

**Adolescent psychosocial identity development associated with traditional  
rituals and rites of passage in the Bosomtwe District of Ghana**

**By**

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**PRETORIA**

**November 2023**

## DECLARATION BY THE CANDIDATE

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I declare that **ADOLESCENT PSYCHOSOCIAL IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATED WITH TRADITIONAL RITUALS AND RITES OF PASSAGE IN THE BOSOMTWE DISTRICT OF GHANA** is my work and that all sources that I have utilised or quoted have been indicated and accredited through comprehensive references.

I further declare that I submitted the thesis to originality-checking software. It is submitted following the requirements for the degree of Philosophy Doctor in Psychology of Education at the University of South Africa, Pretoria.

I further declare that I have not previously submitted this work, or part of it, for any degree or examination in this or any other university.



**Signature**

**November 2023**

**DATE**

## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this work to my late Mother, Peace Ama Agyapomaa.

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## **ABSTRACT**

This study aimed to explore how adolescents in the Bosomtwe District of Ghana experience their psychological identity development in relation to participating in traditional rituals and rites of passage. This study employed a phenomenology case study design. Focus group discussions and semi-structured interviews were used to gather data from participants. The data was analysed through thematic content analysis. The study participants comprised adolescent learners, teachers and parents, who were purposefully selected. Twenty (20) adolescent learners participated in the focus group discussion, whereas twelve (12) teachers, twelve (12) parents and eight (8) adolescent learners participated in the individual interviews.

Findings show that adolescents typically experience their psychological identity development while they participate in traditional rituals and rites of passage in varied and diversified ways. The study found that these initiation processes exposed adolescents to unique cultural values, aided them in developing a broader worldview and might inspire them to explore their identities and beliefs. Furthermore, adolescents experienced increased self-awareness and improved social skills due to participating in ritualisation processes. In contrast, the study also revealed that not all adolescents have positive experiences, as this initiation in the Bosomtwe District may serve to reinforce harmful gender norms, exclusionary practices, or other forms of discrimination. Above all, it is critical to underline that counselling services should strongly emphasise the value of family and community support to assist adolescents' identity development. Hence, a collaborative approach involving guidance counsellors and other professionals, community members, and their leaders is recommended when providing counselling services to adolescents. Policymakers might support efforts to advance inclusivity and cultural diversity by promoting, funding, and maintaining traditional practices. The study also suggests creating policies and structures to encourage integrating traditional practices in formal schooling as it significantly empowers youth and community practice. Future research needs to be comparative studies to comprehend the distinctive features of traditional practices in the Bosomtwe District of Ghana and how they differ from those in other regions of Africa.

**KEYWORDS:** Adolescents, traditional rituals and rites of passage, psychosocial, identity development, bio-ecological system, social learning, well-being.

## ABSTRAK

Die doel van hierdie studie was om te verken hoe adolessente in die Bosomtwe-distrik van Ghana hulle sielkundige identiteitsontwikkeling ervaar ten opsigte van hulle deelname aan tradisionele rituele en deurgangsrites. Die studie het 'n fenomenologiese gevallestudie-ontwerp gebruik. Fokusgroepbesprekings en semi-gestruktureerde onderhoude is gebruik om data van deelnemers in te samel en deur tematiese inhoudsontleding te ontleed. Die studiedeelnemers het bestaan uit adolessente leerders, onderwysers en ouers wat doelgerig geselekteer is. Twintig adolessente leerders het aan die fokusgroepbesprekings deelgeneem, terwyl twaalf onderwysers, twaalf ouers en agt adolessente leerders aan die individuele onderhoude deelgeneem het. Bevindinge toon dat adolessente tipies hulle sielkundige identiteitsontwikkeling ervaar terwyl hulle op verskillende maniere aan tradisionele rituele en deurgangsrites deelneem. Die studie het bevind dat hierdie inisiasieprosesse adolessente aan unieke kulturele waardes blootstel, hulle wêreldbeskouing verbreed en hulle kan inspireer om hulle identiteite en oortuigings te verken. Verder het adolessente verhoogde selfbewustheid en verbeterde sosiale vaardighede ervaar deur aan ritualiseringsprosesse deel te neem. Die studie het egter ook aan die lig gebring dat nie alle adolessente positiewe ervarings het nie, aangesien hierdie inisiasie in die Bosomtwe-distrik moontlik skadelike gedragsnorme, uitsluitingspraktyke of ander vorme van diskriminasie kan versterk. Bowenal is dit van kritieke belang dat beradingsdienste die waarde van gesins- en gemeenskapsondersteuning beklemtoon om adolessente se sielkundige identiteitsontwikkeling te help. Daarom word 'n samewerkende benadering wat voorligtingsberaders en ander professionele persone, gemeenskapslede en hulle leiers betrek, aanbeveel wanneer beradingsdienste aan adolessente verskaf word. Beleidmakers kan pogings ondersteun om inklusiwiteit en kulturele diversiteit te bevorder deur tradisionele praktyke te bevorder, te befonds en te handhaaf. Die studie stel ook voor dat beleid en strukture geskep word om integrasie van tradisionele praktyke in formele skoolopleiding aan te moedig aangesien dit die jeug- en gemeenskapspraktyke aansienlik bemagtig. Toekomstige navorsing moet vergelykende studies insluit om die kenmerkende eienskappe van tradisionele praktyke in die Bosomtwe-distrik te verstaan – en hoe dit van dié in ander streke van Afrika verskil.

**SLEUTELWOORDE:** Adolessente, bio-ekologiese sisteem, identiteitsontwikkeling, psigososiale leer, tradisionele rituele en deurgangsrites, welstand.

## SENGGQONDWENI KUPHELA

Lolu cwaningo luhloselwe ukuhlola ukuthi abantwana abasakhula esifundeni sase-Bosomtwe e-Ghana bakuthola kanjani ukuthuthuka kobunikazi babo obungokwengqondo ngokuhlobene nokubamba iqhaza kwabo emikhubeni yendabuko namasiko okudlula. Ucwangingo lusebenzise umklamo wocwaningo ochaza ngezinto abantu abahlangabezana nazo ezimpilweni zabo. Izingxoxo zeqembu okugxilwe kuzo kanye nezingxoxo ezihlelwe kancane zisetshenziwe ukuqoqa imininingwane kubahlanganyeli futhi imininingwane yahlaziywa ngokuhlaziywa kokuqukethwe kwendikimba. Abahlanganyeli bocwaningo bahlanganisa abantwana abasakhula, othisha nabazali, abakhethwe ngenhloso. Abantwana abasakhula abangamashumi amabili babambe iqhaza engxoxweni yeqembu, kanti othisha abayishumi nambili, abazali abayishumi nambili kanye nabantwana abayisishiyagalombili abasakhula babambe iqhaza ezingxoxweni zomuntu ngamunye. Okutholakele kubonisa ukuthi abantwana abasakhula bavamise ukuzwa ukukhula kobunikazi babo bengqondo kuyilapho babamba iqhaza emikhubeni yendabuko nemikhuba yamasiko ngezindlela ezihlukahlukene. Ucwangingo luthole ukuthi lezi zinqubo zokuthwasa zidalule abantwana abasakhula kuzindinganiso zamasiko eziyingqayizivele, zandisa umbono wazo womhlaba futhi zingase zibakhuthaze ukuba bahlale ubunjalo nezinkolelo zabo. Ngaphezu kwalokho, abantwana abasakhula bathola ukuzazi okuthuthukile kanye namakhono omphakathi athuthukisiwe ngokubamba iqhaza ezinqubeni zamasiko. Kodwa-ke, lolu cwaningo luphinde lwembula ukuthi akubona bonke abantwana abasakhula abahlangabezane nokuhle, njengoba lokhu kuthwasa esifundeni saseBosomtwe kungase kuqinise imikhuba yobulili eyingozi, imikhuba yokubandlulula, noma ezinye izinhlobo zokucwasa. Ngaphezu kwakho konke, kubalulekile ukuthi izinsizakalo zokwelulekwa zigcizelele kakhulu ukubaluleka kokwesekwa komndeni nomphakathi ukusiza ukuthuthukiswa kobunikazi kwabantwana abasakhula. Ngakho-ke, kuphakanyiswa indlela yokusebenzisana ehlanganisa abeluleki bezeluleko nabanye ochwepheshe, amalungu omphakathi nabaholi bawo lapho kuhlinzekwa izinsizakalo zokwelulekwa ebantwaneni abasakhula. Abenzi benqubomgomo bangase basekele imizamo yokuqhubekisela phambili ukubandakanywa nokuhlukahluka kwamasiko ngokukhuthaza, ukuxhasa ngezimali, nokugcina imikhuba yendabuko. Lolu cwaningo luphinde luphakamise ukuthi kwakhiwe izinqubomgomo nezinhlaka ezikhuthaza ukuhlanganiswa kwemikhuba yendabuko esikoleni esisemthethweni njengoba kunika amandla intsha kanye nezinqubo zomphakathi. Ucwangingo lwesikhathi esizayo ludinga ukufaka izifundo zokuqhathanisa ukuze kuqondwe izici ezihlukile zemikhuba yendabuko esiFundeni saseBosomtwe - nokuthi zihluke kanjani kulezo ezikwezinye izifunda zase-Afrika.

**AMAGAMA ASEMQOKA:** Abantwana abasakhula, ubudlelwano abantwana abanabo nabazali nabanakekeli kunomthelela ekukhuleni kwabo, ukuthuthukiswa kobunikazi, ukuhlobana komphakathi kanye nomcabango womuntu ngamunye kanye nokuziphatha, ukufunda ngokwezenhlalo, amasiko nemikhuba yendabuko, ukuphila kahle

### **LIST OF ACRONYMS/ABBREVIATIONS**

COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease of 2019
GDHS	Ghana Demographic and Health Survey
GSS	Ghana Statistical Service
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
AIDS	Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
HPV	Human papillomavirus
OALD	Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary
RPWB	Ryff Psychological Well-being
StatsSA	Statistics South Africa
STIs	Sexually Transmitted Infections
UN	United Nations
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
WHO	World Health Organisation

## GLOSSARY

Ahenema	Name of the native sandals among the Ashanti's of Ghana.
Anoka	Is the name of the dedication ceremony where the initiate mouth is touched with food among the Ashanti's of Ghana.
Bojale	Is a customary initiation rite for adolescents within the Bakgatla-baga-Kgafela region of Botswana
Bragoro	A puberty rite among the Akan adolescents to initiate them into adulthood in Ghana
Brannworm	A ritual singing group among the Ashanti's of Ghana
Chisungu	Is a female initiation rite for young girls among the Bemba tribe in Zambia.
Dipo	The name given to the rite of passage to mark children's transition to adulthood among the Krobo people in Ghana.
Fiesta de Quince:	A name of a celebration in Latin American countries such as Argentina, Peru, Paraguay, Bolivia, and Uruguay to mark the transition of a fifteen-year-old girl from adolescence to maturity.
Gisu	Is a rite performed to initiate adolescents into adulthood in Uganda
Hakama	A formal dress Japanese boys wear during their rites of passage
Kente	is the name given to the traditional cloth or garment of the Ashanti people in Ghana.
Kinaalda	Is a rite of passage for girls living on the Navajo Reservation
Kra	Refers to the soul of a person by the Ashanti's of Ghana.
Kudonza	Is a rite of initiation for adolescents in Zambia
Malepe	Is the name for semen among the people of Zambia.
Murundu	Is the name of the initiation rites performed for young men in South Africa.
Okomfo	Is the name given to a diviner through which a deity is consulted among the Ashanti's of Ghana.
Otufo	A rite of passage to mark children's transition to adulthood among the Gas of Ghana.
Samskara or sanskara:	Is a rite of passage established for young Hindus in India to usher them into adulthood.

Shichi-Go-San	Is a rite of passage for Japanese females between the ages of three and seven and boys between the ages of five and seven
Ssengas:	An adolescent girl's paternal female elder relatives responsible for initiating them during this transition period into adulthood among the people of Banda in Uganda.
Ti-yi	This refers to haircutting among the Ashanti's of Ghana
Unyago	Is a rite of passage for young females in Tanzania's Northern Island who have experienced their menstruation for the first time.
Yaawa	A brass bowl used for serving food among the Ashanti's of Ghana

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# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

### 1.1 Introduction and Background

Human life completes its journey through various developmental stages, and one of the most critical stages is adolescence. During this stage, various psychological, social and physiological changes occur within the individual. It is a time of rapid growth, and the changes vary widely among individuals (Oppong-Frimpong & Amissah, 2009<sup>1</sup>). It is an important period given the possible emergence of a variety of psychosocial challenges such as antisocial behaviour, poor mental health, and experimentation with alcohol, smoking and drugs. Hall (1904, in Ogbogu & Odife, 2019), one of the first psychologists to conduct extensive research on the challenges of adolescents' experience, denotes this period as "stress and storm". Following the work of Hall, many researchers (Daniels & Piechowski, 2009; Fanti & Henrich, 2010; Wolff & Ollendick, 2006) have since shown that adjustment issues and undesirable behaviours commonly mark adolescence. Consequently, their normal development is impaired, leading to maladjustment and mental health problems. Without social support, this may remain throughout one's life, with the tendency to reduce the society's socioeconomic productivity capacity.

The above discussions point to the fact that adolescence is a challenging time in a person's life and presents psychosocial identity challenges to many young ones. Most researchers have attempted various definitions of psychosocial challenges. Hobfoll (2002) asserts that psychosocial challenges are emotional behaviour disorders resulting from the interactions between the capacities of individuals and the demands of their physical and social environment. The author further notes that the most common behaviour disorders associated with these challenges include depression, anxiety, aggression and eating disorders.

Though there are merits in Hobfoll's assertions, not all psychosocial challenges are disorders. For instance, adolescents confronted with academic and career difficulties may be merely experiencing psychosocial challenges but not necessarily having a disorder. Ultimately, understandings regarding psychosocial challenges from other researchers conclude that they are adjustment problems in various facets of an

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<sup>1</sup> The reference style is APA 7

individual's personal and social well-being, which are not strictly medical or somatic, but affect their environment and life events (Ahmad et al., 2007; Brugman et al., 2011; Hofvander et al., 2009). Oppong-Frimpong and Amissah (2009) argue that the situation is a topical issue and poses great worry for the populists of many cultures.

Across the globe, it is estimated that 20 per cent of adolescents experience at least one psychosocial challenge (Csikszentmihalyi et al., 2014). Furthermore, before turning 14 years old, half of all lifetime mental illnesses would surface in individuals (Kessler et al., 2005; WHO, 2017). In the United States (US) as well as Canada, psychosocial identity is a great concern among the adolescent population, as studies (Ullah & Ming, 2020) reveal, and it pose a great threat to public health. Similarly, in Asian countries such as India and Nepal, 14-40 per cent of adolescents are diagnosed as having issues with psychosocial identity development (MacDonald et al., 2018). The situation is the same in African nations like Ghana and other West African nations, even as their healthcare systems are inferior to those of other industrialised nations like the United Kingdom, Canada, China, and others.

The crucial element that connects to the psychosocial conception of identity creation is argued to be the rites of passage (Kangwa, 2011; Pemba et al., 2012). Rites of passage for children's birth, transition to adulthood, marriage, becoming a community elder, and death are highly regarded by almost all communities across every African nation that observes them and practically all societies and nations on this planet. They play an important role in handing down social and religious beliefs and cultural values, especially those related to human sexuality, gender and relationships (Markstrom, 2011; Mutale, 2017; Siweya et al., 2018; Skinner et al., 2013).

The subject of rites of passage among African adolescents has evolved into a framework for defining and interpreting initiation ceremonies associated with adolescents transitioning from childhood to adulthood. Rites of passage are structured social activities that aid people as they transition from one identity to another, support them during this time of change and subsequently assist them in fitting into a new position or social standing. When such transitional periods are recorded, ritualised, observed, and encouraged, the adolescent develops a form of self-development map. Both the person being initiated, and society have the shared belief that during the sacred moment of transcendence, the old self has been cast aside, and a new persona

emerges. This new identity is shaped by the self's new roles, obligations and tasks, as well as the society's demands and expectations. As there is awareness of role performance expectations, which often lack role mastery, these new roles and obligations can induce anxiety among many youngsters. Scheer et al. (2007) contend that all these events have a sturdy internal psychological connection and necessitate both individual and collective care from community members for the individual to transition successfully and for society to remain stable in the face of the adolescent's change in status.

It is intended for this transition from one stage of life to the next to be seamless and successful with the development of healthy adult duties and attributes. However, modernity and societal advancements have greatly impacted the transition process and its outcome (Ibrahim et al., 2022). Modern social changes have skewed and modified transition processes, affecting adolescents' outcomes in either a favourable or bad way, leading to psychosocial identity difficulties in these young people (Fantinelli et al., 2023).

As a result of the preceding, it is impossible to overestimate the importance of concentrating on mental health in adolescent growth because the opposite can have major implications that last a lifetime and deplete the country's potential manpower resources. There is no doubt that proper adolescent psychosocial development associated with effective rites of passage leads to great academic accomplishment, physical health, optimal emotional balance, and social and psychological well-being (Abbey, 2016). As a result, any effort aimed at enhancing adolescents' identity is a step in the right direction. Detecting and instituting proper social systems to develop adolescents' psychosocial identity is the key to guaranteeing a person's proper quality of life and psychological well-being (Pomytkina et al., 2021).

## **1.2 Rationale for the Study**

This study sought to explore how adolescents in the Bosomtwe District of Ghana experience their psychosocial identity development concerning participating in traditional rituals and rites of passage. Importantly, adolescent rites of passage in Ghana are used by many tribes to validate the transition from a lower level of personal development to a greater level of cognitive, emotional and personal-social development (Alford, 2013; Harvey & Hill, 2004). While there is a lot of literature on

Ghanaian adolescent rites of passage, none of it looks at the psychosocial identity development that these rituals and rites may foster (Forster, 2012; Olade, 2011; Pratt-Clarke, 2013). By focusing on Ghanaian-centred adolescents' rites and rituals of passage, this study attempted to close gaps in the body of knowledge on psychosocial and emotional issues faced by persons classified as "emerging adults" or adolescents. Furthermore, the findings of this study may provide insight into adolescent experiences during rites of passage, allowing local governments, policymakers, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Health, and all other parties involved in adolescent health services to strengthen education and preventive counselling programmes to mitigate adolescent identity challenges during this time.

Again, as a teacher and a Counselling Psychologist, I have been involved in designing adolescent-orientated programmes for both basic and second-cycle schools. The programmes include newly admitted students' (freshers') orientation and group counselling addressing drug abuse, career guidance, examination malpractice, test-taking techniques, self-esteem, occultism and sexuality education. These programmes allowed me to interact with many adolescents. During this period, it has become increasingly clear that many of these adolescents are confronted day-to-day with psychosocial adjustment challenges in their environment. In my frequent engagement with these young minds, I noticed that though most of them appear visionary and enthusiastic about many life goals, they never anticipate that these adjustment problems pose a great threat to their future prospects.

My passion is to help adolescents develop their identities and minimise the challenges emanating from the adolescent rite of passage to achieve their goals and aspirations in life without much stress or anxiety. Challenges with psychosocial identity development encountered by adolescents pose a threat to their academic careers and also to their general well-being. Therefore, I aim to research in this area to add my voice through research to help these adolescents live worthy and meaningful lives. Thus, gaining an in-depth understanding of this area of research will enhance my attitude and perception of these young ones regarding their attitude, thinking, adjustment challenges and how they perceive life.

### **1.3 Statement of the Problem**

The primary goal of adolescents' traditional rituals and rites of passage, as this might appear to be, is to help initiates better grasp their gender roles and cultural identities, as well as to help them establish good self-images and career paths (Abbey & Nasidi, 2023). Urbanisation, educational opportunity, worldwide media access, and social mobility have nevertheless decreased youth participation in initiation rites (Becevic & Dahlstedt, 2022). The debate over the usefulness of traditional rituals and rites of passage to young teenagers and their moral implications seems to be a concern in today's culture (Abbey et al., 2021).

