *Ilwuasinkishu*. The population was 176,360. The sample was drawn from the *Rrampau*, *Iseuri* and *Ilnyankusi* age sets. The accessible population constituted of 919 respondents that comprised 455 males and 464 females. The sample was selected through stratified technique sampling by age sets, and by gender. The sample that was drawn from the above accessible population was 260 respondents whose distribution was 160 females and 100 males. The instrument for data collection was Focused Group Discussions that yielded valuable information from the targeted participants. The statistical analysis was done using the latest Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 22.0 for windows. The study found that there exist some distinct developmental stages that have a lot of comparisons with Erik Erikson's psychosocial stages whose combination will help in the formation of future generations and make psychological interventions more productive. The research found out that there are a lot of similarities between the two approaches in terms of structures that is, timing, qualities of the facilitators, content and evaluation procedures. The study recommends minimising the influence of the psychosocial environment that hinders proper development from ensuring the continuity of the Maasai developmental stages.

Key Terms: Psychosocial development, teenage, psychosocial stages

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Introduction

Human development is seen as a patterned, orderly and lifelong process that contributes to one's progress in the context of society. This process helps one's interaction with others. Erikson (1978) asserts that the life cycle chart becomes meaningful only when one observes it as a weave. One's life is, therefore, a chain of developmental stages. Developmental stages give the definitions of who we are and the reason we happen to be. They predict the outcome of the person we become. These stages explain the reason why people get stagnated or manage to overcome any given stage's tasks rendering success or failure in the society's suitability (Erikson, 1974). The understanding of these stages makes the solution in enabling clients to retrace themselves and claim their rightful place of productivity and fulfilling life. According to Mbiti (1990), it does not only lead to understanding but also the mutual acceptability of the person as well as the community by the person. The entire life of a human being consists of developmental stages. According to Hans, Cruysberg, Pennings & Lammens (2014), developmental stages begin immediately after fertilisation. It is a basis of psychohistory from which life cycle ensues (Stevens, 2008). Biological as well as experiential vulnerabilities predispose persons in the society as they develop (Schwartz, Klimstra, Luyckx, Hale & Meeus, 2012).

A person's harmonious development determines one's ability to cope with the demands of life. Social and psychological development is an essential aspect of a person's growth and adaptation to the environment. According to various theories of psychology as well as cultural interpretations, human development is characterised by physical, psychological and social factors across the lifespan. The Maasai culture has a vast wealth of cultural traits to contribute to this scientific study. This culture is characterised by passing through life stages in which developmental milestones are realised at various ages.

The Maa speaking groups are outlined as follows; the *Iltiamus*, who live near Lake Baringo in Kenya; *Isampur* who live in the Northern part of Kenya, the *Ilarus* who live in the Northern part of Tanzania near Mount Meru and the *Ilparguyu* who live on the west of Tanzania. In Kenya, we have sixteen sections in Maasai known as *Iloshon*, and these are *Ildamat*, *Ilpurko*, *Ilkeekonyokie*, *Iloitai*, *Ilkaputiei*, *Ilkangere*, *Isiria*, *Ilmoitanik*, *Iloodokilani*, *Iloittokitoki*, *Ilarusa*, *Ilmatapato*, *Ilwuasinkisu*, *Kore*, *Iparakuyu*, and *Ikisonko*. Cronk (2004), adds that *Mukogodo* who were initially *Yaakku* speakers have a strong link of association with the Maasai of Doldol in Kenya. Voshaar (1998) concludes that these people share a common language, but are different in cultural elements.

There are stages or developmental milestones that are obligatory for the Maa people to go through as rites of passage. They are childhood, youth, circumcision, warriorhood and finally elderhood (Biswas-Diener, Vittersø, & Diener, 2005). According to the Maasai people, developmental stages begin from conception in that, care given to the mother is presumed to care for the foetus. The expectant mother is allowed to take some foods and prohibited from some (Sankan, 1979). A woman who disobeys is considered disrespectful and endangering the life unborn. The Association for Psychological Science (2011) study found out that a human foetus is an active participant in its development and collects information for life after birth. Many rituals are performed before and during birth. Sacrifices are offered by shedding of blood from the slaughtered animals. Libation is carried out where traditional liquor and milk are poured. Community members partake in the celebrations (Nkoitoi, 1973).