Traditional rituals and rites of passage were assessed primarily in light of the contemporary state of societies (modernity, religious requirements, and technological demands). According to Furedi (2013), the current state of society has influenced people's perceptions that religion and education are more important than traditions passed down from generation to generation (initiation ceremonies). Less focus has been placed on the belief system relating to the traditions of many societies. Yet, among some societies, particularly in the Bosomtwe District of Ghana, traditional rituals and rites of passage still seem to leave initiates with a variety of experiences, such as empowerment, confidence, a sense of self and feelings of worth (McCaskie, 2019).

My observations as an adolescent learner counsellor over the years have shown that traditional rituals and rites of passage for adolescents are not unreservedly praised in Ghana. The practice has sparked numerous discussions. While some people argue that it is a custom from their culture that should be preserved, others say it is outdated and has no place in contemporary Ghanaian society. The age and the number of participants in the practice have drastically decreased, and some girls fled the community to avoid the initiation. This trend has been confirmed by Reist (2008), who urges that practices involving breast exposure, which diminishes women's dignity, and shaving, which may increase the risk of acquiring Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV), be prohibited. However, the author contends that traditional rituals and rites of passage for adolescents could be utilised to help them develop their psychosocial identities.

Traditional rituals and rites of passage emerged as very important tool in shaping adolescent development (Abbey, 2016; Agra, 2014; Emafa & Selase, 2014), but these ritualization processes remains abandoned in most Ghanaian communities. Furthermore, parents and adolescents' voices were not well represented in the previous studies on the impact of traditional rituals and rites of passage on adolescent identity development. Given these circumstances, I believed it was essential to expand my inquiries into how adolescents experience psychosocial identity development as they undergo their traditional rituals and rites of passage.

#### **1.4 Purpose of the Study**

In view of the above discussions, this study endeavoured to provide research-based evidence on how adolescents experience their psychosocial identity development in relation to participating in traditional rituals and rites of passage in the Bosomtwe District of Ghana. The researcher believes that adolescents, parents and teachers can all provide insightful information on matters that impact these young people. According to Zhu et al. (2021), parents' and teachers' voices can be crucial in managing delinquent behaviour at home and school since they influence how adolescents build their psychosocial identities. The study also sought to provide policymakers with recommendations for counselling guidelines that would be useful in improving the management of adolescents. The basis for these guidelines is that guidance counsellors are always advised to study new things and implement specific, widely accepted ideas on enhancing students' well-being, one of which is adolescent identity formation (Thompson, 2013).

#### **1.5 Research Questions**

This study was guided by the following research questions:

##### ***1.5.1 Primary Research Questions***

In line with the problem statement and purpose of the study, the primary research question guiding this study was:

How do adolescents experience their psychosocial identity development in relation to traditional rituals and rites of passage?

### **1.5.2 Research Sub-Questions**

Five sub-research questions were formulated to generate an in-depth response to the primary research question.

#### **1.5.2.1 Research sub-questions explored in the literature review.**

- a. What are Western and African viewpoints on the psychological, social, and emotional identity formation of adolescents?

#### **1.5.2.2 Sub-questions explored in the empirical research:**

- b. What traditional rituals and rites of passage do adolescents in Ghana undergo?
- c. How do adolescents in the study experience the traditional rituals and rites of passage?
- d. How do traditional rituals and rites of passage influence an adolescent's psychosocial identity development?
- e. What knowledge about adolescents' psychosocial identity development and their associated rites of passage can inform counselling guidelines for adolescents in the Bosomtwe District of Ghana?

### **1.6 Aims of the Study**

The general aim of the study was to explore how adolescents experience psychosocial identity development as they undergo their traditional rituals and rites of passage to adolescence in the Bosomtwe District of Ghana.

### **1.7 Objectives of the Study**

The study sought to:

- a. Explore Western and African viewpoints on the processes involved in developing psychological, social and emotional identity formation of adolescents
- b. Explore the traditional rituals and rites of passage that adolescents in Ghana undergo.
- c. Examine how adolescents experience traditional rituals and rites of passage;
- d. Identify the extent to which traditional rituals and rites of passage influence an adolescent's psychosocial identity development and

- e. Establish knowledge about adolescents' psychosocial identity development and their associated rites of passage to inform counselling guidelines for adolescents in the Bosomtwe District of Ghana.

## **1.8 Literature Review**

This qualitative phenomenological case study is based on two concepts: adolescent identity development in the context of their traditional rituals and rites of passage in a resource-constrained rural environment and looking at adolescents' well-being from a bio-ecosystemic viewpoint and the lens of an asset-based approach and positive psychology. The study area is in a resource-constrained rural environment as seen by its inadequate road system, deteriorating school buildings, and inadequate health care facilities. Literature studies from international, national, and local researchers are explored to inform the aim of the study.

### **1.8.1 Adolescence**

The concept of adolescence defies a single universally accepted definition. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), adolescence is a period of life distinguished by distinct characteristics that span the ages of ten to nineteen years (WHO, 2016). In a similar vein, the United States (US) Department of Health and Human Services uses "persons" from ten to twenty (10-20) years as a reference age group for adolescents (Ostchega, 2012). In Ghana, the term "adolescence" is often used synonymously with "teenage" which ranges from thirteen (13) to nineteen (19) years, denoting the time between childhood and adulthood (Ghana Demographic and Health Survey [GDHS], 2020; Ghana Statistical Service [GSS], 2017).

### **1.8.2 Phases of Adolescent Development**

As individuals progress into the adolescent phase, their health care and general well-being are still the responsibility of caregivers. However, towards the conclusion of adolescence, young people are solely responsible for their own health and well-being. As a result, it is critical to consider the many stages of adolescence as posed by Sawyer et al. (2018).

#### **a) Early Adolescence**

Girls go through this stage between the ages of 11 and 13, while boys go through it between the ages of 12 and 14. Young females undergo physical changes such as

the onset of a growth spurt, the growth of pubic hair and the emergence of breast buds during their early adolescence. Boys, on the other hand, go through testicular expansion and the beginnings of genital development. Improvement in abstract thinking and early moral conceptions are among the psychological changes observed in these young people. There is a process of developing one's sexual orientation or identity, as well as potential homosexual peer attraction and re-evaluation of one's body image. Socially, adolescents begin to separate themselves from their parents or caregivers and form strong peer identification (or attachment) and exploratory behaviours such as smoking, drinking and violence (Oppong-Frimpong & Amissah, 2009).

#### b) Mid-Adolescence

This phase of adolescence begins for girls at 13 and ends at 16 years, while boys reach this phase at 14 to 17 years. Girls are in the middle of puberty, towards the end of growth spurts, menarche, and the formation of a body shape with a fat disposition. Similarly, their male counterparts go through spermarche, nocturnal discharges, voice breaks, and the beginning of a growth spurt. The ability of youths to think abstractly, develop verbal abilities, associate the law with morality, and adopt fiercely religious, political, and personal ideologies are all characteristics of this phase. The social task of adolescents at this point, as noted by Kullik and Petermann (2013), is to participate in emotional separation from caregivers or parents, form a strong peer identity, and increase health risk behaviours such as drunkenness, smoking, and many others. Again, the heterosexual peer interest and a sense of early vocational plans arise at this phase.

#### c) Late adolescence

This last phase of adolescence for girls is between 16 to 19 years and for boys between 17 to 19 years. The boys' muscle mass and body hair increase all the time. For boys, this is the last stage of puberty. Adolescents can engage in complicated abstract thinking, distinguish between law and morality, have improved impulse control, and establish or reject religious and political ideas. This period comes with the development of social autonomy and vocational capabilities. Again, it is also characterised by strong intimate ties ("We feelings") and financial freedom (Antwi-Danso, 2019).

### ***1.8.3 The Burden of Adolescents' Psychosocial Identity Challenges***

Adolescents currently number 1.2 billion worldwide, accounting for sixteen per cent of everyone on the planet. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), 2019 estimated that eighty-eight per cent of them live in underdeveloped nations. Psychosocial identity issues have developed as a concern for adolescents' overall development around the world. However, many of these issues are transient and go unnoticed. Epidemiological surveys of adolescents have reported a wide variation of 20 to 33 per cent in the prevalence of psychosocial identity challenges across the globe (Kaltiala-Heino & Lindberg, 2019). Other individual studies, such as Bista et al. (2016) and Sunitha and Gururaj (2014), have explored psychosocial identity challenges among adolescents in 15 schools in the Central Region of Nepal and 2,500 adolescents selected from the Norwegian National Registry, respectively. Their findings illustrated the prevalence of adolescents' psychosocial identity challenges (such as behavioural, emotional, and educational challenges) ranging between 10 to 45 per cent.

Further, the Status Report on Adolescents and Young People in Sub-Saharan Africa published by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) revealed that more than 90 per cent of adolescents experiencing these psychosocial identity challenges live in poor countries, with sub-Saharan Africa having the highest proportion (UNFPA, 2017). Notably, most psychosocial identity challenges in both developed and developing countries emanate from peer pressure, parental neglect, poverty, substance abuse, increasing access to social media that promotes irresponsible behaviours (Daniel et al., 2011), academic failure and increase in the dependency ratio, especially in developing countries (Tipple & Speak, 2009). A study of adolescents in San Francisco to determine the consequences of psychosocial identity issues indicated that these challenges resulted in around 20% of them developing mental health disorders. Furthermore, suicide was discovered to be the third most prevalent cause of loss of life in this age range, after road accidents and interpersonal violence (Knopf et al., 2008).

### ***1.8.4 Psychosocial Identity Challenges of Adolescents***

Psychosocial identity challenges are categorised along two dimensions. In this section, psychological and social identity challenges are discussed.

#### **1.8.4.1 Psychological Identity Challenges**

Psychological identity challenges faced by adolescents include anxiety, depression, sadness, rejection, and thoughts of suicide. These challenges have an impact on the adolescents' mental health as well as their physical fitness (Assini-Meytin & Green, 2015). According to studies, adolescents who face psychosocial identity issues frequently develop anxiety (Siegel & Brandon, 2014). Anxiety, in the view of Amoah (2013), is an unexplainable fear or unease that adolescents experience due to unsolved difficulties. These worries could be brought on by the adolescent's changing body, the actions of close relatives, or the fear of failing an examination. Adolescence has been recognised in several research studies as a period of psychological stress, which is commonly a major depressive disorder associated with social isolation and suicidal behaviour (Beers & Lewin, 2013). Studies have revealed that suicide behaviour is a fairly prevalent trait among adolescents, and it is commonly linked to psychiatric illnesses (Jonsson et al., 2011). This behaviour occurs when young people decide that it would be best to end their lives because they feel helpless in the face of their problems (Amoah, 2013; Jonsson et al., 2011). Nonetheless, many of these adolescents will experience better outcomes and a higher quality of life with supportive parents, teachers and peers (Beers & Lewin, 2013).

#### **1.8.4.2 Social Identity Challenges**

The difficulties adolescents face in their relationships with the opposite sex, in addition to career decisions, are just two examples of the social issues they face because these decisions are based on an individual's subjective image of the future. These difficulties are a component of adolescent identity development and, consequently, of adolescent social problems. They choose the wrong careers since there are not enough centres for vocational training and career counselling to assist them in making informed decisions on what they will be able to do (Seginer, 2009). They fail to specify their aptitudes, interests, skills, and shortcomings, let alone the profession or employment that best suits their personality. Their relationship with the opposite sex is another concern; when adolescents transition into adulthood, there is an overwhelming attraction to the opposing sex. Boys tend to appeal more to girls, and vice versa (Carrell, 2010). They prioritise their relationship with the other sex above all else, which causes them to be much more devastated when it ends, leading to psychosocial identity difficulties. It is challenging for individuals to avoid sex, alcohol, and drugs at

these times because their emotions and feelings control them. This trend tends to endanger the lives of adolescents (Limone & Toto, 2022).

### ***1.8.5 Factors Influencing Psychosocial Identity Development Among Adolescents***

Factors influencing human behaviour can be mainly categorised according to internal (genetic) and external (acquired) factors. Coll et al. (2014) argue that the interplay between the genes (hereditary) and the environment (acquired) explains the individual development path which each individual follows through their lifespan. Internal factors that influence one's behaviour are the physical features transmitted from parents, psychological heredity (such as motivational needs, emotions, goals and desires), character (moral standard) and temperament (Ristea, 2013).

The home (parents, siblings, and family socioeconomic status), religious bodies (church, mosque, or shrine), society in which the individual lives, the school, and the media play a role in the life of adolescents. As a result, psychosocial identity development challenges could emanate from poor parenting styles, low socioeconomic status of the family (poverty), peer group pressure and the negative impact of the media (Asikhia, 2020).

Adolescents are born into this world by two parents. It behoves them to instil a sense of responsibility and courteous behaviour in adolescents (Feinstein, 2023). When adolescents diverge from these societal norms, parents deem it their responsibility to inflict punishment to correct them, while adolescents feel they should resist the punishment. Interestingly, this form of resistance and rebellion against the punishment from adolescents results in prolonged arm wrestling (Antwi-Danso, 2019). Rejection, frustration, anxiety, and despair are all characteristics of parenting or child-rearing practices. Gardner et al. (2014) ascribed some of these changes to the arrival of Western civilisation in Africa. According to him, the uttermost regard that youngsters once showed for the elderly has been washed away. Compliance with directives or instructions from parents or authority without questioning seems to be a thing of the past. Moreover, this parent-adolescent relationship conflict in Ghana, in the opinion of Owusu-Banahene (2007), could be attributed to adolescents seeking independence and emancipation from parents, the adolescents' own ideologies, poor parenting styles

and inconsistency displayed by some parents, which eventually makes these adolescents override them.

Another factor that could be attributed to the upsurge of adolescents' psychosocial identity development challenges is peer influence. Indeed, at adolescence, the home ceases to be the centre of emotional interest to the adolescents. This situation makes adolescents intensify their involvement with peers to give way to more intimate friendships and romance. Peers are members of adolescents' equals. According to Oppong-Frimpong and Amissah (2009, p.34), "the group exerts influences on various aspects of life; including sexual behaviour standards, entertainment, attitude towards authority figures and academic purists". Adolescents rely greatly on their peers for support, security, guidance and emancipation (freedom). It is quite regrettable that some of the recommendations provided by the groups are sometimes unjust. Negative peer pressure has led many adolescents into inappropriate behaviours such as smoking, alcoholism, substance abuse, armed robbery, stealing and indiscriminate sex (Tarshis, 2010).

Concerning the media, adolescents are perceptive and frequently impacted by what they hear and see. Adolescents of today are privileged to have access to the media. The media have made it easier for everyone, including adolescents in Ghana, to know what is happening in almost every part of the world in seconds (Burrell & Anderson, 2008). They spend most of their time viewing programmes, movies and musical clips, reading messages from their phones, laptop computers and television via the internet. The negative use of the internet by these adolescents has become the source of increasing their desire for sexual pleasure and also the quest for quick money, which has taken centre stage through internet fraud popularly known in Ghana as "Sakawa" business. "Sakawa" is one area of internet abuse. It is the practice that involves young individuals manipulating evil occult powers to perform successful financial fraud through the internet.

Traditional West African powers (locally known as "juju") have been employed in this Internet scam, whereby providing spiritual services through strange and costly rituals purported to increase their client's (the young one) powers of persuasion (in defrauding) and by making their unsuspecting victim's (mostly from Western countries) emails deceitful and irresistible to fake business ventures (Mohammed et al., 2019).

This negative behaviour is intended to move the participant up the social class ladder and acquire expensive properties. Due to the extreme ritualistic nature of the behaviour, society labels the attitude as aberrant (Sottie et al., 2018). As a result, if the person fails to complete the occultic practices assigned by the traditional African ritualist, they either die or become mentally ill (Forster, 2012).

Furthermore, one of the key elements impacting adolescents' psychosocial identity difficulties has been recognised as poverty. Across the globe, especially in developing countries such as Ghana, adolescent psychosocial identity challenges are more likely to be prevalent among adolescents who have low aspirations for their education or careers and who live in underwhelming circumstances (Viner et al., 2012). Due to the amount of poverty (poor socioeconomic position) of the majority of parents in Ghana, adolescents are more prone to experiencing psychosocial identity difficulties, especially when the adolescent and other older family members occupy the same space (Newman & Newman, 2017). Adolescents who experience such upbringings are more prone to struggle with adjustment at the early stages of their lives since their families cannot provide for their basic needs. Thus, poverty plays a significant role in influencing adolescents' behaviour.

## **1.9 Research Methodology and Design**

The current study was conducted according to the following research methodology and design.

### **1.9.1 Research Paradigm**

Teherani et al. (2015) assert that a paradigm is a set of fundamental beliefs characterising how people interpret the world and reality. Therefore, the study was conducted from a phenomenological case study design within an epistemological perspective of an interpretivist paradigm since the researcher wanted to fully understand participants' subjective experiences (Finlay, 2013).

### **1.9.2 Research Approach**

The research followed a qualitative approach. According to Cohen et al. (2011), using qualitative research enhances our understanding of the diversity and depth of people; hence, this design is most definitely suited for the study. As a result, a more complete understanding of adolescents' psychosocial identity development was attained

because qualitative approaches helped me to comprehend the framework in which individuals express their ideas, feelings, and actions.

### ***1.9.3 Population and Sampling***

The study's target population constituted all adolescents in Junior High Schools in the Bosomtwe District of Ghana. Purposive sampling was used to select participants for the qualitative data. With the help of the school heads, I purposively selected 20 adolescent respondents (five from each sampled school) for the focus group discussions, 12 teachers, eight adolescents and 12 parents for the individual interview sessions. The purposive sampling technique was deemed appropriate as it ensured a homogeneous sample of participants who were likely knowledgeable and helpful in exploring adolescents' psychosocial identity development associated with traditional rituals and rites of passage (Etikan et al., 2016).

### ***1.9.4 Data Collection Techniques***

Semi-structured interview guides were employed to obtain the qualitative data via individual interviews and Focus Group Discussions (FGD). Kusi (2012) opines those participants have lived in their communities or socio-cultural contexts and, therefore, possess extensive knowledge about the phenomenon under exploration. Using an interview schedule, therefore, allowed the study participants to construct their own world. The instruments were developed based on a careful review of existing literature related to the study. Three data generation assistants were recruited and trained to conduct the FGD. The interview was done by the researcher alone.

### ***1.9.5 Trustworthiness***

In qualitative research, the degree to which a study can be replicated in a different setting is called trustworthiness (Anney, 2014). Guaranteeing the trustworthiness of data and method of analysis is the key strategy to achieve quality assurance in qualitative investigations. Gunawan (2015) argues that a study is trustworthy only if the reader of the research report agrees with it. In qualitative research, credibility, dependability, conformability, transferability and authenticity are used to determine trustworthiness (Matlala et al., 2014). Participants in the study were sufficiently involved to safeguard the study's credibility. Transferability was established by giving readers of the study enough information about the research subjects and study environments to enable them to decide whether and how the study's findings may be

used in their own context. In light of the dependability and conformity, the study's purpose, the methodology that was used, and its projected limits were all clearly defined.

#### **1.9.6 Data Analysis and Interpretation**

Thematically, analysing interview and FGD transcripts were employed for inductive analysis. The ATLAS-ti scientific software program assisted in the analytical procedure. During the inductive analysis process, the following processes were followed: data preparation, data coding, category formation, and pattern discovery.

#### **1.9.7 Research Ethics**

Before collecting data, the relevant procedures were followed to get ethical approval from the University of South Africa's ethics unit. Permission from the Ghana Education Service, consent from teachers, parents or guardians, and, where applicable, assent from learners were all obtained. The purpose of the study and the freedom to withdraw at any time without penalty was explained to the participants by the data collectors. They also ensured voluntary participation as well as the anonymity of the participants.

#### **1.10 Delimitations of the Study**

The study focused on adolescents in the Bosomtwe District of Ghana only. The study further focused on adolescents in Junior High School (JHS) because it has been revealed that they usually face many challenges. Some experts (for example, Kjobli & Sorlie, 2008) suggest that all efforts aimed at improving adolescents' behaviour should target students at the JHS level. Moreover, available data from public JHSs in Ghana showed that most students who withdraw due to poor academic performance are JHS students (Amponsah et al., 2018).

#### **1.11 Clarification of Key Concepts**

The following key terms used in this research study are clarified below:

Adolescents - Adolescents refer to boys and girls between the onset of puberty and maturity. Individuals within this age bracket, as defined by the World Health Organisation, fall within the age range of 10 and 19 years (WHO, 2016). In a broad sense, the term is well understood by many societies to encompass social, psychological, physical and moral aspects of development. This transitional period or developmental

stage in one's life legally terminates when one reaches the age of majority.

Challenges - Challenges are a state of difficulty that needs to be resolved. In this circumstance, it requires the individual to apply great mental and/or physical effort to overcome this psychological trauma that sometimes imposes fear, self-doubt and insecurity. Individuals' ability to overcome this situation ultimately leads to their superior performance and influences their thinking, feelings and how they relate to others (Singh, 2010).

Psychosocial - Psychosocial refers to a combination of social and psychological factors. These factors are related to an individual's social conditions, mental and emotional health and influence the person's mind or behaviour (Oxford English Dictionary, 2012). Identity development is how people create a distinct and clear picture of themselves. Cote and Levine (2014) describe identity development as the process through which individuals begin to comprehend and have a sense of who they are in the setting of societal expectations.

Rites of passage – Rites of passage refer to a set of "rituals which mark the passing of one stage of life and entry into another, e.g., birth, puberty, marriage, initiation to priesthood, or death." They are used to describe the transition from one stage of life to another. According to Setlhabi (2014), the ceremonies are performed when a person reaches puberty and are known as puberty rites. They serve to protect the transition from infancy to adulthood. Initiates are instructed on how to carry out their obligations in their capacity as adults during this transitional period.

Traditional Rituals – Traditional rituals consist of a series of actions or statements that are recited regularly, as a component of a religious function. In the performance of traditional rituals, Markstrom (2011) asserts that the customs of a society, including a religious community, dictate the order in which certain gestures, words, actions, or objects of veneration should be performed. Traditional rituals are a sequence of behaviour that people follow on a regular basis (Moore et al., 2013; Natsuaki,

2011; Salusky, 2021). These are observable behavioural patterns shared by all known societies. They play a major part in religious, cultural, and social behaviours and are used to define or describe persons.

- Psychosocial Identity - Psychosocial identity is an individual's sense of self characterized by a set of physical, psychological, and interpersonal traits that distinguish them apart from other people (McAdams & Zapata-Gietl, 2015). It is the conscious sense of self that individuals develop through social interaction, which is constantly changing due to new experiences and information they acquire in their daily interactions with others (Morss, 2020). Individuals create a conscious sense of who they are through social contact, and this notion is ever-evolving because of the new experiences and knowledge they acquire from everyday encounters with others.
- Perception – Perception is the process through which individuals ultimately experience the world and how they organise and interpret sensory information. As Cruz et al. (2010) stated, perception determines how people view themselves and the world around them.
- Influence – Influence describes a power to affect persons, events, or something psychological without direct or apparent effort.
- Adjustment - The term "adjustment" refers to an individual's response to the demands and stresses of their social environment.
- Personal development - Personal development entails mental, physical, social, emotional and spiritual development that enables a person to live a productive and meaningful life while adhering to community norms and rules.
- Academic development- Academic development refers to persons reaching their full potential by using their ability and knowledge to function in school so that they can also perform professionally in the employment setting.

## 1.12 Chapter Outline

This thesis was organised into six chapters. Chapter One began with an introduction and background to the study, followed by discussions of major research aspects such as the rationale for the study, the statement of the problem, the purpose of the study,

research questions, aims and objectives of the study, preliminary literature review, research methodology and design, study delimitations, and concept definitions.

Chapter Two dealt with the literature review of the psychosocial identity development of adolescents and its impact. It included an introduction and empirical studies on traditional rituals and rites of passage of adolescents. Firstly, the concept of adolescence was explored, with a focus on the developmental levels of adolescents within the Ghanaian context. Secondly, the psychological, emotional and social challenges adolescent encounter was examined. Thirdly, I explored the traditional rites of passage adolescents undergo in selected African countries. Thereafter, I discussed the influence of rites of passage on adolescent's psychosocial identity development.

Chapter Three focused on the conceptual framework that underpins the study of adolescent psychosocial development in relation to their traditional rituals and rites of passage. Constructs from the ritual process paradigm, social ontogenesis, bio-ecological system and psychosocial identity development theories have been adopted as the conceptual framework.

The research methods are discussed in Chapter Four, which includes the choice of phenomenological case study as the research design, study area, population, target population, sample and sampling procedure, data generation instrument, and data generation procedures. It also elaborated on the data processing and analysis, trustworthiness, and ethical considerations undertaken to ensure the study's credibility.

In Chapter Five, I presented the study's results and discuss the findings in relation to existing literature and the conceptual framework. I presented the themes and their sub-themes and categories that emerged from the participating adolescent learners, parents, teachers' verbatim interviews and FGD transcripts during the thematic analysis and interpretation phase. The study's findings were supported with verbatim quotations from the participants and excerpts from my field notes.

Finally, Chapter Six provides an overview of the study by addressing the research questions presented in Chapter One and their relation to the literature and conceptual framework of this research. In Chapter 6, I explore the potential contributions of the study and reflect upon the challenges and potential limitations of the study. I conclude

this chapter with recommendations for supporting counselling practice and educational psychologists, and then I make recommendations for future research, training and policy.

### **1.13 Conclusion**

In this chapter, I presented the background and rationale of the study, as well as the problem statement. Furthermore, I provided the aims, purpose, search questions and research objectives I formulated to guide the study, and I explained the rationale for the study. A preliminary literature review is provided on factors influencing psychosocial identity development among adolescents. I expound on the paradigmatic lens, which I employed in this study, and the chosen research design and method. The data generation and analysis, trustworthiness, ethical considerations, limitations and delimitations of the study and clarification of concepts are also highlighted in this chapter. In the next chapter, I will focus on the literature review that guided this study.

## **CHAPTER TWO LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 Introduction**

In the preceding chapter, I offered an outline and orientation to the study. In this chapter, I position the study within the context of literature. This involved a review of a published compilation of papers, books, and other documentation that summarises the historical and present state of information on the subject and organises the literature into topics and documents needed to conduct the study. The literature review in this study aimed at exploring the literature base on what has been researched on adolescents' psychosocial identity development globally, in Africa and particularly from Ghana's perspective. To provide an extensive analysis of the academic literature published on the matter, I consulted university library collections and various electronic subject databases. The literature review was organised in line with the research questions of this study. The overarching research question, emerging from the problem statement as stated in Chapter 1, is:

How do adolescents experience their psychosocial identity development in relation to traditional rituals and rites of passage?

Research sub-questions explored in the literature review:

- a. What are Western and African viewpoints on the psychological, social, and emotional identity formation of adolescents?

Sub-questions explored in the empirical research:

- b. What traditional rituals and rites of passage do adolescents in Ghana undergo?
- c. How do adolescents in the study experience the traditional rituals and rites of passage?
- d. How do traditional rituals and rites of passage influence an adolescent's psychosocial identity development?
- e. What knowledge about adolescents' psychosocial identity development and their associated rites of passage can inform counselling guidelines for adolescents in the Bosomtwe District of Ghana?

The strategy I considered in reviewing the literature included conducting searches in all population-based studies that were accessible. These studies comprised independent studies, theses, dissertations and reports with significant multicentric sample sizes from urban or rural locations published since 2005 in reputable academic databases. I conducted searches using UNISA Encore Library Catalogue, PubMed, ProQuest, Sage Journals, Science Direct, Eric, Taylor and Francis, Wiley Online Library, Google Scholar and ResearchGate.

In this chapter, I begin by offering a detailed conceptualisation of the adolescent stage of development. Then, I explore the developmental level of adolescence. Thereafter, adolescents' psychological, emotional and social experiences encountered in their identity development are examined. Moreover, I discuss the concept of rites of passage. In addition, I explored how adolescents experience rites of passage. Finally, I situate my study within the existing gaps I identified in the respective body of knowledge that examined the impact of traditional rituals and rites of passage on adolescents' psychosocial identity development.

## **2.2 Review of Related Literature**

Badu-Nyarko (2010, p.18) defines literature as “the meticulous identification, discovery, and evaluation of documents holding knowledge relevant to the problem under investigation”. It is also the reading of prior work similar to the topic or subject under investigation. Essentially, it combines what has already been written in terms of theories or ideas and empirical research. The overarching goal of this literature review was to determine if the current analysis can resolve gaps, silences, or flaws in previous research. I was aided in my literature review by following the suggestions outlined by Alhassan (2017, p. 22):

- To stay away from accidental duplication. Researchers could discover, through a literature review, that a very similar thesis on their study topic has already been conducted.
- Include details on the previous methods used by previous researchers, including the data collection and analysis procedures.
- Identify areas where there are information gaps. What has been done by some, and what has been left unfinished, needing further study?
- Put the research into a historical context.

- Assess the viability or feasibility of the proposed research.
- Check to see if there are any tools available for the present analysis.

Based on the above discussion, I explored the literature to find answers to the sub-research question: What are the processes in adolescents' psychological, social and emotional identity construction from Western and African perspectives? In the next section of this chapter, I delve into the adolescent stage of development.

### ***2.2.1 The Adolescent Stage of Development***

Adolescence, generally referred to as the second decade of the human life span, currently accounts for 1.2 billion people, making up 16 per cent of the world's total population (The United Nations Children's Fund [UNICEF], 2019). Eighty-eight per cent live in developing countries (Assan et al., 2018; UNICEF, 2019). In Asia and Africa, documentation has also shown that adolescents make up a significant portion of the population. For example, in Nepal and Nigeria in South Asia and West Africa, respectively, more than one in four people are adolescents (age 10-19 years).

Ghana's adolescent demographic accounts for more than eighteen per cent (18%) of the total population, having grown from 1.1 million in 1960 to 5.2 million in 2021 (Ghana Statistical Service [GSS], 2022). Similarly, the population of adolescents in Bosomtwe District, Ghana, was estimated to be 43,277 in the 2021 population and housing census, accounting for 26.2 per cent of the total population of 165,180 (GSS, 2022). This data indicates a large adolescent population globally and, thus a critical group to target because they are a nation's future manpower.

The idea of adolescence defies a single widely agreed definition. For example, the World Health Organisation (WHO) defines the term "adolescence", both in terms of age and a stage of life distinguished by unique characteristics. On the one hand, it should be emphasised that the age of interest ranges from 10 to 19 years. On the other hand, the stage of life is distinguished by unique characteristics, including biological development and growth, enhanced decision-making capacities, and a search for oneself (WHO, 2016). In the same vein, the United States (US) Department of Health and Human Services uses "persons" between the ages of 10 and 20 years as a reference age group for adolescents (Ostchega, 2012). However, in Asia,

particularly in India, its National Youth Policy refers to adolescents between the ages of 13 and 19.

In Africa, diverse definitions have been applied to adolescence. In South Africa, where over 10 million adolescents reside, Statistics South Africa (StatsSA) classifies persons between 10 and 19 as adolescents (StatsSA, 2017; Toska et al., 2019). Similarly, the Children's Act of 2001 in Kenya demarcates adolescents as those aged 10-19 years. In Ghana, the word "adolescence" is often used interchangeably with "teenage," which runs from 13 to 19 years and denotes the era of transition from childhood to adulthood (Ghana Demographic and Health Survey [GDHS], 2018; GSS, 2022). Adolescent development is seen as a central issue in identity formation and is represented by both biological and cultural indicators.

#### **i. Biological identifiers of adolescence**

Biologically, adolescence marks the beginning of a growth surge. The physical changes that occur at this time of a person's life are caused by hormones, which are chemical molecules in the body that work on specific organs and tissues. Height, weight, bone thickness, breast development in females, expansion of sexual organs, and pubic hair development are all examples of accelerated biological advances at this time (Antwi-Danso, 2019). Zoladz and Diamond (2013) further established that this type of marker or identifier is found in most young individuals aged nine to sixteen and connotes the physical or reproductive changes humans experience. In other words, biological markers indicate a person's physical maturity.

The start of puberty, or reproductive capability, was adolescence's most fundamental physiologic marker (Matousek et al., 2010). This was the key insignia that sparked "rites of passage" for pubescents in most African societies and communities (Settersten et al., 2015). As indicated by Dalton and Leung (2014), menstruation for girls in most African communities in the late 1700s and 1800s ranged from 15 to 16 years, substantially later than the current range of 10 to 12 years. Adolescence in boys today occurs around the age of 12 and in girls at 10, yet a recent study suggests that the beginning of puberty is also on the decline (Das et al., 2017). While the causes of these changes are unknown, the shift toward early puberty in African has been attributed to nutritional and environmental conditions (Settersten et al., 2015).

## **ii. Cultural markers**

Different cultures have different conceptions of the stages of adolescence, and there is little consensus on the beginning and end of adolescence (Birr Moje et al., 2008). For example, the dominant Western culture (which is part of the European-American culture) sees adolescence as an individualistic process with the development of an "independent self" as its central subject (Russell et al., 2010). Thus, the dominating ideology construct that establishes the current category of adolescent development and upholds the conventional adolescent development paradigm is the primacy, legitimacy, and institutionalisation of the individualistic dogma of Western culture. Considering that Westerners and Africans evolved from distinct conceptual, ideological, historical, and cultural backgrounds, it is imperative to consider the cultural settings of the African adolescent in any study. In other words, despite the cultural differences across African countries, most promote a distinct family structure with a particular national character and "value system". Hence, it is essential to re-examine the dominant model and its underlying assumptions (Kaul, 2014).

In most African cultures, no one is perceived as an isolated or distinct individual. They are typically seen as a component of a social structure with a specific task for others. African adolescents, therefore, see themselves as dependent on others and others as dependent upon them. According to Way et al. (2013), adolescence involves acquiring the appropriate attitudes and beliefs necessary for meaningful social participation. When adolescents find employment and leave home, for example, they are accepted as adults among the Yoruba people of Nigeria in West Africa, as well as in other regions of Africa (Adagbada et al., 2021; Gbenle, 2018).

In parts of East Africa, especially among the people of Banda in Central Uganda, it was the responsibility of the adolescent girl's paternal female elder relatives, known locally as "Ssengas", to initiate them during this transition period into adulthood. The Ssengas's role as a traditional mentor covers a variety of sexual concerns including pre-menarche practices, pre-marriage planning, erotic teaching and reproductive health, how to prepare food and a body of values and behavioural issues (Dipio, 2019). However, the Ssengas' work has since been taken over by persons who have now monetised the whole operation. Commercial Ssengas' are now run so that parents employ young girls to perform the traditional Ssengas' role. Furthermore, the Ssengas

roles and responsibilities are currently being circulated in electronic printing. Ssengas booklets can also be purchased on the streets of Kampala, Uganda's capital. The fact that ancient conventions have been transformed into "modernisation" suggests that the barrier to female sexuality has been broken somehow (Dipio, 2019).

In a similar context, cultural markers in Ghana could be regarded as rites of passage (Owusu-Banahene, 2007). The adolescence phase for both sexes is controlled by social and economic variables in most Ghanaian cultures. Puberty traditions in Ghana teach young people the traditional ideas of adulthood. The initiates are also sensitised about sexuality, dating, marriage, and family duties. In Ghanaian custom, the initiate returns home having been mentally, physically, and spiritually prepared to assume adult responsibilities. It is generally believed that the rites help them better understand themselves and their identities, build real-world skills, and (most crucially) experience the state of mind that comes with achieving a significant stretch goal (Dipio, 2019). The various stages of development of adolescence are discussed next.

### **2.3 Adolescent development from the Ghanaian cultural context**

The emphasis of this segment is on the adolescent's developmental stages. McAdams and Olson (2010) refer to development as the course of action or change that starts at conception and lasts throughout a person's life. This term "development" has a psychological connection. The pattern of movement is complicated since it results from numerous processes, physical (biological) development, cognitive development, emotional development and social development as these landmarks are critical in comprehending the psychosocial identity development of adolescents (Grusec, 2011). These processes are typically identified as the domains or levels of development. This evolution is significantly influenced by a person's sociocultural environment. It is, therefore, challenging to understand someone's development adequately without considering both their culture and their surroundings.

#### **2.3.1 Moral Development**

Thompson (2012) opines that moral development emphasises how morality emerges, changes, and is understood from childhood to adult life. Morality develops throughout one's life and is shaped by a person's actions, reactions and experiences when faced with moral problems or dilemmas over various times. Morality deals with a person's developing sense of right and wrong. In support of this, Haslett (2012) contends that

young people develop moral judgment and character that differ from an adult's. Morality refers to a set of principles that govern one's acts, behaviours, and thoughts stemming from one's cultural background, faith, or personal ideologies.

In the view of Lawrence Kohlberg, moral development is how individuals have arranged their vision of the world, which is a function of their intellectual development (Lunenburg, 2010). According to Kohlberg, moral development takes place in an invariable order, with each stage becoming more intellectually sophisticated than before as the individual ages. He went on to say that at adolescents' first stage of moral development, they tend to follow socially established rules but later question the validity of some of them. Adolescents in the second level follow their own set of rules based on their conscience or what they believe an ideal just person would do (Lunenburg, 2010).

Issues of moral development date back to the time of ancient philosophers such as Confucius, Aristotle and Rousseau, who all adopted a more humanist viewpoint and concentrated on the formation of the conscience and sense of virtue. With the help of psychology theorists like Sigmund Freud, Jean Piaget, Lawrence Kohlberg, Burrhus Fredrick Skinner, Carol Gilligan, and Judith Smetana, empirical research has recently examined morality in connection to cognitive development. Additionally, many academic fields, including philosophy, economics, biology, political science, religious studies and other subfields of psychology (for example, developmental, social, cognitive, clinical, educational and forensic) have interests in morality.

### **2.3.1.1 Moral Development and Factors Influencing Morality**

Examining people's opinions, beliefs, feelings, attitudes, values and behaviours that contribute to their sense of morality, is crucial in understanding how they perceive and interpret morality (De Leeuw, 2015). In gaining an in-depth understanding of the elements that influence morality in an individual, researchers in the area of moral development also consider the functions of conscience and values, socialisation and cultural effects, empathy and altruism, and one's capacity to develop.

An explicit way for societies to socialise individuals is through moral education. Koh (2012), in a study that sought to combine direct instruction and guided reflection approaches to moral formation, presented evidence showing an increased

spontaneous prosocial behaviour. Schaefer et al. (2018) observed that one's cultural background may also play a central role in societal moral differences. Behaviours that enhance the lives of others in society are more probable in communities with good social values than in societies where the focus is primarily on the individual. For instance, children growing up in China embrace their society's collective communist ideals (Child & Warner, 2014). Cohen and Cohen (2013) elucidated that children learn to fabricate stories instead of attempting to accept responsibility for what they have done. Early indications of pro-social behaviour include toy sharing and offering consolation to friends in distress or need. These features can be observed in the behaviour of a person's behaviour as young as childhood through adolescence. Schaefer et al. (2018) concurs with Cohen and Cohen (2013). The author concluded that sharing, helping, and other pro-social behaviours start to increase in frequency in preschool, especially in females; however, there are rarely obvious gender variations in pro-social behaviour.

Moral relativism, also known as "cultural relativism," indicates that morality varies depending on the community or cultural context (Caduff, 2011). Members of other cultures cannot be properly judged morally except based on their own traditional values and norms. He also established that an individual's actions or behaviour may be labelled immoral if it undermines any moral norm or value of society. For example, among the Ashanti of Ghana, it is the duty of the visitor who enters someone's home first to greet them, regardless of their age. However, among the Northern tribes of Ghana, this act is seen as a sign of disrespect, as the younger one will have to meet the older at first sight. This confirms the point made by Kim and Johnson (2013) that the boundaries of morality are defined differently across various societies. In support of this idea, Quataert (2011) advocates for resistance groups that fight for justice by promoting individual rights to self-consciousness within societies.