In the Maasai people of Trans Mara, for one to grow into a mature and acceptable person in the society, there are rites of passage to go through without which one is not recognised as an acceptable member of the community.

These rites of passage involve tasks to be performed to the satisfaction of the leaders of the society. The end of a rite of passage signifies one's graduation from one stage to another. One is then considered fit to assume responsibilities in the community. This confirms its validity because the Maasai people, whether educated or not have good leaders in their society filled with wisdom and understanding in taking care and continuing life in the society, hence, making the Maasai community outstanding. This background inspired the coming up with this paper.

The paper was based on comparing the young adult stage of Maasai to Erik Erikson's psychosocial stages. The article focused on the young Maasai from the ages of 10-18 years in the stage of puberty and adolescent referred to as *Tikoishi* and *Ayokiso* as well as those of 18-23 years in the stage of young adulthood initiation termed as *emuratare*. This is a very crucial stage of someone's life according to Erik Erikson's psychosocial developmental stages. It is at the earlier stage that society allows them freedom of choosing who should be their friends and their careers. Identity crisis is likely to be when the proponent of this stage is not well guided through, such that he or she is not sure who they are and are continuously trying to find out, it is the perpetual identity crisis, which is the result of failure to successfully being able to go through this ego crisis (Erikson, 1968, 1994). Youngsters here are learning to interact with others more intimately and deeply. The inability to create strong social ties with others without losing self in the process results in isolation and loneliness instead of love and fulfilment. Such a person is in return not able to form an intimate relationship, or he/she develops a relationship that is more superficial or becoming a loner (Schwartz et al. 2012).

Methodology

The study relied on a descriptive survey research design that employed an ex-post facto design. According to Kathuri & Pals (1993), descriptive research is recommended

in obtaining information that describes the real phenomena, by asking individuals about their perceptions, opinion, attitudes, behaviours and values. This study was carried out in Trans Mara Sub-County of Narok County. The Maasai people living in this region are pastoralists. In the dry season, they compete for pasture to feed their animals with wilder beasts from the Serengeti national park. The culture of the people in this location is still robust and dramatically determines the life and the worldview of the people (Gardiner, & Kosimitzki, 2002).

Stratified purposeful sampling procedure, using respondents from various groups from each age bracket was carried out to get to specific different age brackets as per their developmental stages. The researcher used Focused Group Discussions for gathering data through open-ended questions. Focus Group Discussion is a tool used to gather people together from similar backgrounds or experiences to discuss a specific topic of interest (Krueger, 1998). Data collection procedure refers to the protocol that must be followed to ensure that data collection tools are applied correctly and efficiently (Mugenda, 2008). Descriptive analysis was used to analyse data using frequencies and percentages. Data collected from the group discussions were equally analysed by use of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 22.0 for windows.

RESULTS

Adolescent stage, 10-18 years (boyhood and girlhood, *ayiokisho/titoisho*)

At this stage boys and girls are also distinguished by distinct duties. At this stage, guardians specify for them what they are supposed to do and not to do. They are furthermore taught about taboos, consequences of breaking them as well as rewards associated with being faithful to the community's norms.

Behaviour expected from the adolescent's stage (10-18 years) by the Community

Considering their stage and role in the community, the researcher wanted to find out some of the behaviours that were expected from the adolescents. According to the findings as presented in Figure 1, 100% of the respondents said that the adolescents are expected to look upon the adults for guidance and directions as well as look upon them as guardians respectively. 97% and 93% of the FGD said that adolescents should learn how to draw blood from a cow, be obedient and respectful. 47% claimed that adolescents should be able to take emissaries from adults as part of the behaviour expected of them.