Crimston et al. (2016) claim that there is cultural variation in the weight assigned to moral issues (such as the significance of prosocial aiding) rather than variation in what people view as good moral standards (such as fairness, justice, and rights). However, Abdullah and Brown (2011) argued that children from various cultures, including those in the United States, India, China, Turkey, and Brazil, share a pervasive perception of situations in which people have different beliefs about the outcomes of actions or the

status of diverse groups of individuals. It is evident that their assessments of whether certain behaviours are harmful or fair frequently vary, in terms of maintaining unfairness and the wrongness of inflicting pain, among other things.

Conventions and norms differ across numerous cultures, but fairness is a value that seems to arise very early in development before socialisation takes hold (Haidt & Joseph, 2007). Even when people adopt the same moral principles, many ostensible cultural disparities in moral judgments are actually caused by different informational assumptions or views about how the world functions (Wainryb, 2006).

A person's moral development, which inevitably influences their sense of moral identity, may be influenced by the role of religion in a cultural setting. Religious activities, which for many are intricately related to the development of cultural identity, may be used to promote societal ideals (Reddy & Van Dam, 2020). Since religion impacts adolescents' ideas of what may be right and evil, religious growth frequently coincides with moral development in young people. The internalisation and symbolism of moral identity may benefit from the intrinsic features of religion. Unless practising a specific religion is a family activity or if the adolescent is a member of a religious social group, they may absorb their parents' morals. The levels of an adolescent's moral and cognitive development are mirrored in their religious development (Schachter & Ben Hur, 2019). The family's religious background is, therefore, seen to significantly impact how its members, especially its adolescents, acquire their values, beliefs and behaviour.

### **2.3.1.2 Developing Morality in the Ghanaian Setting**

In Ghana, just like most African societies, children are usually socialised by their parents' religious ideas and behaviours. In fact, many parents in these societies believe it is their moral obligation to teach their adolescents and children about religion. According to Parsai et al. (2010), there is a strong correlation between parents' and children's religious involvement. Furthermore, this relationship exists not just when the offspring are young and under their parents' care but also after they grow up and leave their parents' supervision.

McKay and Whitehouse (2015), on the other hand, proposed that the development of morality is distinct from the understanding of religious rules when assessing individuals' reactions to whether moral and nonmoral religious rules were contingent on God's word and whether a harmful act could be justified as morally right based on God's commands. However, adolescents also learn that not all religious precepts apply to morality, social systems, or other religions as they acquire knowledge of the world, self, and others (Parsai et al., 2010).

Youngsters are primarily taught morals in indigenous Ghanaian communities through storytelling, or "Ananse" stories, as they are popularly called among the indigenous people. It gives youngsters pointers for comprehending the fundamental principles of their society, the importance of life, and moral theories from earlier generations (Asimeng-Boahene, 2014). In these societies, storytelling affects young people's thinking and serves as the primary comprehension tool and the cornerstone of instruction. In daily life, sharing stories is utilised among the elderly as an informal teaching method. Amid routine household activities, tales are recounted that incorporate lessons in morality, ethics, and principles.

Many indigenous Ghanaian youngsters learn to pay close attention to the nuances of a story to learn from them and comprehend why people behave in certain ways (Asimeng-Boahene & Mbakogu, 2018). The information a person gains from listening to morality and ethics being taught through storytelling allows them to participate appropriately in their community. In storytelling, for instance, certain animals are utilised as characters to represent particular cultural values and viewpoints, and listeners are instructed through the acts of these creatures.

In Ghana, the Akan tribe regards the figure "Ananse" (spider) as a trickster who exhibits unfavourable traits, including avarice, carelessness, and hubris. On the other hand, tortoises, cats, and ants are typically considered morally upright, smart, and noble role models for children (Asimeng-Boahene & Mbakogu, 2018). There is a distinction drawn as the trickster characters frequently experience terrible consequences in the stories, and these youngsters are taught to refrain from engaging in similar harmful behaviours. Character re-use necessitates a more predictable result that adolescents can grasp more readily.

### **2.3.2 Physical Development**

The advancement and improvement of motor skills, or an individual's capacity to use and regulate their body, is referred to as physical development (Parrish et al., 2010). Physical development includes a myriad of biological changes in the body. That is, in the way that individuals utilise their body, motor skills, sense organs, muscles, bones, and sexual organs. It also includes the effects of ageing, such as eyesight or muscular strength changes. However, these changes do not usually include changes when they result from accidents, illnesses or other special events (Antwi-Danso, 2019).

During this period of adolescence, the body gets to its maximum height but may not reach its maximum weight. The growth rate slows down, but physical coordination improves drastically. Boys catch up to girls in height and weight after the age of 15, and they stay taller and heavier for the remainder of their lives (Oppong-Frimpong & Amissah, 2009). As a result, boys have voracious appetites. The young boy develops a deep voice and grows hair on various areas of his body. The noticeable part of the process in girls starts about the age of eleven, when the first signs of breast growth show, followed by expanded hips and rounded body contours. The adolescent may be bothered about their changing physical appearance and their attractiveness or otherwise (Owusu-Banahene, 2007). Gorely et al. (2016) contend that while adolescent boys think of the size and physical process, girls are usually concerned about their looks and appearance. He further maintains that boys engage more in strenuous activities, including gymnastics, while girls enjoy art and music (Gorely et al., 2016).

### **2.3.3 Cognitive (Intellectual) Development**

The term cognitive development describes the functions of the brain, mind and the individual's thinking aspect. Cognitive development include changes in the development of mental potentialities of the person, which involves changes to perception, imagination, memory, reasoning, thinking and language acquisition (Saxe & Powell, 2006). It deals with how adolescents acquire and store knowledge. During adolescence, there is evidence of a great leap in the individual's capacity to deal with abstract reasoning. In the works of Jean Piaget (Antwi-Danso, 2019), the adolescent has attained the capacity for formal operations and is, therefore, capable of deductive reasoning. This is to say that, at adolescence, the individual is no longer tied to

concrete things or objects to make rational judgments only but to problems and issues requiring analysis.

Piaget's theory focuses on the concept that adolescence is marked by developing the capacity for abstract thought, logical reasoning, and drawing inferences from the evidence presented (Antwi-Danso, 2019). The author also highlights the adolescent's capacity for logical and hypothetical reasoning. The young person may comprehend concepts like love, morality, "shades of grey," logical proofs, and societal ideals and conventions at this point. Therefore, Adolescents are better equipped to function independently, analyse their own experiences, make connections between them and others, and grow to care about others.

Cognitive development is measured in Indigenous African culture, particularly Ghanaian culture, by a person's capacity to comprehend, utilise and interpret proverbs, riddles and puzzles. A proverb is a wise statement derived from thorough observation of social events, people's lives and animal behaviour (Ndofirepi & Ndofirepi, 2012). An intelligent adolescent may explain the same concepts using proverbs or wise sayings instead of a protracted speech. By doing so, an otherwise long statement is condensed, and the primary point of the topic is highlighted for easy comprehension. For example, there is an Akan proverb which is literally translated as "we use proverbs rather than simple words when speaking or addressing a wise person". This means there is no need to converse with a clever individual for an extended period. The adolescent's proverbial expressions are proof of their intellectual condition. Aside from proverbs, riddles, known among the Akans of Ghana as "ebisaa," are used to assess a person's cognitive growth (Kuwornu-Adjaottor et al., 2019). Riddles are used to assess an individual's intellect and cognitive development because they require people to think quickly and make decisions. As a result, an adolescent who excels at proverbs and riddles is believed to have greater knowledge, reasoning, and critical thinking prowess (Ndofirepi & Ndofirepi, 2012).

### **2.3.4 Emotional Development**

Emotions relate to the feeling tone, the affective part of man, with which individuals respond to their circumstances. This includes feelings, attitude, and appreciation. In other words, expressing feelings about self, others and things describes emotional development (Mascolo, 2020). Emotions are responses to particular relationships

between one's goals and events he encounters, and it forms an important aspect of an adolescent's personality development.

When children attain emotional maturity, they no longer experience temper tantrums in front of others and instead vent theirs in a socially acceptable way. Failure, embarrassment, and alienation are all fears that adolescents have. Anxiety and remorse also weigh their shoulders (Carr, 2015). Adolescent aggression is a sign of deficiencies in the child's social and emotional maturity due to an inability to suppress emotions. Uncontrolled aggressiveness suggests a lack of social maturity in adolescents, making them unable to regulate their feelings (Sharma, 2012). Adolescence is often the period in which one's self-concept forms and develops. Self-concept is described by Kim and Manion (2019, p.35) as "a complex arrangement of beliefs and conceptions about one's behaviours toward oneself where one is ordinarily conscious of things happening within their surroundings and so may become cognizant." A positive self-identity is paramount for enhancing adolescents' mental well-being and their social connections, academic achievement in all fields, and career aspirations.

Eysenck (2012) and Wong et al. (2008) argued that the individual's personality affects everything he or she is, wants to be or does. Additionally, Kim and Manion (2019) contend that adolescents with low self-esteem can have psychosocial challenges. The more unhappy an adolescent is, the more the individual becomes concerned for their family and education. If they do not feel welcomed, they may engage in antisocial behaviour such as substance abuse or alcoholism (Lacomba-Trejo et al., 2020). According to Kaess et al. (2014), adolescents have difficulties with their personalities. Most adolescents experience interpersonal crises that Erikson (Owusu-Banahene, 2007) refers to as "crises of identity versus confusion". Adolescents attempt to develop social and occupational identity by trying different adult roles. Difficulties in reaching a settlement in this regard result in identity or role confusion, frequently leading to inadequacy, isolation from peers and uncertainty. Eventually, anxiety, apathy, or animosity towards positions or beliefs may result from identity uncertainty.

In this, there is uncertainty among these adolescents as they seek to clarify who they are and how to relate to the environment; adolescents will attempt to respond to the following questions:

- What will I become if I am not what I should be?
- What am I?
- What ambitions or aspirations do I have for my life?
- Why am I like this? or Why am I fat or slip?
- Why doesn't my hair have curls in it? (Erikson, as cited in Whiteley, 2013).

Most adolescents frequently clash with social norms, customs, and traditions as they search for their identity (Cone et al., 2014). Antwi-Danso (2019) further writes that adolescents frequently engage in conflict, tussling, internal strife, and minor arguments with their parents or older siblings over routine family tasks such as carrying foodstuffs from the family farm, washing the utensils after cooking, cleaning the compound, finishing school assignments, fetching water from a stream or river and gathering firewood to prepare family meals.

Notably, adolescents want to know how others see them, how that contrasts with how they see themselves, and how the responsibilities and abilities they have already accomplished relate to their future goals. They tend to be worried about how others perceive them, how they are viewed as adults, and other important role actors. Homan and Tylka (2015) explained that adolescents would feel good about themselves if they received affection, protection, appreciation, and recognition. However, the person would feel intimidated and anxious if they did not have these experiences. These reactions can lead to behavioural challenges.

As can be seen from the above discussion, moral, emotional, and cognitive development all interplay with one another and significantly affect an adolescent's life adjustment and academic achievement. These developmental domains are essential for comprehending how adolescents' psychosocial identities develop. Adolescents' identity challenges are influenced by developmental crises in each of their developmental domains (Antwi-Danso, 2019, p.12). The next section looks at adolescent identity and psychosocial development as they relate to their academic and personal well-being.

## **2.4 Adolescent Identity and Psychosocial Development**

In this section, I provide an overview of the concepts I will explore in each part. To make a good life adjustment, the adolescent must acquire skills and techniques and

learn about rules, attitudes and values that will permit them to maintain their place in society while giving them a sense of personality. Achieving this milestone requires satisfaction with one's well-being, and creating a conducive environment free of behavioural and mental health challenges. This segment delves into the meanings of the concepts of adolescent identity development and adolescent psychosocial development.

#### ***2.4.1 Adolescent Identity Development***

In psychology, identity development, also known as identity formation or construction, is conceptualised as a person's feeling of self-esteem and personal worth (Alsaker & Kroger, 2020). Humans create a clear and unique image of themselves and their identity through a complex process. Identity development is intertwined with self-concept, personality development, and value development. Forming one's identity is a unique stage in the lives of every adolescent. Santrock (2009) defines identity as the memories, experiences, connections, and values that shape an individual's sense of self. The author adds that physical and sexual identity, career goals, religious beliefs, and ethnic heritage are all examples of a person's identity. As adolescents enter early adulthood, they explore these characteristics and commit to aspects of their identity. Over time, this fusion generates a continuous feeling of who adolescents are, even as new elements are developed and absorbed into their identity.

According to Erik Erikson, a notable stage theorist and pioneer in the study of identity development, the goal of adolescence is to achieve a coherent identity while avoiding identity uncertainty. Erickson has further demonstrated the significance of identity development in adolescents' lives by arguing that the age-old issue of "who" helps find the best possible "fit" with identities. They are excellent at imagining how other people would perceive them after they make adjustments (Kroger et al., 2010).

As they enter early adulthood, adolescents explore these characteristics and commit to aspects of their identity. This could entail participating in activities, including joining clubs or groups focused on this component to enhance their comprehension of or relationship to their adolescent identity. Many other psychologists have also attempted to explain and theorise identity development. Sigmund Freud (psychosexual stages of development), Carl Rogers (Humanistic Theory of Personality Development), Michael D. Berzonsky (social cognitive model of identity), James Marcia (theory of identity

development), Jean S. Phinney (ethnic identity development theory), and Janet Helms (racial identity development theory) are only a few to mention.

Expanding on Erikson's idea, James Marcia claimed that identity creation happens in four stages in his identity development theory (Losh & Nzekwe, 2017). The first is what he refers to as identity diffusion, which distinguishes adolescents who have not explored their alternatives or committed to an identity. According to Marcia, such adolescents are those who have not committed firmly to the issues at hand and are not moving forward with them. Persons who uphold this identity may drift throughout life without a sense of direction or attachment to those around them.

Next is identity foreclosure status, which he defined as the condition of people who have chosen an identity without first considering their possibilities (Losh & Nzekwe, 2017). In this way, individuals create their own identity based on the preferences or ideals of others instead of experimenting with their own identity. Interestingly, some parents impose their own decisions or things on their wards without considering that they should have the freedom to make their own decisions. Conversely, in circumstances where parents and other kinsmen of the community give adolescents the option to make their own decisions, they tend to identify with them and choose them as role models strongly.

Thirdly, he used the term "Identity-Moratorium state," which applies to individuals who are still investigating and trying to define their identities without making any decisions. The individual is contemplating various choices but has yet to decide on any of them. This could be a frightening and emotionally troubling time for that person since they are experimenting with many roles and exploring different viewpoints. The final stage is called Identity-Achievement status, and according to him, it is the state that follows commitment after exploration. Here, the adolescent has developed a consistent and loyal identity based on choices they made on their own. It takes time to complete this process, and it seldom does so before the end of adolescence. It is indicative from Marcia's stages that the adolescent must break away from childhood ideas to consider different identities in a certain field and commit to their own personal identity in that area.

Identity development is far more crucial for the quality of life, interpersonal relationships, personal well-being and productivity (Herman et al., 2005). For adolescents, identity development is far more important for learning, good mental health and self-expression (Kroger et al., 2010). At the very same time, adolescence is a vulnerable period in many young people's lives, characterised by large periods of physical and mental upheaval as they try to figure out who they are and cope with the demands of life and their personal aspirations (Kroger et al., 2010).

In their study, Barry et al. (2013) revealed that adolescents who had formed their self-identities were more likely to be perceived as well-adjusted and so often avoided associating with negative friends, abandoning classes, demonstrating at-risk behaviour, or having low self-concept. Adolescents with negative identities, on the other hand, had low self-image, lacked focus and were frequently labelled as poor academic achievers, as well as being more likely to correlate with inappropriate behaviours and bad ideas. Self-identity development is critical for everyone's health, mental well-being and happiness in any society (Barry et al., 2013).

In contemporary Ghanaian culture, two major shifts in context have influenced identity development: cultural and social shifts. Regarding cultural shifts, Ghana is transitioning from dependence on an extended family system to a nuclear family system. In other words, people are now more concerned with providing for their close families (wife and children) than with providing for other relatives such as nephews, nieces, and cousins (Annim et al., 2015). Since the country's quick economic expansion into a lower middle-income country, it has managed to move from a collectivistic society ("weeism") to a more individualistic one. Ghanaian adolescents' developing individualism is entwined with centuries-old traditional collectivist norms. Individualistic collectivism is valued by contemporary Ghanaian adolescents, who seek individualism (e.g., self-determination) within a collectivist society (Flotskaya et al., 2019). Regarding societal transformations, most Ghanaian adolescents live in a post-industrial society for an extended period, primarily due to a lengthier period of schooling:

Despite the rise in studies on adolescent identity formation in recent years (Alsaker & Kroger, 2020; Flotskaya et al., 2019; Hihara et al., 2021; Losh & Nzekwe, 2017; Schwartz et al., 2012), the majority of studies have been undertaken in Western

countries. Studies on Ghanaian adolescents challenge the traditional assumptions of identity theory by highlighting major developmental differences between Ghanaian and Western adolescent counterparts. These features may reflect profound changes in the very fabric of Ghanaian culture and society.

#### ***2.4.2 Psychosocial Identity Development***

Erik Erickson's works in the 1950s laid the foundation for psychosocial identity development which provides knowledge on processes surrounding prominent developmental tasks. Rosenberg (2017) presented the view that psychosocial identity development is all about human well-being and that it brings together aspects of cognitive, social, and biological adjustments. Accordingly, psychosocial identity development is described as an umbrella term for the study of the combination of biological drives and societal demand (Parker, 2015; Sanders, 2013). The definition focuses on how individuals look physically can affect how they feel about themselves and their relationship with their friends. And their powers of reasoning can influence their ability to understand the needs of others. In this way, psychosocial identity development affects the quality of their relationship with others, the ways that individuals experience joy, display love for altruism, create healthy families, and institutions, and, thereby, address a full range of human experiences (Newman & Newman, 2017).

Psychosocial identity development can also be defined as the uniqueness of individuals in the context of the combined influence that psychological factors and the surrounding social environment have on their physical and mental wellness and their ability to function (Friedman et al., 2010). The focus, therefore, is on the internal cognitive aspects of an individual's life and how that internal world causes them to interact with family, peers, and the community. In sum, psychosocial identity development encompasses social and psychological changes in functioning throughout the normal lifetime of a person. The two aspects of psychosocial identity development are described in the next section.

##### **2.4.2.1 Social Identity Development**

Adolescents in their transition from childhood to adulthood undergo physical but also social and emotional changes (Adamsons & Pasley, 2013). One of the social identity transformations that all adolescents go through as they move to adulthood is the desire

to be autonomous. The development of social identity entails the element of one's self-concept that is formed from one's group affiliations, which is a large component of what an adolescent goes through (Rosenberg, 2017). Accordingly, Valkenburg and Peter (2011) suggest that "social identity development" connotes the process by which people develop social and emotional abilities over the course of time; in other words, "social identity development" refers to how an adolescent develops a sense of self through the acquisition of interpersonal skills.

Stryker's 1968 identity theory, which was cited by Adamsons and Pasley (2013), focuses on how individuals integrate societal expectations about what it means to hold particular social positions or statuses (such as a parent, spouse, or employee) and the behavioural expectations that go along with those positions in society. Making comparisons and contrasting themselves with others helps adolescents form their own unique identities. They also find significance in the activities relating to sports, religion, school, gender, and ethnic organisations to which they belong (Tiggemann, 2015). As a result, most adolescents wish to distance themselves from their parents. They prefer to make their own decisions without being influenced by others. They become more devoted to their peers and prefer to adhere to their friends' standards to avoid being labelled with disparaging words. The peer group offers valuable information about one's self-concept to adolescents.

More so, the adolescent social identity development is characterised by a strong desire to gain popularity, especially in the style of dressing, a strong desire to be with the opposite sex, an assumption of leadership qualities and other forms of personal popularity (Whiteley, 2013). To achieve this goal, adolescents may prefer the company of friends and peers to that of the family. Generally, they strive to become members of prestigious groups and tend to participate in group activities, such as clubs, parties and other social activities (Fegert et al., 2020).

#### **2.4.2.2 Psychological Identity Development**

As shown by Friedman et al. (2010), psychological identity development encompasses one's capacity for self-reflection and awareness. To Sirgy (2018), it entails aiming for perfection and recognising one's vast worth. As a result, it is a facet that includes individual expectations of self-concept, long-term happiness, satisfaction with life, and balancing emotional states. Psychological identity development, a set of traits and

mental capacity for emotions, affects an adolescent's general resilience to stressful events. In the opinion of Collier and Morgan (2008), the ability to really be conscious within, recognise, and evaluate situations, appreciate, comprehend and connect to everyone else, cope with intense feelings, reactions and behavioural inhibition, as well as the capacity to adjust to change and resolve personal and interpersonal issues are all part of the structure.

Ryff's description of psychological well-being includes the following six aspects of psychological well-being (RPWB): having a positive outlook on oneself and one's past (self-acceptance); having healthy, fulfilling relationships with others (positive relationships with others); feeling autonomous and free from social pressures (autonomy), having life goals and the conviction that one's existence is worthwhile (purpose in life), and having the power to manage one's own affairs which is termed as "ecologi" (Henn et al., 2016).

According to Jeyarani (2022), a person's identity reflects their highest potential, which in itself is self-realisation. Self-realising activities that a person perceives as self-defining or appropriate, engaging, stimulating, useful, and helpful in achieving their life goals and objectives are how identity is represented. Achieved psychosocial identity is linked to a decreased manifestation of psychosomatic and neurotic symptoms (Chen et al., 2007), depression, including thoughts of suicide (Ramgoon et al., 2006). In the view of McMahon and Watts (2002) and Crocetti et al. (2014), psychosocial identity among adolescents is also linked to emotional adjustment, psychological well-being, decreased anxiety, and increased emotional stability. In this matter, adolescent psychosocial identity has been ascertained as an important element in forming the adolescent's self-concept and, therefore, a rule-breaking in this current study. The psychological, emotional and social challenges adolescents encounter will be discussed in the following section.

## **2.5 Psychological, Emotional and Social Challenges Adolescents Encounter**

As indicated earlier, adolescence, the developmental stage that marks the transition from childhood to adulthood, presents its own demands and problems for adolescents to manage. However, Fegert et al. (2020) concluded that some adolescents can manage the difficulties and demands of developmental activities without experiencing significant psychological, social, or emotional disturbance, but others may notice a

considerable change in their overall well-being. This change may occur due to the adaptation's impact on the demands of the new task, which may lead to a depletion of their emotional, cognitive, and social resources. The adverse repercussions of this demand on the adolescent include the possibility that the alterations in the person's well-being could be the beginnings of more serious psychiatric problems. In the following discussion, the manifestations of psychological, emotional and social challenges that affect adolescents will be covered from international and national perspectives.

### **2.5.1 Psychological Challenges**

Adolescents may face various crises and challenges due to their physical, psychological and behavioural development. However, not every adolescent faces all of these psychological challenges. As earlier stated, many adolescents worldwide go through adolescence without facing any of these difficulties (Sourander et al., 2010). According to Ward and McMurray (2015), psychological challenges are conditions characterised by dysfunctional thoughts, feelings and behaviours. Major psychological issues faced by adolescents include anxiety, depression, sadness, rejection and thoughts of suicide (Young et al., 2022). These challenges affect not only the physical but also the mental health of adolescents (Assini-Meytin & Green, 2015). Some of these psychological challenges of adolescents are categorised as follows:

#### **2.5.1.1 Depression**

Adolescents who face psychosocial problems have been linked to depressive symptoms (Dardas et al., 2018). As a result of this, adolescents are said to be "far from being emotionally, cognitively, and socially ready" (Assini-Meytin & Green, 2015). Depression is characterised by a low mood and reluctance to undertake activities. Adolescents' thoughts, behaviour, motivation, feelings and sense of well-being are all affected by depression. In addition, the World Health Organization (WHO) report of 2014 identifies a variety of psychiatric conditions, including major depressive disorder and panic disorder, linked to this challenge among adolescents (Dick & Ferguson, 2015).

Due to its comparatively high prevalence in the general population and the fact that mood disorders are connected with severe morbidity and mortality due to suicide, depression is viewed as a critical health problem for teenagers (Knopf et al., 2008).

Depression in adolescents can be characterised in eight dimensions, according to the American Psychiatric Association (2015): Depressed or irritable mood, lack of interest; cognitive impairment, such as inability to think or focus entirely; vegetative symptoms, such as sleep, lack of appetite, or loss of weight; psychomotor symptoms, such as agitation or retardation; existential issues which might cause suicidal thoughts and exhaustion or lack of energy; negative cognitions such as feelings of hopelessness or undue remorse.

Several family traits or parenting styles may trigger adolescent depression. One component of parenting that leads to adolescent depression is psychologically manipulating tactics, such as coercion, guilt induction, and expressions of dissatisfaction and shame. Mayseless and Scharf (2009), for instance, found that psychological regulation hinders normal psychological and emotional growth in adolescents and that exposure to these techniques is linked to internalising issues like depression and anxiety. Furthermore, Hendricks and Testa (2012) found that psychological influence generally harms healthy cultural transitions.

### **2.5.1.2 Anxiety**

According to Amoah (2013), anxiety is an unexplained apprehension or uneasiness felt by teenagers due to lingering problems. Anxiety is also defined as “a feeling of psychological distress brought on by the anticipation of a distressing and potentially dangerous event” (Hendricks & Testa, 2012). Anxiety brings about a feeling of unpleasant mental state of unease, worry, apprehension, and fixation or concern about an undetermined eventuality. Studies have shown that adolescents often experience anxiety resulting from psychosocial challenges (Siegel & Brandon, 2014). Such fears may be triggered by changes in the adolescent's body, family members' actions, or the fear of failing an examination.

Reardon et al. (2009), in their thorough evaluation of the relationship between anxiety and puberty, established that adolescents who develop early have higher anxiety symptoms and panic attacks, and these risks persist throughout adolescence and then into adulthood. The paucity of adolescent readiness for the pressures and rigours accompanying growth during specific developmental milestones, most notably puberty, was deemed to be the root cause of anxiety. Physical signs of anxiety or

mood disorders in adolescents include exhaustion, chronic fatigue, nausea, headaches, and abdominal or respiratory problems (Ge & Natsuaki, 2009).

### **2.5.1.3 Suicidal Tendencies**

Suicide is defined by the Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (an agency of the United States Public Health Service in Atlanta) as "death by self-inflicted harm, poisoning, or suffocation where there is clear proof (either explicit or implicit) that the victim intended to take his/her life" (Baum et al., 2014). Pompili et al. (2015) define a suicidal attempt as "a self-injury with varied degrees of lethal intent". A suicide act is one with a fatal outcome. According to psychologists, multiple negative changes in youth can indicate major problems that demand immediate attention. Young people who begin to act restlessly and show signs of anger or melancholy, which are not typical of depressed adolescents, may be harbouring suicidal thoughts (Baum et al., 2014).

Suicide deaths are estimated to be 34,000 a year in Sub-Saharan Africa (Randall et al., 2014). They further add that adolescent high school pupils have had significant rates of suicidal thoughts in recent years. Studies have revealed that suicide ideation among persons aged 15 to 24 are widespread in the region, with rates ranging from 12% in Southwest Nigeria to 28.3% in Benin in 2017 (Amare et al., 2018). At least ten adolescents attempt suicide every week, according to research (Special Assignment, 2013). Suicidal activity is increasingly common in teenagers undergoing psychosocial problems, according to studies, and is often correlated with psychiatric disorders (Fergusson & Woodward, 2011).

Suicidal ideation necessitates urgent mental health treatment; parents often might not be able to assess the severity of the issue on their own. That being said, more of these youngsters would have improved outcomes and a higher quality of life if they had strong parental support (Hodgkinson et al., 2009). According to some reports, several teenagers considered suicide when they learned they were confronted with too many difficulties (Amoah, 2013). This occurs when teenagers believe there is no hope in their circumstances and thus conclude living is futile (Amoah, 2013; Fergusson & Woodward, 2011).

Suicide rates have been rising throughout Africa, notably in Ghana, since the year 2000. From 4.30 fatalities per 100,000 people in 2010 to 5.30 deaths per 100,000 in 2016, it climbed by 23.25 per cent and then by 9.4 per cent to 5.8 deaths per 100,000 by the close of 2018 (Nii-Boye Quarshie et al., 2019). In other words, 1,740 Ghanaians committed suicide between 2010 and 2018. With 9.1 males per 100,000 picking this option as opposed to 2.1 females; thus, men are more likely than women to make this decision. This pattern aligns with the gender divide in suicide rates in most developed countries. Asare-Doku et al. (2017) gave some early insights into suicide among Ghanaian youth. Anxiety, loneliness, low self-esteem, insufficient social support, drug addiction, self-stigma, traumatising experiences, and anger management issues were all identified as factors that contributed to suicide behaviour.

#### **2.5.1.4 Loneliness**

Lim and Gleeson (2014) describe loneliness as a form of distress or discomfort, typically when there is a gap between a person's desire for social interaction and their actual experiences. It is frequently linked to an unwelcome lack of closeness and connection. Lonely people feel empty, alone and undesired. Lonely people would really desire to interact with others, yet finding friends is harder for them due to their poor mental condition. Adolescents often detach themselves from their friends and other relatives as part of their defence mechanisms for their challenging circumstances. This is due to the remarks made by others and how they are viewed (Amoah, 2013). According to similar research, late adolescents particularly feel isolated and desperate, which leads to loneliness and despair as they adjust to their new position as young adults (Higginbottom et al., 2006). According to several studies, this condition causes an adolescent to cry or become depressed when they realise they are powerless in the face of formidable challenges (Amoah, 2013; Wilson-Mitchell et al., 2014). Adolescents who received much social support had lower rates of sorrow than those who received little social support (Fergusson & Woodward, 2011).

The 2019 coronavirus disease (COVID-19) epidemic prompted lockdown restrictions in practically every country, including African countries. The Ghanaian government has been isolating its citizens socially and physically since March 2020 to flatten the viral contagion curve. Several studies revealed that the COVID-19 pandemic's effects, including social isolation and widespread transmission of anxiety, were all significant

pressures on mental health (Galea et al., 2020; Weiner et al., 2020). Adolescents were a particularly vulnerable group that suffered from these restrictions (Marchini et al., 2021). In Ghana, over one-third of adolescents reported feeling lonely during isolation, and over half of those aged 15 to 18 reported feeling lonesome during the restriction period (Loades et al., 2020).

Social isolation is associated with an unpleasant sense of loneliness, which has been proven to be connected to mental illness and psychosocial risk issues like symptoms of depression, anxiety, thoughts of suicide, alcohol and violent behaviours (Cacioppo et al., 2015). Adolescents are meant to go through many challenges, obstacles and difficulties in their daily attempts to gain recognition from society members, friends and families (Loades et al., 2020). The emergence of COVID-19 and its related restrictions may impact all of these issues.

#### **2.5.1.5 Eating Disorders**

Eating disorder is a condition characterised by abnormal eating habits that negatively impact a person's physical and mental well-being. It has been observed as a serious condition linked to long-term eating habits that have a negative influence on an adolescent's health, emotions, and capacity to function in important areas of their life. Eating disorders are common in adolescents who are undergoing psychosocial difficulties, notably in females, and they can be potentially fatal. Dennis et al. (2014) observed that some adolescents craftily find ways to hide the warning signs and symptoms of an eating disorder, which can include a sharp reduction in food intake, vomiting during meals, the use of laxatives, or engaging in a lot of exhausting activities. These concerns often prompt therapists to offer realistic advice to teenagers and persuade them to accept specialist care where necessary.

#### **2.5.2 Emotional Challenges**

Emotional challenges are acts, attitudes, and behaviours that arise from the adolescent's psychological difficulties. Adolescents with emotional challenges, according to Lewinger and Russell (2019), have emotional responses that are either excessively powerful, too weak, or erroneous. According to Reder (2014), these adolescents have very powerful emotional responses. Adolescents, for instance, may become overly reactive to even the slightest criticism by their parents or caregivers,

especially when other peers or younger siblings are present. Circumstances that are not fascinating to them can easily irritate or frustrate them.

Reardon et al. (2009) maintain there is a collection of feelings that, in the regular course of events, enrich a person's life. Emotions, like thought (or cognition), are a normal, fundamental part of human psychological or biological growth. They are more tangible than cognition because they have a tactile drive component. Emotion and cognition are inextricably linked and either can impact the other, causing it to change unexpectedly (Reder, 2014). Emotions operate both at the conscious and unconscious levels of one's mind, despite not all analysts agreeing (Ethier et al., 2006; Reardon et al., 2009). It is also widely understood that if an adolescent's normal affective development is disturbed throughout the period of adolescence, the impact will last throughout the individual's life unless corrective emotional experiences rectify it.

In an ideal situation, an individual has access to the complete gamut of human emotion, which is experienced with varying degrees of intensity, based partly on the stimulus strength. Affection is typically expressed outwardly, both verbally and nonverbally, in addition to being experienced within, though this varies widely depending on the adolescent's developmental stage. Emotions may be suppressed, repressed, excessively aroused, or transformed in an aberrant condition, which might be caused by an inborn error or an unfavourable environment. Negative emotions may prevail, giving an adolescent's life an angry, despondent, or dysfunctional tone. Due to this, they may feel unhappy, stressed, timid, apprehensive, or unworthy. When adolescents are exposed to unpleasant emotions over a long time, they are more likely to become clinically depressed, agitated, worried, or have low self-esteem (Ethier et al., 2006; Ofori (2019). On the other hand, when a parent is affectionate, supportive, and caring, it benefits the adolescent's emotions, making them cheerful, bold, and confident.

### **2.5.3 Social Challenges**

The social challenges adolescents face revolve mostly around their difficulties in sustaining their relationships with the opposite sex and also their career aspirations. These outcomes largely occur because adolescents' decisions are based on their subjective image of the future. This is a component of adolescent identity development and, consequently, adolescent social problems. Taylor and Buku (2012) suggest that

adolescents choose the wrong careers since there are not enough centres for vocational training and career counselling to guide them on the vocation that suits their interests, abilities and personalities. In this regard, these youngsters fail to identify their aptitudes, interests, skills, and shortcomings, let alone the profession or employment that best suits their personality.

The relationship with the opposite sex is another concern; when adolescents transition into adulthood, there is an overwhelming attraction to the opposite sex. Males are more likely to be more appealing to females, and vice versa (Oppong-Frimpong & Amissah, 2009). They prioritise their relationship with the other sex above all else, which causes them to be much more devastated when it ends unsatisfactorily, leading to psychosocial difficulties. It is challenging for some adolescents to avoid sexual issues, alcohol, and drugs throughout these stages. This could be because their emotions and feelings are controlling them, which may endanger their lives. In the next section, I focus on elucidating rites of passage through one's life.

## **2.6 Rites of Passage**

The concept of "rites of passage" was first used by Belgian anthropologist Arnold van Gennep in his landmark research study. It embraces the behaviours and customs that several societies adopted throughout important human transitions. He used this term to describe these rites and their attendant ceremonies (Van Gennep, 1960). Van Gennep (1960, p. 25) defined these rites as significant social rituals that assist, lead and reinforce a shift from one stage of an individual's life to the next. The Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (OALD, 2012) defines rites of passage as "a ritual carried by a specified set of individuals, usually for religious purposes." Wozniak and Allen (2012), commenting on rites of passage, notes that they are a planned practice for moving into the next stage of life.

Other scholars explain that rites of passage communicate and dramatise important life transitions, such as those associated with birth, puberty, marriage and death (Boateng & Agyeman, 2018; Markstrom & Iborra, 2003). Accordingly, they signify a collection of activities commemorating significant milestones in one's life (Boakye, 2010). According to Blumenkrantz and Goldstein (2010), it is a phase of training and selection to safeguard and maintain the best interests, customs and values of the society in which these youngsters live. In Markstrom and Iborra's (2003) view, rites of passage

are ritualised activities organised to mark key life events, including childbirth, puberty, nuptials, and death, which are made up of a succession of rituals that elevate people from one social position or status to the next.

On the other side, a ritual, according to Tambiah (2013), is a series of actions performed at specified places and periods, incorporating gestures, words and artefacts. In rituals, common movements and gestures are transformed into expressions and their meaning is strengthened with each performance activity (Hobson et al., 2018, citing Van Gennep, 1909). Rituals permeate every sphere of human life; whether through religion, entertainment, education, sports, music or even the military, there is something for everyone. They are at the heart of many of the world's most profound traditions and cultural activities.

Religious themes and material objects are common in rituals (such as rosary beads). The recital of customary vows by couples in a Catholic wedding ceremony is an example of a ritual. An athletic team's pre-game routine of putting on equipment from left to right (rather than right to left) inspires them to perform at their best; repetitive kneeling and bending in religious prayer offers comfort; and again, the exchange of vows during wedding ceremonies cements the bond between two individuals (Hobson et al., 2018). Rituals are an important element of the human experience. Scholars studying human behaviour from several academic disciplines, including education, anthropology, psychology, religion, sociology, and moral education, are interested in them (Hobson et al., 2018; Thomassen, 2016).

Both society and individuals value rituals. It enables community members to make significant, humane initiatives that enhance people's quality of life and offer support. Consider the rituals performed for persons who are dying or grieving. These rituals performed for the dead help family members cope with death by increasing their strength, capacity, and health. Through possibilities for naming, honouring, and memorialising, it also assists the living in maintaining links with those who are dying, aids in coping skills and allows for healthy growth (Pace & Mobley, 2016). Likewise, during the rituals for the newly born baby, the display of respectful behaviour and a non-judgmental mindset opens a space for attention, love, trust, sharing of emotion, empowerment and high-quality support among community members. Moreover, marriage rituals assist participants in transitioning from one scenario to another and,

as a result, describe a significant change in their role. Rituals enclose memories and serve as a bridge between the past and the present.

Though the terms rite and ritual are clearly related, they have variances. Boret and Shibayama (2018) posit that rituals satisfy the need for meaningful relationships, order, and a place in the wonder and mystery of life. They also address the desire to understand human existence and behaviour. Rituals usually appear to be usually segmented into units of activities, which are subsequently sequenced, patterned, and recurrent in a set or restricted manner (Lienard & Boyer, 2006; Nielbo & Sørensen, 2016). On the other hand, a rite appears to be an umbrella term referring to one specific act as part of a ceremony, often with repeated or cooperative movements.

The invariability of performing rituals is another unique feature due to the psychological effects that are associated with it, which frequently enhance its connotation. Take into account the rituals of animal sacrifice prevalent in Islamic and Jewish belief systems: For all preparations, the same series of steps are taken in a similar sequence (Aghwan & Mac-Regenstein, 2019). The purpose of cleansing the meat in these circumstances makes the ceremony special. Even the smallest mistake, such as a swift blade movement in the incorrect direction, might ruin the entire ceremony and make the flesh unfit for consumption (Farouk et al., 2015). The rules governing the performance of a ritual cannot be compromised in this way since the events themselves carry important meaning for the person performing. A series of behaviours that constitute a ritual must have physical and psychological characteristics (e.g., rigid, repeating action sequences); that is, the performer must assign or interpret the meaning and purpose well.

In addition, rituals have distinct physical characteristics relating to the distinctive components of the individual actions that make them up. These components are typically organised in rigorous, formal, and repeated ways (Rossano, 2012). Unlike rites, which might alter any time they are carried out or performed, rituals are usually conducted the same way every time (Smith & Stewart, 2011). Due to this constancy, rituals usually necessitate "scrupulous adherence" to regulations, which means conforming to the script of the letter (Pace & Mobley, 2016). As a result, the distinction between the two categories is that rituals enact stories utilising sacred text and

symbols to imitate the divine's lifestyles, whilst rites refer to ceremonial activities that mark the transition from one social rank to another.