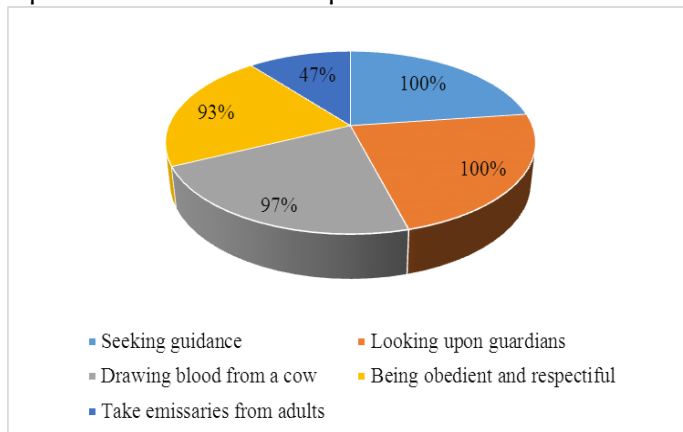


Figure 1: Adolescent behaviour (10-18 years) expected by the community

One participant summarised the situation as follows:

Our growing children are supposed to be very close to adults to pay attention to what they are being told. The children should always look upon the grown-ups for guidance and direction which should enhance their learning capability through the guardianship of the supervising parents who are all the times, their guardians and the connection between them is that of respect. They should at all times emulate responsible adults' behaviour.

Adolescent's preoccupations stage at the age of 10-18 years

According to the Maasai, the adolescent is at the threshold of young adulthood. Their endurance determines this in withstanding pain and working in harsh conditions. They take up the responsibility for herding cows among wild animals as well as in dry spells accompanied by Morans. The above is a prerequisite for circumcision for both boys and girls. They have to convince their guardians that they are really prepared for this essential rite of passage. They are prepared towards assuming primary community responsibilities after circumcision such as being warriors who can defend the community. If they are not well formed and trained at this stage of life, they are ushered in as failures, lazy and not reliable even as they face circumcision.

Table 1: Adolescent's preoccupations (10-18 years)

Adolescents preoccupations	Freq.	Per cent
Preparing for more responsibilities as they enter into higher stages in Maasai culture through circumcision	29	35%
Venture into occupations they have been trained on	28	33%
Activate learned activities	27	25%
Learn more and more about Maasai culture	26	24%

The results in Table 1 show that the adolescent is mainly preoccupied with preparations for more significant responsibilities as they get into the next stage. This was as cited by 35% of the focus group discussions. 33% of the focus group discussions noted that adolescents are also preoccupied with the need to venture deeper into the occupations that have been taught to them while 25% of

the focus group discussion agreed that the adolescent at this stage usually is steady putting into practice the already learnt activities. Lastly, 24% of the FGD argued that learning more about the Maasai community was another critical preoccupation of adolescents at the ages of 10-18 years. They would be expected to be industrious as opposed to being inferior (Ngari, 2008).

Significant others that are role models to the adolescent

The adolescent idolises various people in society and would identify with them as opposed to role confusion (Erikson, 1968). This is not different among the Maasai as this group of young adults look after different people as their role models. Table 2 shows some of the people the adolescent among the Maasai at this stage looks up to as their role models.

Table 2: Significant others adolescents identify with as role models

Significant others	Freq.	Per cent
People with special achievements	30	100%
Responsible prominent people	30	100%
Successful people in the community	28	93.3%
Disciplined members of the community	24	80%
Successful parents and relatives	15	50%
Leaders in society	8	26.7%

Table 2 shows that all the focus group discussions concluded that adolescents should emulate and identify with people with exceptional achievements as well as responsible prominent adults in society. This was closely followed by 93.3% of the focus group discussions that had the opinion that adolescents should emulate successful people in the community such as brave warriors, the chiefs,

business persons and leaders. About 80% of the focus group discussions noted that adolescents should also imitate disciplined people in the society while 50% and 26.7% of the groups claimed that adolescents should emulate parents/relatives and all leaders in the community respectively.

These responses concur with Phillips and Bhavnagri (2002) who indicate that this a period of great learning and what is learned by the Maasai is meant to be very relevant to their family, clan, tribe, religion and tradition. Maasai children’s education revolves around learning tasks related to various roles or jobs to be performed within the Maasai community.