### **2.6.1 Roles of Rites of Passage**

Rites of passage are typically used to improve social cohesion because their primary goal is to match an individual's belief system with the group's. Kasomo (2009, p. 13) and Ezenweke (2016, p. 24) opined that rites of passage serve four main purposes. These are to:

- Equip individuals with the ability to exercise power over potentially uncontrollable natural processes by giving the impression that social transitions (such as birth, puberty and death) are actually influenced by society and fulfil social purposes. According to Alexopoulos (2021), certain behaviours and practices that occur during adolescents' initiation rites trigger cognitive dissonance, which is thought to increase the psychological justification of the event.

Research shows that those who associate initiation procedures with a reward experience more gratification and demonstrate higher group identities (Rossano, 2012). This has resulted in higher self-esteem, good interpersonal skills and mental stability, diversely affecting adolescents developing into adulthood in various social contexts. Sociologists and psychologists believe that group social norms have an impact on cycles of life and chronicled life events like puberty ceremonies, traditional marriages, fertility and death rituals. The psychologists focused on various phenomena, their meanings (cognitive consequences), and the behavioural implications that come with them (Alexopoulos, 2021).

- "Fence In" the potential risks construed to be ubiquitous across cultures while giving regulated access to their enlivening and reinvigorating potency (Scheer et al., 2007). This occurs when people are transitioning across social categories and question the conceptual reality of those classifications. Merten (2005) asserts that without significant community-based rituals, youth would develop their own marker events based on what is propagated by their friends and social media, many of which could be damaging to the adolescents' personality development and society. It is vital for adolescents in most communities because, in the absence of rites of passage, they try to construct their own by

indulging in risky behaviours, including violence, drug addiction, gang membership, bullying and criminal activity.

- Send a sequence of repeated and remembered messages to the initiate about the fundamental principles and values of the society into which they are being introduced. This is accomplished through the carefully planned manipulation of sufficiently representative systems which are predicated on the initiate's inmost being. For example, in Ghana and most African cultures, it is illegal for an Akan girl to 'take seed' (become pregnant) before her rites of passage (De-Whyte, 2018). The effects, both for the person and for society, are thought to be disastrous. It defiles the gods and God and causes shame to the matrilineage of the forefathers. Unless the transgression is ritually cleaned, the spirits are claimed to visit the living (whether or not they have kinship ties to the delinquents) with drought, starvation, sickness, childlessness, and other difficulties (Teferra & Shibre, 2012).

In most chiefdoms in the Ashanti Region of Ghana, the culprits (both the girl and her boyfriend) are initially ordered to appear at the chief's palace. The parents of both the boy and girl are obligated to pay a specific sum of money. It occurs because, in the eyes of society, the parents are equally responsible for the offence as their children, demonstrating the inadequacy of parental instruction. The chief's spokesperson spends the money on a couple of lambs, a bottle of palm oil, a tiny white fowl, and eggs to the area's overlord. Then there are prayers for the spiritual creatures who have been so blatantly offended (Teferra & Shibre, 2012).

- Transmit a community's common ideals and create procedures that will support their continuous development and success in future. It renews and rejuvenates these values for those who conduct and participate in or simply observe the rituals through which these transitions are performed to ensure the continuation and viability of the society's belief and value system.

According to Glozah and Lawani (2014), rites of passage are a period of training and selection to preserve the ideals and standards of the society they are living in. That is to say, the adolescent initiation procedure not only facilitates a person's transition to a new status but also organises public events that commemorate the event and uphold the values of the community that shape

and direct expectations for important group behaviours. The high "evolutionary validity" of these processes at the major transitions of birth, puberty, marriage, and death has continued to be an integral part of the community and public healthcare promotion (Abbey, 2016).

### ***2.6.2 Traditional Rites of Passage for Adults***

Various rites and rituals commemorating the passage from one essential stage of life towards the next have been described by anthropologists working in African communities. Other crucial stages, such as birth, marriage and death, have been detailed by many researchers, as well as the ritualisation processes that these African cultures follow regarding life transitions (Nwadiokwu et al., 2016). For example, according to accounts, the Sena of Malawi requires that a widow whose spouse died should have unprotected sexual intercourse with another man (preferably a relative of the deceased person) to banish the spirit of her late husband away. According to Nyanzi et al. (2009), this form of rite, known locally as widowhood or sexual cleansing, is a traditional rite that protects women from societal risks. It is necessary to appease the deceased and avoid evil omens affecting the bereaved and other family members in the community (Lomba, 2014; Malawi Human Rights Commission, 2005).

Similarly, Audrey Isabel Richard, a renowned anthropologist who works on the Chisungu, outlines the rites that Northern Rhodesian Bemba girls go through as they mature into women (Blumenkrantz & Goldstein, 2010). Following the delivery of a new baby, numerous rites and rituals, including the preparations of a "special concoction" to bathe the newborn baby, are performed among the Dagomba of Ghana to protect the infant from various ailments (Liamputtong et al., 2005).

These rites and rituals demonstrate that different cultures recognise different stages of a person's physical, moral or social development. From the preceding, it may be argued that rites of passage help to restore social equilibrium and transport people from one social level or status to the next. For instance, it spans puberty into maturity (puberty rites), from being single to being married (marriage), and from life to death (funeral rites). The researcher presumptively refers to rites of passage in the context of the current study as a collection of activities carried out to commemorate or ritually celebrate the many stages of transition in a person's life cycle. This life journey begins with the conception of a baby and ends with the death of the individual. People

worldwide encounter and participate in rites of passage in their various cultures and religions.

Rites of passage are landmark occasions that aid in forming a new identity and acting as responsible adults in our society. It is not limited to Africans but can be seen in various religious and secular settings worldwide (Crentsil, 2015; Wozniak & Allen, 2012). In Japan, for example, "Shichi-Go-San" is a rite of passage for females between the ages of three and seven and boys between the ages of five and seven (Splisgart, 2019). This relates to the ages when girls were historically permitted to have long hair, and boys were permitted to wear a "hakama", a formal dress. For Hindus in India, rites of passage are more than just formalities; they are an important part of soul purification at various stages of life. They are called 'samskara' or 'sanskara', which means 'mental impression'. They are first introduced to the children to instruct them about their responsibilities after the ritual is over (Shamsuddin, 2020). The Fiesta de Quince is celebrated in Latin American countries such as Argentina, Peru, Paraguay, Bolivia, and Uruguay. This event marks the transition of a fifteen-year-old girl from adolescence to maturity (Gutierrez & Wagenberg, 2013).

Rites of passage in African cosmology, according to Kyalo (2013), occur in three phases, namely, the separation, transition and incorporation phases. Wozniak and Allen (2012) claim that notwithstanding their differences, all rites of passage follow the same three-stage process:

- a. Separation Stage: The separation stage is a temporary withdrawal from society in which a person or group loses their identities. A rite of passage's separation phase is frequently abrupt or violent, severing ties to oneself, one's family and one's society. It frequently entails estrangement or cross-border mobility, in which the individual is temporarily displaced geographically (Kyalo, 2013).
- b. Transition Stage: In this second stage, the person becomes familiar with the roles and expected behaviours of the new stage they are approaching. This is the "in-between" stage, according to Blumenkrantz and Goldstein (2010), when an individual has shed their old identity but has yet to entirely reintegrate into society under a new one (Kyalo, 2013). Initiates are given instructions and counsel during transition ceremonies to train them for their anticipated new

obligations in society. Puberty rites, for example, signify the beginning of sexual life (Boakye, 2010).

The increase in testosterone and oestrogen levels throughout puberty sets the somatic and other changes that occur in motion. Males and females go through significant physical changes during puberty. These changes include an increase in height and weight, pubic hair growth, enlargement of the genital organs, breakouts of acne and other skin conditions, voice deepening and facial hair growth for males, and breast enlargement for females. Key developmental landmarks that mark the end of childhood and the beginning of an individual's biological capability to have children include menarche in females and the capacity of males to ejaculate seminal fluid (Boakye, 2010).

- c. Incorporation Stage: Finally, the individual who has completed the ritualisation process is re-admitted into society once more, having transited through the first two stages as a different person from the incorporation stage. This usually entails reintegrating the individual into society while giving them a new identity. Having passed through a series of rituals and rites, the individual would have acquired new skills, knowledge, and innovative ways of thinking and performing certain tasks. The person advances to a new status with ease and gets into a more stable state at the completion of the incorporation stage (Markstrom & Iborra, 2003).

Scheer et al. (2007) maintain that, for an individual to successfully transition while society sustains its equilibrium in the face of the person's change of status, each of these occurrences is closely tied to intrapsychic processes and requires the commitment of the individual and as well as that of the community. Most African lineage members go through different rites of passage from birth to puberty, marriage, adulthood and old age, which connect them culturally and spiritually to those in their neighbourhood.

### ***2.6.3 Traditional Rites of Passage Adolescents undergo in Selected African Countries***

Traditional adolescent rites of passage are an example of an old African ritual tradition. They are cultural ceremonies that mark a person's passage from infancy to maturity. Ceremonies, rituals or simply training cycles that provide individuals with the skills or

abilities required to occupy a new rank and privilege are events marking rites of passage for African adolescents. Several initiation rituals and rites for both young males and females in various African communities have been documented by Dipio (2019) and Nwadiokwu et al. (2016).

Many African societies are aware of the practices that have been studied. Among them are the Zambian Bemba, who perform the Chisungu female initiation rites for young girls (Kangwa, 2011), the Tanzanian Unyagon is performed for girls immediately to recognise the first experience of their menstrual cycle (Agnarson et al., 2015), Ugandan Gisu is to initiate adolescents into adulthood (Lewinger & Russell, 2019), Bojale is a customary initiation rite for adolescents within the Bakgatla-baga-Kgafela region of Botswana (Setlhabi, 2014), and the Ghanaian Bragoro, a puberty rite among the Akan teenagers to initiate them into adulthood in Ghana (Crentsil, 2015), among others.

Unyago is a rite of passage for young females in Tanzania's Northern Island that starts with initiates who have experienced their menstruation for the first time. Beidelman (1997) revealed in a research study on initiation rituals that the process usually concludes with two main ceremonies. Despite the fact that this process is not done on all females, ritual leaders (otherwise known as sexual instructresses), who are mainly the girls' aunts and grandmothers, are responsible for washing the girls who do undergo the ritual. According to Beidelman (1997) and Markstrom (2011), these girls are also taught how to behave during menstruation through song ministrations.

Purification, teaching young women appropriate behaviour during menstruation and toward potential spouses, and refraining from discussing their sexual issues in public are all important aspects of this ceremony. A millet seed is put in a pot to symbolise the initiation period during the ceremony. The rites emphasise that a girl's capacity to mature depends more on her character training. Typically, the process results in the girls acquiring a new position as virtuous young women (Markstrom, 2011).

Life experiences and traumatic events can cause depressive symptoms in girls before and after menarche, while less traumatic experiences can lower the severity of depressive symptoms. A study on Stress by Nicholson and Lutz (2017) made a connection between group settings and individual functions. Girls going through puberty may experience psychological difficulties as a result of transitory processes

such as bodily change, in addition to emotional and social adaptations and demands (Natsuaki et al., 2011). Abbey and Nasidi (2023) found that younger initiates are more likely than older initiates to experience the emotional pain associated with initiation. According to Abbey et al. (2021), initiates conceptualise and internalise key initiation values in their own unique way. Even though girls have comparable experiences, each initiate develops her own ideas about the implications and significance of the initiation ceremony. Earlier in the literature, certain anthropological and psychosocial models recognised the transitional period as exerting significant psychological effects. According to Erikson (as cited in Kaldor & De Waal, 2020), in the identity-formation process, a condition of perplexity is regarded as normative.

Vhusha, Tshikanda, and Domba are three renowned Venda customary initiation establishments for young women in South Africa. For Venda girls, Malisha et al. (2008) claim that Vhusha is the first stage of the initiation process when they reach puberty, whereas accessibility for Tshikanda and Domba ranges from every three to five years. Older women promote these rites of passage to train these young ones for diverse roles as spouses, household managers and for career-oriented jobs. The girls are also taught healthy sexual behaviours “to aid them in successful marriages” (Jeannerat, 1997, p. 23). In Venda, young men are also given an initiation process. The men's rite, known as Murundu, lasts three months and requires participants to spend some time in the woods. Typically, the bush aids in isolating the initiates from all social networks and allows them to show off their survival techniques.

Male circumcision is an essential facet of the initiation ceremony since it is stated that "removing the foreskin metaphorically sharpens the warrior's spear" (Mohlaloka et al., 2016). Male circumcision has been linked to a lower incidence of heterosexual HIV, herpes simplex virus, and human papillomavirus (HR-HPV) infections in recent research (Suttner, 2014). Male initiation ceremonies are regularly reprimanded, as some scholars believe they teach men to regard women as sex objects (Mohlaloka et al., 2016). This is partly because it evaluates a man's bravery, strength, and ability to contribute to society in many African societies. Hegemony perpetuates this dynamic of male dominance and superiority, as well as female submission and inferiority.

Kinaalda is an important rite of passage for girls living on the Navajo Reservation and is defined by Rivers (2005) as a progressive process through which youngsters learn to give meaning to their abilities and ideals. Kinaalda is associated with feminine gender roles in societies (Hobson et al., 2018). It is a four-day event in which young women are taught how to thrive, become courteous and strong and perform tasks for their future husbands, families and community (Rivers, 2005). According to the ethnographic studies by Rivers, to build them up and get them ready for the future, females were required to run long distances before dawn while wearing their traditional costumes. These young ladies were taught how to prepare meals, clean up, work hard, and pay close attention when their elders advised them on many facets of women's roles in society. These exercises were created to help young women prepare for various responsibilities in the future (Hobson et al., 2018). Rivers (2005) further notes that some initiates viewed rites of passage as part of a culture that supported physical health.

Bojale, a Botswana rite of passage is a practice that honours the passage of girls into womanhood. The Tswana people frequently participate in this ritual, and the female participant must maintain their virginity to be eligible. However, missionaries condemned the ceremony since songs were taught during initiation to encourage debauchery in and among the girls. Singing was essential in Bojale because the music was used to impart information about the community's history, traditions, and ideas about adulthood. Through participant observation, Setlhabi (2014) discovered that Bojale songs contain metaphorical themes concerning gender, morality and human nature. Chiefs gained significant prestige and glory based on the number of initiates; hence it was viewed as one of the socio-political foundations. The rite was initially intended for virgins approaching puberty, but after it was abandoned for a long time, mothers began to participate in it, weakening the purpose for which the event was established (Setlhabi, 2014).

#### ***2.6.4 Rites of Passage for Adolescents in Bosomtwe-Ghana***

According to Salm and Falola (2002, p. 129), many indigenous Ghanaian cultures celebrate children's transition to adulthood, and this is known as “otufu” among the Gas; “bragoro” among the Akans (of which the people of the Bosomtwe District are a part); and “dipo” among the Krobos. In addition, Abbey and Nasidi (2023) note that

while this practice is essentially unknown in the northern region of Ghana, it is common among the Ewes. However, a Ghana News Agency story from 2004 mentions that female genital mutilation is actually practised as a sort of puberty ceremony in the Upper East Region, located in the Northern part of Ghana. This practice among the indigenes of the Upper East region involves the removal of the clitoris and labia minora during this kind of mutilation.

Female genital mutilation appears to have spiritual roots among some groups in Ghana's northern regions. Traditional tribal beliefs, not religion, are what keep it going. Akweongo et al. (2021) hold the view that female genital mutilation promotes a woman's purity and faithfulness, which boosts fertility and prevents the death of firstborn children. It is also thought to be a means of controlling a woman's sexual impulses and reducing her promiscuity. Most people believe that children born to uncircumcised women are obstinate and troublemakers and that they are more likely to be damaged or blinded if the mother's clitoris comes into touch with them during birth. In some cultures, a woman's clitoris is a sign that she is a man, and as such, she should be buried in men's clothing and undergo a man's funeral rites. Some people also believe that uncircumcised women are unclean, unattractive, and unsuitable for marriage. A young girl marrying without being mutilated was considered sacrilegious in such communities (Berg & Denison, 2013).

It must be noted that most communities in the Ghanaian setting presently do not undergo the same initiation procedures as their forefathers did, chiefly due to the gradual fading of such rites (Akweongo et al., 2021; Salm & Falola, 2002). This initiation or ceremony is performed in most Ghanaian communities to lead the individual into adulthood and to teach the young generation about the traditional ideals of the community. This initiation, done for both boys and girls, is to make the youngsters full participants in their community activities.

#### **2.6.4.1 Initiation Rites for Male Adolescents**

Typically, initiation procedures for boys are not practised in most societies. In the past, it was common among most communities, especially in southern Ghana. When a boy enters adolescence among the Bosomtwe people and in much of Ashanti, the father traditionally gives him a gun, a cutlass, or a tool of the trade. This presentation of a gun indicates that the boy has come of age and can work to look after himself. In other

words, the boy is no longer regarded as a juvenile at home and is supposed to be responsible for his actions and decisions. Henceforth, he has to spend all his time with his father and other senior family members. In this way, he gets introduced to all aspects of adult life except sex (Abbey & Nasidi, 2023). This is because most ethnic groups in Ghana, especially the Ashantis, expected first sex to take place primarily during marriage. Boys who were found engaged in pre-marital sex, as well as girls who were pregnant before going through puberty rituals, were harshly punished in the pre-colonial era, with expulsion from the village. As a result of this cultural procedure, the rate of out-of-wedlock sex and teenage pregnancy was minimal (Abbey & Nasidi, 2023).

#### **2.6.4.2 Initiation Rites for Female Adolescents**

Bragro is performed for girls only after their first menstruation, often at the age of 13 years. The parents start preparing their daughter for the ceremony when they notice her having her first period. The girl is handed to the queen mother, the region's female traditional monarch, before the ritual, so she may make sure she is not pregnant through a physical examination. For the ceremony, there are both physical and spiritual preparations. The spiritual preparation, which may precede the latter or come in the middle of it, involves consulting a deity through a diviner (locally known as "Okomfo") to ascertain the auspiciousness of the girl's initiation rites. This type of consultation is used to determine whether or not the girl's "kra" (soul) approves of the ritual being done. On the other hand, gathering many different things constitutes physical preparation, some of which may have to be bought or borrowed from relatives, friends and other acquaintances in the community. This entails supplying all the necessities, including foodstuffs, money, fowl, rich local cloths known as "kente", beads, mats, pillows for the girls' attendants, big cooking pots, blankets, necklaces and the like (Boateng & Agyeman, 2018).

Typically, the ceremony takes place on a Monday or a Tuesday. Any of these days were selected because crossing streams to farms was prohibited among the Ashantis on those days. They were regarded as rest days and, therefore, suitable for such ceremonies. The ritual is open to family, friends and "Brannworm", a ritual singing group. The mother announces the initiation on the ritual day early in the morning (Boateng & Agyeman, 2018). The crowd gathers on the initiate's property when the

announcement is made to sing. After taking a bath, the initiate covers her head from the waist up, leaving her face exposed. She is placed on a stool three times, the third time remaining on it. Typically, the stool is set on a mat that is wrapped in a blanket or a traditional cloth called "kente." The girl is placed in a brass bowl called "Yaawa," which is filled with water that contains leaves, an egg and a dried okro fruit (Boateng & Agyeman, 2018).

Alongside the "Yaawa" is a woman. Her duty at this point is to splash water over the adolescent girl when gifts in the shape of coins are placed in the "Yaawa." The application of this water is thought to guard her against evil spirits that could render her infertile. Around the girl, women dance and sing. There is a lot of celebration and revelry. Libations made with palm wine or schnapps are offered to thank the gods and the ancestors for protecting the girl up until this puberty age. Gifts from her parents, family, friends and well-wishers are brought to her. Displays of all items received surround her. The following rite is the "ti-yi" (haircutting). The father provides payment for the initiate's unique haircut. The money acts as the adolescent's capital. Her finger and toenails are trimmed, and she has her hair styled in the customary manner for Asante women. She wears a fresh white dress, leaving her breasts visible. She adorns her neck, wrists and ankles with beads (Boateng & Agyeman, 2018).