A participant in the FGDs summarised the issue as follows:

The society seems to be having everything that young people may require to be. We have successful farmers, artists (singers and dancers), leaders and business persons whom we expect the adolescents to imitate and always identify with them; that is people with exceptional achievements and qualities (charismatic leaders, medicine men, well-organised families) as well as responsible prominent adults. Adolescents are also expected to admire and imitate the disciplined adults in the society who do not over-do things (for example, over drinking, quarrelsome, greedy and selfish).

These results agree with Sherrod (2015) who describes this stage like the one in which a child can take errands from their parents. The love between children and parents/guardians is a unique bond. These results agree with Reynolds et al. (2011) who argued that this stage is an imitation stage in which children play roles of the adults, imitating them. For instance, boys imitate grazing adults

while girls imitate their female counterparts in their everyday chores as they experience them doing. At this stage, a sense of responsibility is instilled hence determines a move into circumcision stage.

Anastasia and Teklemariam (2011), put it clear that young girls would be under the guidance of their mothers or aunties, who act as teachers. They instruct girls through an apprenticeship on how to carry out domestic chores. Male counterparts teach boys, and so they are supposed to be around the Morans, from whom they learn a lot. They would admire them as they dance and would witness the bursting vein of blood from an animal. They learn how to defend their animals from both tribal raids as well as against wild animals. Most of the teachings are communicated through tales (Lyong, 1972). At the end of this stage, they are called upon to be role models to the generations to come (Lekuton & Hermann, 2005).

Young adulthood (19-20 years) emuratare stage

At this stage, the boys are supposed to have shown signs of endurance in pain. This is in anticipation of the circumcision which is done at home after cold water is splashed onto their naked bodies. They are not supposed to flinch or cry because of pain (Sankan, 1979). Girls are equally initiated at this stage. They are then married off hence becoming mothers belonging to the age group of their husbands who might be older than the age group of the boys that they were circumcised with. This means that women always exist for their husbands. During circumcision, girls are slightly younger than the boys.

This is the stage at which close bonds of friendship are created. Members of the group become united hence share problems. Whoever isolate themselves from the group, has no friend to open up to thus diminishing the experience of sharing and solving problems as a group. The group is faithful to each other as well as being trustworthy. At this stage identification with the group is paramount. At

this time they have heroes and heroines they would like to imitate (Saitoti, 1986).

Behaviour expected of the young adults by the community (19-20 years)

This is a predominantly a circumcised boys age. Members of this group are expected to have left all the characteristics of the previous stage. They are taken through new lessons about life. They learn more about the community.

Table 3: Expected behaviour during the young adulthood stage (19-20 years)

Expected behaviour	Freq.	Per cent
Seeking guidance and confirmation of one's deeds	25	83.3%
Showing submissiveness, respect and readiness to learn	24	80%
The desire to be emulated by lower groups	21	70%
Trustworthy	20	66.7%
Closeness to adults in willingness to learn	19	63.3%

Table 3 shows that majority (83.3%) of the focus group discussions concluded that seeking guidance and confirmation of their deeds is the most key behaviour expected of young adults at the age of 19 -20 years. Likewise, about 80% of the FGD listed that showing submissiveness, respect and readiness to learn is expected behaviour at this stage of young adults. 70%, 66.7% and 63.3% of the FGD agreed that young adults at the age of 19-20 are expected to be emulated by the lower (more youthful) groups, be trustworthy and closely related to the adults to learn, respectively.

One participant summarised the situation as follows:

Young adulthood stage (age of 19-20 years) is a transitional stage where boys and girls seek guidance and confirmation of their deeds, shows submissiveness, respect and readiness to learn. The lower group should emulate them and be closely related to the adults who would by so doing be learning.

All the focus group discussions concluded that young adults (19-20 years) have a sense of identity and the demands of life. They are dependent on the elders. Their age group is entrusted with some responsibilities.

The cultural teaching at young adult stage 19-20 years

This is the transition stage between the adolescent stage and young adult. The learning that takes place is so vital in that it is the foundation of the future life of the initiates. They are assigned individual responsibilities as well as collective responsibilities as an age group. Several things are taught. This is depicted in Figure 2.

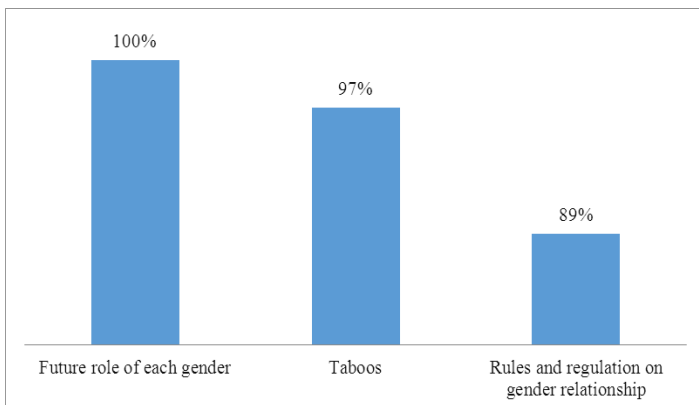


Figure 2: Lessons taught the age of 19-20 years

The results in Figure 2 show that all the FGD participants agreed that at the age of 19-20, young adults are taught about the future roles for each gender. Also, almost all the FGD participants (97%) claimed that at the age of 19-20 years young adults are taught about all the taboos in the

community (for example, dos and don'ts that pertain each gender). 89% are taught about all the rules and regulations about relationships.

One participant summarised the situation as follows:

Both boys and girls are in progress learning about the life they will live in the future. Girls know by this time that they will have learnt about their domestic chores such as milking, cooking and indeed how to be good wives. Men will have almost become experts in getting blood from the live animal, slaughtering, grazing and herding.

Significant others at young adults stage (19-20 years)

Young adults at the age of 19-20 years have some people to teach and socialise with (significant others) as depicted in Figure 3. The results show that elders were cited as the most key group of persons who were 'significant others' as depicted by 51% of the focus group discussions. About 49% of the focus group discussions considered colleagues as significant others.

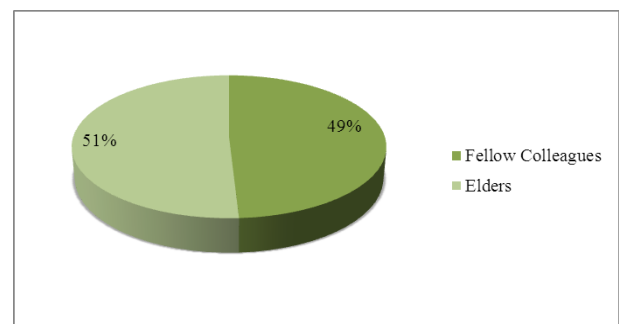


Figure 3: Significant Others for Young Adults Stage (19-20 years)

One participant in the focus group discussions summarised the situation as follows:

The significant others are mainly the elders, both for girls and boys. The elders may be of any gender (women or men). At this age, boys and girls very closely interact with the elders. Their colleagues are also significant; they are inseparable from each other. Boys, for instance, have a solid bond for they would be expected to stay together for so long and actually in their whole life as they would eventually belong to one age group.

Indicators that young adults in 19-20 years stage have become adults

The young adults are already in a different standing in the society. This is the basic level that places them in the community in a trajectory set. Their future life depends on how they courageously endure the pain of circumcision. They are already shown that they are mature and ready to lead a life to the next stage.

Table 4: Indicators of mental health of young adults in the age of (19 -20 years)

Characteristics	Freq.	Per cent
They are mature and have risen to a higher level in society and regard themselves as not being young anymore (not children).	30	100%
They have increased mental capability and honour in society	30	100%
They are well oriented in the community and have the direction of their life and know what to do	19	63%

Table 4 shows that all the focus group discussions (100%) agreed that at the age of 19-20 years, young adults are generally mature and have risen to a higher level in the society and do not regard themselves as young anymore. Similarly, all the focus group discussions agreed that young

adults at this age have increased mental capability and honour in the society. However, fewer groups reported that young adults at the age of 19-20 years are well oriented in the community and have the direction of their life and know what to do.