The ritual bath, which takes place in a river or stream, is the next step. Water is placed in a basin ("Yaawa") for the same purpose in some communities in Bosomtwe where there is no stream or river. The girl is taken to the water, where she would have the customary wash while covering her head (and face) in fabric. When she arrives, the officiating woman removes her clothes and immerses her three times in the stream to communicate their presence and intent to the water spirits. Pieces of cut hair and finger and toe nails are buried at the riverbank. Four or five elderly women perform the actual river bath. She is bathed with a fresh local sponge, soap and lime juice. After taking a bath, she changes into a magnificent "kente" (a traditional garment) and brand-new "Ahenema" (native sandals). While "Bragoro" songs are being sung, she is being taken home under a gorgeous umbrella in regal fashion (Crentsil, 2015).

Once she reaches home, she is placed on a stool for the dedication ceremony called "Anoka" (mouth touching ceremony). Boiled eggs, mashed yam, elephant skin, bananas and roasted groundnuts are among the foods served during this ritual. Each

meal is put into her mouth for her to taste after the libation has been poured. Prayer follows the tasting of each food item. A cloth is then placed over the initiate's head, and a boiled egg is placed in her mouth. She is not allowed to eat or bite it. She has to swallow the entire egg. She is handed some mashed yam and told to do the same. It is thought that if she bites or chews those foods, she will become infertile.

The very next event presents a wonderful time for children. Two children, a boy and a girl, are being held by the initiate, who releases them so they can run for a large bowl of mashed yam and eggs. The initiate is blindfolded when the two make contact with the meal. Two of the children gathered are asked to be touched by her (Boateng & Agyeman, 2018). It is thought that she will give birth to children of both sexes if she can touch both a boy and a girl at the same time. The celebration and revelry continue after. After the feast is finished, everyone gathers to dance, especially to commemorate the day's ceremony. All of the "bragoro" vocalists dance and play drums. All other performers leave the stage as soon as the initiate begins to dance. On stage, she dances with two or three other girls and shakes hands with everyone in attendance as she moves. The significance of rites of passage for the adolescent include:

- It prepares the individual physically and spiritually for adulthood. This suggests that they are now prepared to assume the responsibilities of marriage and raising children. Alford (2013) denotes those rites of passage activities established with precise descriptions of adolescent responsibilities, tasks, and expectations to foster a positive self-image and sense of self-worth. As a result, it fosters positive self-esteem and encourages adolescents to engage in healthy behaviours.
- One of the most powerful features generated by rites of passage is psychosocial well-being. Rites of passage have long been used to teach young people how to handle difficulties encountered throughout life changes. The rite is difficult and exhausting. As a function, completing it successfully demonstrates that one has matured, has perseverance, and is fearless and courageous in facing the future (Natsuaki et al., 2011).
- The shift from one stage to another in the transitional stage is driven by psychological factors associated with brain development as people gain a

better ability to understand and analyse problems due to the training they receive during the rites.

- The initiate is taught highly significant values and skills, morality, as well as how to carry out home duties. She is familiarised with singing, dancing, and using different local equipment. This enables the adolescent to fit well into society. Boateng and Agyeman (2018) conclude that adolescent initiation ceremonies are important for achieving gender identity during the socialisation process. The ability to overcome challenges, tolerance, humility, good communication, respect and compassion and are all emphasised in adolescent rites of passage. Since one must be chaste before going through the process, these ceremonies are social strategies for encouraging adolescents to be morally upright or avoid premarital sex (Crentsil, 2015).
- In Bosomtwe and just like other Ghanaian traditional societies, the gifts the initiate receives provide seed capital to help them start a trade or finance an apprenticeship as a seamstress, hairdresser, etc. (Crentsil, 2015).

Though puberty rites are fading due to modernisation among many Ghanaian cultures, their performance or their corresponding rites of passage are often included in religious rituals and cultural heritage. In recent times, most formally educated Christian and Muslim (the two dominant religions in Ghana now) parents prevent their children from going through puberty rituals due to their own ideologies and convictions. However, some parents feed their teenage daughters mashed yam when they have their first period. Rites of passage symbolise the transition from childhood to maturity (Abbey & Nasidi, 2023). These rituals are typically initiations, which frequently entail trials of bravery, discomfort and uncertain times (Natsuaki et al., 2011).

Similar circumstances posing difficulties are often sought for in our culture, according to Abbey and Nasidi (2023), who state:

*“The predominance of the symbolism of these rituals that call for a display of what is considered vital to prestigious adult positions in some Ghanaian cultures, if not physical toughness, then at least maturity and the capacity to make independent decisions” (p. 25)*

As HIV and AIDS continue to be a problem in Ghana, there have been appeals for the government to enact legislation to make it compulsory to conduct “bragoro” as part of HIV prevention initiatives (Crenstil, 2015). The phases of adolescent growth in Ghana should be viewed in a broader sense, that is, in light of the child's various situations and cultural settings. (Trawick-Smith 201, p.56).

This discussion will include a more thorough account of teenage growth. The next part focuses on how adolescents experience rites of passage. This data will provide a comprehensive picture of the impact of rites of passage on adolescents, its function and how to keep them safe from this peril.

## **2.7 How Adolescents Experience Rites of Passage**

Previous studies have shown that adolescents' rites of passage are common and highly regarded throughout practically all cultures and nations around the globe, particularly in almost every tribe across many African nations (Pemba et al., 2012; Siweya et al., 2018). These ceremonies and their associated events are intended to either formally recognise the young person as an adult or to assist in preparing them for the duties and roles that come with adulthood. The rituals are intended to mark the passage from childhood to adulthood formally, and they frequently differ from tribe to tribe and from nation to nation (Ekine et al., 2013). In this sense, adolescents experience these rites of passage in various ways depending on their culture (Siweya et al., 2018).

Dalbudak et al. (2013) found that social factors account for eight to 18 per cent (18%) of depressed young adolescents, while biological factors account for 4 per cent. They added that before and after menarche, girls may suffer depression symptoms as a result of their unpleasant experiences and unfortunate life circumstances, but less severe experiences may have less of a depressive effect. Studies on stress showed an association between the social environment and personal functions (Çivitci, 2015; Veresova & Mala, 2012). The causes of psychological pain among initiates may involve transitional events, including girls experiencing biological change, along with emotional and social adjustments and demands (Veresova & Mala, 2012).

As Turner (2012) reported, initiates conceptualise and absorb the fundamental principles of initiation rites in their own unique ways. Despite undergoing similar experiences, each adolescent generates their own perceptions of the implications and significance of the initiation process. The literature examines the anthropological and psychosocial theories that acknowledge the psychological effects of this transitional period. According to Hihara et al. (2018), citing Erikson (1968), a condition of confusion, for instance, is acknowledged as typical in forming identities. As shown in Reardon et al.'s (2009) study, females who develop quickly are often more prone to have stress and panic attacks, and such concerns may persist into adolescence and early adulthood. Ge and Natsuaki (2009) revealed that anxiety resulted from initiates not being adequately prepared to face the pressures and challenges of maturing at specific developmental milestones.

Early maturing adolescents were also reported as having higher than average emotional discomfort levels, which were mainly connected to how girls responded to menarche (Orth et al., 2008). Additionally, they noted a direct link between depression and low self-esteem. Adolescents' poor self-esteem predicted different levels of depression, but depression was not a predictor of future levels of self-esteem (Orth et al., 2008). One of the major elements that have been associated with rites of passage is psychosocial well-being. However, during the transition period, individuals felt discomfort when doing specific rituals (Abbey, 2016).

A study by Yarney et al. (2015) claims that 83.3 per cent of adolescents in Ghana's Eastern Region who were orphans reported having a host of concerns. These included psychological, emotional, and physiological pain that has been linked to certain sociocultural factors, including rites of passage and customary rituals. Following the performance of the "dipo" rites (a customary initiation rite for teenagers for the people of Krobo in Ghana), the authors reported that these orphans whose ages ranged from ten to seventeen years, were left to cater for their own needs since they were now considered adults. This condition led to the majority of young females turning to prostitution to meet their basic life necessities (Yarney et al., 2015).

There are other communities where the "kudonza" (a rite of initiation for Zambians) spreads false health information. For instance, according to a research report by Abbey and Nasidi (2023), several participants (girls) claim they had been informed

that having "malepe" (semen) in their body protected them from Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs), including the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) infection. Such regions maintain the belief that unprotected sexual intercourse between an elderly man and a newly initiated girl will "cleanse" her by viewing semen as a cleansing fluid (Maleche & Day, 2011).

In some cases, the initiate must miss school to undergo the rites. This situation can cause them to fall behind academically and impact the extent to which they can advance academically. Their financial prospects are in danger because it is considerably more difficult for girls and women to obtain a higher-paid job without any formal education (McBride, 2011). Further to this, some girls who underwent virginity testing described the psychological toll of believing their families did not trust them to make the decision to abstain from having sex (Padmanabhanunni et al., 2017). In conclusion, a study by Abbey et al. (2021) revealed younger initiates are more likely than older ones to experience the psychological trauma associated with going through initiation.

This study contributes to filling this knowledge gap by analysing how Bosomtwe boys and girls experience their rites of passage, how society prepares them to deal with the myriad of psychological obstacles connected with this life-changing transition, and their development as individuals. This study examines the experiences of adolescents and the nature of information imparted to adolescents during these initiation ceremonies to determine the degree to which such institutional socialisation systems prepare adolescents for the challenges associated with their psychosocial identity development during this period and later in life. I examined how these discoveries could affect learning and personal fulfilment in the discussion section.

The following segment looks at the influence of rites of passage on adolescent psychosocial identity development. In accordance with the findings of Chapter 5, the following review will aid in creating recommendations for teachers and parents in supporting adolescents to develop their self-concept.

## **2.8 Influence of Rites of Passage on Adolescent's Psychosocial Identity**

### **Development**

Mitchell et al. (2012) note that adolescence is when physical, emotional, social, and psychological changes occur. These changes are critical for developing identity, self-esteem and early life experiences (Mitchell et al., 2012). Adolescents' identity is influenced by their age and gender (Ciuluvica et al., 2010). A study by Gatti et al. (2014) that tested the idea among Italian adolescent girls found that females who grow up early become more sensitive about their body image. The outcome of this was low self-esteem and excessive levels of stress. Additionally, it has been stated that rites of passage programmes among young African Americans helped to foster a positive self-image and self-esteem by clearly defining roles, responsibilities and expectations (Alford, 2003).

Ritualising, witnessing and supporting these times of transition has been proven in research to be a key element of how people construct their identities. This results in creating a kind of experiential self-concept map (Pittman & Kerpelman, 2013). In other words, without proper traditional rites of passage, especially for adolescents, they may get confused and lose their bearings on the path of life. Consequently, it is as if their life blueprint is unfinished. This claim is supported by Kyalo (2013), who contends that adolescents' rites of passage are an essential step toward completeness and their identity development. Indeed, rites of passage during adolescence are highly predictive of influencing one's psychosocial identity development.

A research study by Blumenkrantz and Goldstein (2010) has revealed that the influence of rites of passage can be particularly important for adolescents who can improve when they have the love and support from the extended family to encourage the said adolescent to see to the preservation, protection, nourishment and development of the new life. For example, if the initiates place themselves willingly under elder women's direction and heed their teaching and training, then the individual will be assisted by these women to acquire the necessary change. This assistance will help safeguard the individual's psyche during the critical moment by minimising anxiety and confusion. On the other hand, adolescents who do not pass through the initiation may lack the simulation and reinforcement needed for self-development and to function as an adult in the community (Mapindani, 2018; Markstrom, 2011).

Adolescents' rites of passage typically focus on the interactions between social and physiological circumstances, highlighting key life cycle stages as particularly relevant. During this particular time, the ritual linkage of symbols and physiological processes offers a way to shape and control the person's emotions and biological urges before explaining them within the larger cosmological frameworks (Kearin, 2013).

According to Markstrom (2011), such events may be associated with excitement, anxiety, distress, and other psychological issues depending on the expectations and understanding of what the changes signify and mean. This has sparked growing interest and curiosity in exploring how adolescents' concepts are formed and the impact of rites of passage on adolescents' psychosocial identity development. While many studies (Blumenkrantz & Goldstein, 2010; Steegstra, 2005; Wozniak & Allen, 2012) have examined the timing of pubertal changes and their implications for psychosocial identity development, there is scanty evidence demonstrating how adolescents experience the process of puberty and how effectively these rites of passage impacted their identity formation. Yet, examination of such processes could help understand how adolescents in the Bosomtwe District of Ghana define and comprehend their unique identity and what is expected of them as young adults.

Herbert (2005) contends that young people's physical, emotional and social changes throughout adolescence can have a lasting impact on them throughout their lives. Despite this, cultural interventions for adolescents in Africa who are at risk of engaging in any prosocial behaviour include involving them in rites of passage. Adolescent initiation rituals or rites of passage are thought to have good social and emotional effects and are justified in part because they help young people form their identities and elevate their social standing in their communities (Markstrom, 2011).

Other goals of adolescents' rites of passage include promoting sexual development and reproductive relationships, which are thought to impact their personalities (Agra & Gbadegbe, 2014; King & Merchant, 2008; Mapindani, 2018). According to Markstrom and Iborra's (2003) study on Navajo girls, the benefits of adolescents' rites of passage include strengthening them for upcoming challenges in life, enhancing their personality development, enabling them to play appropriate roles, putting their strength and endurance to the test, giving them good posture and physical beauty, teaching them

to be kind and generous and revealing what is ingrained in the developing young woman.

Another benefit of rites of passage for adolescents that have been established is its educational component. The initiation rites have previously been demonstrated to be effective in several countries as one of the measures for HIV prevention. They can significantly promote gender equity and sexuality education among adolescents (Kangwa, 2011). This assertion is supported by Gyekye (2003), who sought to examine the views of teachers and adolescents on puberty rites among Krobo girls in Ghana. The author concluded that particular emphasis is placed on educating women on topics including sex, HIV and AIDS, marriage life, parenting, and housekeeping because these are important requirements for marriage. The author stated further that the person who completes the rite of passage acquires a status as a member of the community and a clear place in the family lineage as a mature person. Therefore, the construction of cultural identity and the promotion of health education among adolescents are crucial. (Gyekye 2003; Salm, 2002).

Other researchers (Abbey & Nasidi, 2023; Ethier et al., 2006; Van de Bongardt et al., 2016) believe that adolescent rites of passage have a social and emotional influence. Social and emotional factors influence self-esteem, and self-esteem influences healthy sexual behaviour and consequences. For example, some parents report that they enjoy seeing their daughters go through the rites of passage (Osei, 2012). They appreciate and feel inspired by the fact that the girls in their family are learning about sex and sexuality and being treated like women. The gendered signal is that their daughters' worth as women and girls depends on how feminine they are, how gorgeous they are, and how well they can sexually charm and satisfy men (Ekine et al., 2013).

Those against the practice argue that the rising rates of HIV and AIDS infections in some parts of Africa, particularly in Ghana, could be attributed partly to the current cultural understanding of the rites of passage for adolescents (Abbey & Nasidi, 2023). He argued that a cause of the spread of HIV is the young age at which girls are initiated (girls as young as two years old also go through the ceremonies) and the fact that early pregnancy following initiation is not frowned upon. In his view, initiation now serves as permission for early sexual activity rather than a means of preparing for a

happy marriage. Abbey et al. (2021) confirm this phenomenon and urges that some elements, such as hair-shaving rituals that may contribute to the spread of HIV and AIDS, be abandoned. However, she acknowledges that the decline in girls' participation in puberty rituals is to blame for the rise in prevalence rates, and she makes the suggestion that if puberty rituals were made mandatory, sexual indulgence would be postponed, and young people would be protected from HIV and AIDS. Agra and Gbadegbe (2014) also believe that the rites of passage for adolescents can be employed to stop the spread of STIs and other sexually transmitted infections (STIs) in Ghana "provided the females stick to the lessons" and wait until they are married.

Other elements of the ritual, like the exposing of initiates' breasts and the washing of their feet in goat's blood, have also sparked controversy. According to Tetteh (2006), these elements violate the girls' human rights and freedom and are offensive to the 21<sup>st</sup> Century's view of the dignity of women. These behaviours are essentially abuse, cause embarrassment for the girls involved, and allow their friends to tease them. Several respondents in a study by Padmanabhanunni and Fennie (2017) on adolescents' rites of passage in Zambia attest that participating in the rites caused self-consciousness and embarrassment because of the requirement to dance partially or completely naked in front of others or because the girls' menarche status became a topic of discussion publicly rather than kept private.

Many have found misconceptions and prejudices about adolescent rites of passage. For instance, in Western society, all rites, including rites of passage for adolescents, are seen as demonic (Nnazor & Robinson, 2016). When they claim that "Christians and Muslims consider adolescent rites of passage as wicked and the educated elites see it as obsolete", they go even further into the subject of religion and education. A significant problem in Ghanaian society today is the religious debate surrounding adolescent rites of passage, especially among the Ashantis (Crentsil, 2015). Many Ghanaians who identify as Christians do not want to participate in the ritual since it is carried out in accordance with traditional religious traditions, some of which, such as ancestral worship and the pouring of libations, run counter to Christian doctrine. Since the local inhabitants first interacted with Western missionaries, this conversation has lasted, and given Ghana's growing number of churches and mosques, it is only expected to continue. As culture is dynamic rather than static, Ghanaian customs and

traditions continue to develop. These adjustments, such as the option to pay a fee to forego shaving one's hair, have been implemented in part in reaction to the aforementioned factors.

Some initiation rituals have detrimental social, emotional and psychological effects as well as physical ones that can last into adulthood. The lessons taught at initiation rites are meant to uphold men's dominance and women's subordination, both in marriage and in society (Kapungwe, 2003).

There is much social demand to participate in an initiation ceremony. When adolescents or their parents decide not to, there may be severe social repercussions, including isolation from the community and not being seen as an adult, regardless of age (Warria, 2018;). The expectation might cause a person to obsess over whether they are competent and attractive enough, just like in any society where an individual is subject to criterion or benchmark. This could, therefore, result in a poor sense of oneself and problems with self-esteem and self-efficacy. For instance, some scholars believe that puberty ceremonies are a component of social and cultural norms that maintain girls and women in inferior roles (Nnazor & Robinson, 2016; Steegstra, 2005). Once more, some teenage girls who underwent virginity testing described the emotional toll of believing their families lacked confidence in their ability to choose not to have sex (Padmanabhanunni & Fennie, 2017).

As seen from the literature reviewed, adolescents' rites of passage are not altogether praised. The practice has sparked numerous discussions. While some individuals feel it should be kept up as a cultural tradition, others think it is anachronistic and has little bearing on adolescents' development of their psychological identities, particularly in contemporary Ghanaian culture. The practice has seen a variety of modifications, one of which is a sharp decline in the age of initiates.

The above studies show conflicting opinions and feelings among community members on the positive versus negative impact of adolescent rites of passage and the challenges adolescents encounter. This implies that an additional study is required to fully comprehend how adolescents' psychosocial identity is developed in relation to rites of passage. The various studies reviewed are relevant to this current study as

they attempt to provide a comprehensive picture of how parents and teachers view adolescents' rites of passage and the challenges encountered.

To avert these psychosocial identity challenges, Buku and Edoh-Torgah (2020) argue that it requires an effective counselling guideline that can be developed to aid in the psychological therapy of youth, particularly adolescents. Counselling is referred to as face-to-face assistance provided to people to help them overcome their day-to-day challenges, strengthen their' ability to solve similar situations in the future, make life adjustments and improve their self-awareness (Assoah, 2015). Taylor and Buku (2012, p.15) contend that "counselling services facilitated the individual's self-actualisation within their societal context and focus on the adolescent's identity development nesting their real potentialities, interests, challenges and career aspirations".