Relationship between Maasai young adults' stage and the Maasai society

Participants in the focus group discussion gave their response to what was the relationship between the young adults at the age of 19-20 years with others in society. Their answers are summarised in Table 5.

All the focus group discussions indicated that their young adults are an honour and earn high community respect. The whole group also reported this age of young people is held in high esteem as it is vital in the continuation of life. To them, as boys grow and get married so are girls, and they are expected to have children who continue the community's family tree. 93% indicated that they are considered a treasure and the security of the community.

Table 5: Young adults' relationship with the Maasai community (19-20 years)

Young adults relationship with the community	Freq.	Per cent
Honour and respect	30	100%
Key to the perpetuation of life (Marriageable girls and men)	30	100%
Treasure and community security	28	93%

Indicators of growth for the young adults in the age of 19-20 years stage

Participants in the focus group discussions indicated that there are a variety of signs of growth for the young adults between the ages of 19-20 years as depicted in the figure below.

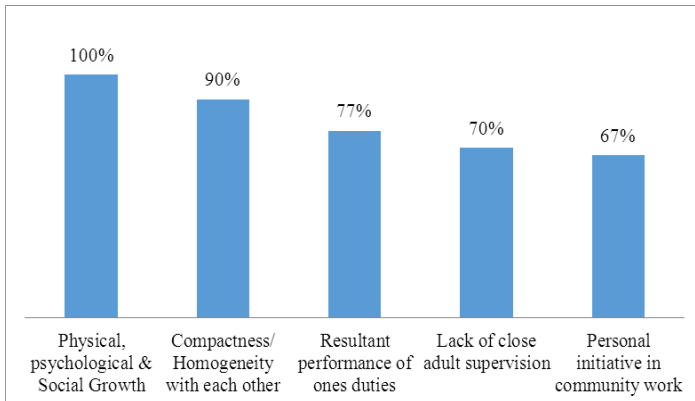


Figure 4: Indicators of growth for young adults in the age of 19-20 years

All the respondents (100%) agreed that the physical, psychological and social growth manifested by the young adults is the best indicator of young adults' advancement in life. 97% of respondents agreed that compactness or homogeneity with one another is the most key indicator of growth among young adults in the age of 19-20 years. At this stage, no person is supposed to walk, eat, decide or be on his own (Adamson, 1975). They are all tied to the age group to which they belong. Some focus group discussions believed that the results of the performance of duties bestowed to young adults to be the best indicator of growth at the age of 19-20 years. About 70% and 67% of focus group discussions believed that absence of excessive adult monitoring and ability to take the initiative in the community is a way of measuring growth achieved by the young adults in the age of 19-20 years, respectively. One of the participants summarised the situation as follows:

Young adults at this time are physically mature and with stamina (for boys) and would be required to be energetic and strong to pursue raids from neighbours for restocking. For girls, they would have matured to be wives. In society, young adults are regarded in terms of the age

group that they belong to which they do not act or behave contrary to the group expectations. The age group they belong to obliges them to act according to their community's expectations. Their growth is also manifested by the duties that they perform. Failure to acquire this communal and social standing will have been that they are socially dysfunctional.

Conclusion

Distinct developmental stages characterise the Maasai way of life. The stages are obligatory for one to undergo. Graduation from one stage to the next determines the social and mental standing of an individual. The Maasai developmental stages have something in common with Erikson psychosocial theories of development. The combination of the two developmental stages will assist in the formation of future generations through school systems by introduction and incorporation of both to facilitate in the learning institutions. Erikson's stages are already being implemented, and its adoption is prevalent in learning institutions and helps in the advancement of humanity. The inclusion of the Maasai developmental stages in explaining Erikson's stages among the Maasai would lead to affirmative acceptance. Both the Maasai rites of passage and Erik Erikson's psychosocial stages have a lot of implications for psychosocial interactions. There should be efforts to use the Maasai developmental stages that can be compared with new psychosocial developmental stages. This will help in guidance and counselling for a culturally sensitive approach. Both approaches should be used to enrich the effectiveness of counselling. Counsellors should be cultural assertive while counselling the Maasai.

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