Adolescent counselling necessitates a unique approach since adolescents are a unique category with unique issues (Buku & Edoh-Torgah, 2020). They are neither children nor adults but are in the middle of their lives. It is, therefore, difficult to achieve a high degree of effectiveness if counselling is performed using methods and approaches that are appropriate for either children or adults (Oppong-Frimpong & Amissah, 2009). The above discussion suggests that psychosocial identity is thus paramount to the academic and personal well-being of the adolescent. The findings of these studies are significant to this study, which attempts to ascertain adolescents' psychosocial identities and how rites of passage affect them. It will assist in understanding the ramifications of psychosocial challenges that adolescents in the Bosomtwe District of Ghana face and also help formulate counselling guidelines to resolve these identity challenges.

## **2.9 Gaps in the Literature**

From the literature discussed in this chapter, it can be determined that the phenomenon of psychosocial identity development is a very complex one. The epidemiology of adolescents' psychosocial identities within the Ghanaian context has received very little attention. Although there has been little research on adolescents' psychosocial identities in Ghana, the real scope of the issue there is still poorly recognised.

Many gaps exist in the literature about rites of passage and adolescents' psychosocial identity development. Moreover, perceptions of adolescents' rites of passage and the challenges they experience tend to show conflicting opinions and feelings, resulting in a definite gap in the literature. Though some individuals consider it should remain a cultural practice because of the positive social and emotional effects on self-esteem (Agra & Gbadegbe, 2014; Ethier et al., 2006; Van de Bongardt et al., 2016), others believe that it is outmoded, lowers human dignity, and has no significance in the modern era especially due to deleterious components the ritual includes, among other things, bathing initiates' feet in goat's blood and exposing initiates' breasts (Padmanabhanunni & Fennie, 2017; Tetteh, 2006). These contradictions seem to highlight a paradox. Therefore, the question remains about how rites of passage influence adolescents' psychosocial identity development.

This study addresses this gap by focusing on Ghanaian adolescents' psychological, emotional and social experiences in their identity development process. It determines whether the traditional rites of passage influence adolescents' psychosocial identity development within the Bosomtwe District of Ghana. The ultimate aim is, therefore, to gain a better understanding of adolescents' psychosocial identity development within this sample; one is able to gain greater knowledge about adolescents' psychosocial identity development and their associated rituals and rites of passage within the Ghanaian context that can inform the development of counselling guidelines. The researcher hopes that the evidence from this investigation will help in these efforts.

## **2.10 Summary of the Literature Review**

A review of the related literature on psychosocial challenges was presented in this chapter. The dialogue opened with a look at a working definition of adolescence to define the study's focus. A detailed discussion of the phases of development and developmental levels of adolescents was conducted, as well as the factors influencing psychosocial challenges, among other relevant topics. The chapter also looked at some empirical studies on the topic.

The literature review showed that adolescents' psychosocial identity development and traditional rites of passage have been well-researched and reported as significant issues in educational institutions and communities worldwide. However, little is known about the connection between adolescents' psychosocial identity development and

traditional rites of passage in the African context, particularly in Ghana. This research aims to provide practical answers to how adolescents experience their psychosocial identity development as associated with their undergoing traditional rites of passage and contribute to the pool of literature on the topic from a Ghanaian viewpoint. The following are some of the conclusions that can be made from this section:

- Adolescent behaviour is influenced by environmental interaction patterns.
- Adolescents' behaviour affects the environment around them.
- The behaviour of the adolescent's family members, peer groups, and other role players has an impact on how they perceive them.
- The transition period requires a re-evaluation of the adolescent's relationship to the external and their own internal world.
- Rites of passage demarcate certain points of an individual's life cycle as significant.
- There are conflicting opinions on the impact of adolescent rites of passage.
- Adolescence is a time when career decisions are made with more clarity, marriage preparation is undertaken, and more concrete life goals, such as the need for obtaining personal, financial and emotional independence, are established.

## **2.11 Conclusion**

In this chapter, I explored literature on adolescents' psychosocial identity development in relation to traditional rites of passage. Adolescence is a time of transition between childhood and adulthood. Adolescent and adult groups are clearly separated, the changeover phase will be easier to see. This chapter aimed to review the literature on adolescents' psychosocial development from Western and African perspectives while focusing on adolescent traditional rites of passage and their psychosocial identity development. The complex nature of adolescence, as well as the psychological, emotional and social problems that come with it, were revealed to negatively impact the internal functioning and self-identity formation of adolescents. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to comprehend the multifaceted aspect of how adolescents experience their psychosocial identity development as associated with their undergoing traditional rites of passage in the Bosomtwe District of Ghana better.

In the next chapter, I discuss the theoretical and conceptual frameworks to provide a theoretical basis for the study.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK UNDERPINNING THE STUDY**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

In chapter two, I explored the literature on adolescents' psychosocial identity development in relation to their traditional rites and rituals of passage. The literature focused on Western and African viewpoints on adolescents' psychological, social and emotional identity formation. In the chapter, I expounded on the adolescent stage of development, psychosocial identity development, the psychological and social challenges adolescents encounter, and the traditional rites and rituals adolescents undergo.

Chapter three explores this study's conceptual framework and incorporates a critical model and theories. I illustrate how essential concepts from my literature review are interconnected to explain various aspects of adolescent psychosocial identity development theories, such as Erikson's psychosocial identity theory, Van Gennep's Ritual Process model and Nsamenang's theory of social ontogenesis. Bandura's social learning theory and Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological system model were also incorporated into the conceptual framework. In the sections that follow, I discuss the conceptual framework developed for this study.

#### **3.2 The Underpinning Conceptual Framework**

The section discusses the connections between the key concepts that emerged from the larger body of work on how adolescents' psychosocial identities evolve in relation to their traditional rituals and rites of passage.

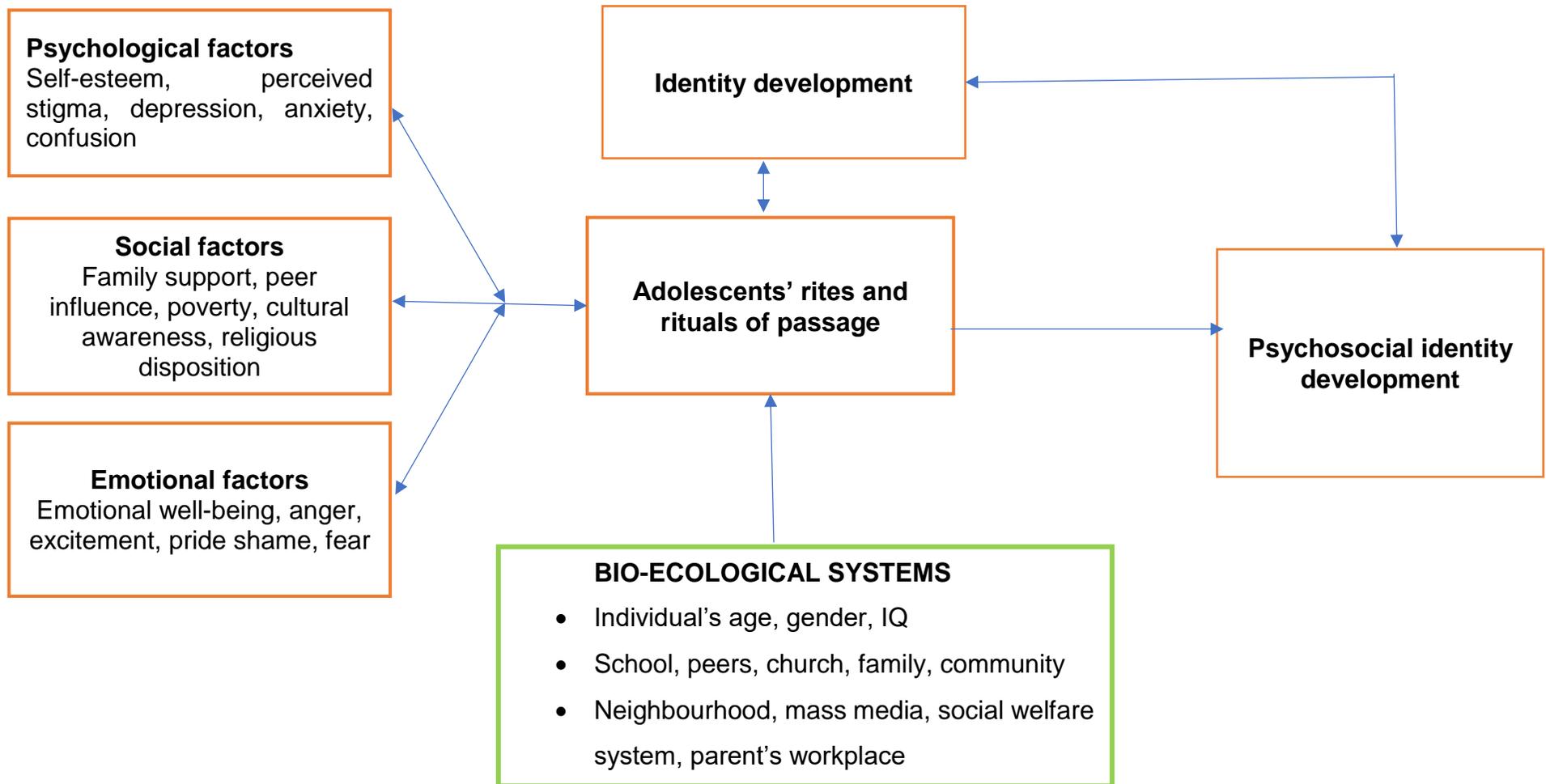
##### ***3.2.1 The Use of a Conceptual Framework in This Study***

In this study, using a conceptual framework plays a crucial role in providing a structured approach to organising ideas and concepts, ultimately guiding the research process and a lens to viewing the results. According to Kelley and Knowles (2016), a conceptual framework visually represents the study's underlying theories and research questions. It facilitates the integration of empirical evidence into comprehensive theoretical frameworks and aids in theory development (Imenda, 2014).

Moreover, this conceptual framework played a crucial role in establishing and forming my perspective on forming adolescent identity (Fisher et al., 2020; Steinke, 2017). When existing theories were insufficient, conceptual frameworks proved effective in constructing a solid foundation for the study (Sancar et al., 2021). Drawing on key ideas from a comprehensive literature review on adolescents' psychosocial identity development (Steinke, 2017), the conceptual framework served as the basis for justifying this research study, formulating the problem statement, determining the research questions and establishing the purpose of the study.

The goals and structure of my study would not have been evident without a conceptual framework, eroding its credibility (Edmondson et al., Gummer & Mandinach, 2015). This study interprets the interconnections among various concepts as powerful and relevant due to the intricate complexities associated with adolescent psychosocial identity formation in the Bosomtwe District of Ghana.

In developing the conceptual framework, I avoided just adopting a single theory in its entirety and incorporated elements from various theories to guide my research. Through this approach, terms such as "psychosocial identity development," "adolescent rites of passage," "traditions," and "psychological, social, and emotional factors" played a significant role in my process of meaning-making. Although each of these parts is referred to as a separate entity, they actually work as a cohesive unit that influences and is influenced by one another. Figure 3.1 visually represents the conceptual framework used in the present study.



**Figure 0.1: The conceptual framework underpinning the study**

### **3.2.1.1 The Conceptual Framework Underpinning the Study**

In the conceptual framework, I underline psychosocial identity formation, identity development, social learning, and psychological, social, and emotional characteristics as essential components of traditional rites of passage and rituals for adolescents.

#### **3.2.1.1.1 Adolescent Psychosocial Development**

The term "psychosocial" has been defined in several ways. Some of the most well-known definitions of psychosocial include the means through which a person acquires the customs of a specific society or social group, as well as knowledge, skills, and dispositions (Baker & Lattuca, 2010; Graham, 2018). This definition necessitates a shifting transmissible connection with parents, siblings, teachers, and peers to participate and exhibit behaviours that are anticipated and acceptable by their specific society or group (Graham, 2018).

Psychosocial development may also be defined as how a person acquires social skills from birth to adulthood and how their personality evolves. Individuals gain the abilities, attitudes, beliefs, and motives necessary for successfully navigating the culture they are positioned in during this period (Rivet-Amico, 2011). Adolescents' social and emotional experiences with the many social agents and situations they encounter throughout their lives shape their learning processes, skills, behaviours, values, and motivations (Kendrick et al., 2022). Therefore, in the framework of this study, the term "psychosocial" is used widely to refer to psychological, social, and emotional facets of life.

Accordingly, Erikson (as cited in Del-Giudice, 2014) considered psychosocial development as competing crises that occur on a spectrum, with the beneficial and destructive aspects of psychosocial development lying on the opposing sides. In this case, Lent and Brown (2013) contend that in addition to a person's physical health, social factors such as interpersonal relationships and an individual's thoughts and behaviour should also be considered since they interact to determine a person's state of being. They further add that psychosocial development includes adjustments to social cognition and overt conduct in adolescents. In this regard, I concur with Przybylski and Weinstein's (2019) stance that suggests that adolescents may exhibit behaviours consistent with productive members of society as an outcome.

This study on adolescents' psychosocial identity development as associated with traditional rituals and rites of passage in the Bosomtwe District of Ghana utilised aspects from Erik Erikson's psychosocial identity theory as a prism to view how young people develop their psychosocial identities. The acquisition of ego identity is the central idea of Erikson's theory of psychosocial identity development, and identity crises are the most fundamental aspect of adolescence (McAdams & Zapata-Gietl, 2015). According to Erikson, adolescence is when a person must establish their identity and protect themselves from the dangers of role dissemination and identity confusion (Erikson, as cited in Cote, 2018). Therefore, the task at this time is frequently more challenging for some adolescents in a historical moment where the past has lost the anchor of family and community tradition, the present is marked by societal change, and the future has become less definite.

Kroger (2015) posits that the older generation could no longer provide the younger generation with suitable role models in a time of fast social change. Adolescents may dismiss older people as unsuitable role models even if they can serve as adequate role models (Kroger, 2015). In light of this development, Erikson maintains that the importance of the peer group cannot be overstated. Peers assist teenagers in answering the question "Who Am I?" since they rely on social feedback to understand how people feel and behave. Adolescents are, therefore, occasionally morbid, frequently curious, and concerned with what they appear to be in the eyes of others rather than what they believe they are when it comes to how to combine earlier formed roles and abilities with the ideal prototypes of the day (McAdams & Zapata-Gietl, 2015).

It is common for adolescents at this age to have larger expectations than their abilities would allow them to achieve since they have romanticised and idealised ideas of what they need to do to achieve their career goals (Deming, 2022). In the process, adolescents idolise and over-identify with their heroes to the point where they lose sight of their own identities and assume theirs (Cote, 2018). Adolescents rarely connect with their parents at this stage; Erikson contends that because they are compelled to separate their identity from that of their families, they frequently battle with their authority, conventional norms, and intrusion into their personal lives. Adolescents must claim their freedom to mature (Kroger, 2015), but those who

struggle to find their identity may experience role confusion, role dilution, and self-doubt (McAdams & Zapata-Gietl, 2015). According to Erikson (as cited in Sekowski, 2022), identity dispersal can result in suicidal thoughts or actions in their most extreme forms, thereby signifying the importance of parental guidance and role models in this stage of development.

In Erikson's view (as cited in Cote, 2018), all ego traits exist at all life stages. According to Sekowski (2022), each virtue has the potential to be fully incorporated into the ego towards the end of the relevant life stage. Therefore, unless the adolescent is psychologically, cognitively, and emotionally ready and the appropriate psychosocial crisis has been successfully handled, the relevant ego strength does not manifest and develop. Each ego virtue is said to result from successfully resolving the psychological turmoil linked to life events. Still, it also depends on how adolescents interact with their surroundings. "Socio-genetic evolution" is the term used to describe this phenomenon. Additionally, Erikson asserted that "all fundamental principles can only arise in conjunction with the process of development among the individuals and the interpersonal components of a true society" Erikson (as cited in Sekowski, 2022). Through modelling and imitating, adolescents can be assisted in developing positive and healthy relationships with their family, friends, and other family members.

Primary social conditions interact and depend on an ego's strength and final ascent. Fundamental commonalities exist between rites of passage and ego strengths in determining an adolescent's equilibrium and engagement. According to Erikson (as cited in McAdams & Zapata-Gietl, 2015), the ideal relationship between adolescents and their social environment is marked by ego virtues. I, therefore, submit that one can better comprehend rites of passage by using Erikson's perspective on life course transitions because, in his perspective, Erikson acknowledged the influence of society on adolescents' development of their psychological identities. Hence, Erikson's view is essential to the current study because after adolescents establish their unique identity, they might seek intimacy in their social connections (McAdams & Zapata-Gietl, 2015).

### **3.2.1.1.2 Identity Development in Adolescents**

In the framework of this study, I considered that identity formation is crucial to adolescents' rituals and rites of passage. Similar to Erikson, Parker (2014) contends

that adolescence is a crucial period of a person's growth and a time when they are at their best. Erikson recognised "identity versus role confusion" as the main psychological process of adolescence, as previously mentioned (Sanders, 2013, p. 355). Most identity research studies to date also emphasise adolescence as a crucial developmental stage connected to identity formation (Parker, 2014; Umana-Taylor et al., 2014).

In line with Erikson's views, this construct on identity development in this conceptual framework resonates with the views of Dunham, Kidwell, and Wilson, who established an identity formulation *model* based on Van Gennep's Ritual Process model (Dunham et al., 1986). As mentioned in Chapter 2, the ritual process model proposes that rituals are essential to human societies and act as a mechanism for establishing and preserving social order and cohesion. I concur with Dunham et al. (1986), who maintain that adolescents are momentarily released from the usual social restraints and free to experiment with new social roles and identities during this transitional period. They further argue that the model generates distinct kinds of identity at each level. At the preliminary or separation stage of the model, the adolescent who is prepared to undergo transitional rites can be recognised by three different forms of identities, including the old support network, the old identity and the old identity completion (Dunham et al., 1986; Hunt, 2002).

Before undergoing traditional rituals and rites of passage (thus, before initiation), the adolescent is linked with the old support group since it is a sort of identification acquired by more senior members who were crucial to the initiate's development. Kyalo (2013) describes an initiate as a person undergoing a significant transition or transformation in their life through a formal ceremony or ritual. Another kind of identity, known as the "old identity," has to do with changeable social, emotional and cognitive characteristics. The symptoms that indicate an adolescent's preparedness for the rite of passage are the third form of identity (ancient identity completeness). This new form of identity, recognised as pubertal maturation, affects cognitive development.

Dunham et al. (1986) noted that a person is forced by shifting environmental demands out of the security of their previous identity and transcend into the uncertainty of their current obligations and tasks during the liminal period (second stage) on Van Gennep's model (Dunham et al., 1986). Fear, depression, anxiety and a sense of

helplessness are thought to be activated by this form of identity formed during initiation, which usually results in emotional consequences. Initiates, on the other hand, return to society with less fear and worry. After initiation, this results in a new kind of identity and a dedication to undertaking new obligations premised on societal standards. Ultimately, new support systems, including mentorship programmes and role models, were considered crucial to assist initiates in exploring and mastering the new position (Dunham et al., 1986; Hunt, 2002).

Identity reinforcement is the identity the adolescent acquires after the initiation process as defined by the model (Dunham et al., 1986). Identity reinforcement comprises members of the society who are part of the new support group and are responsible for affirming or restoring principles and values. In summary, the Ritual Process model distinguishes four types of identity acquisition: transcendence, new image, new support network, and identity reinforcement or affirmation (Dunham et al., 1986; Hunt, 2002). In this situation, the rituals and rites of passage may help form adolescents' identities through sound experiences.

From the above discussions, it can be seen that Erikson's psychosocial identity development and the ritual process model both attempt to explain how individuals develop a sense of identity and purpose. While there are similarities between the two models, there are also significant differences. For example, Erikson's psychosocial identity development is based on a series of stages individuals go through as they develop a sense of self (Maree, 2021). Erikson's stage of adolescence, which he termed identity vs. role confusion, is distinguished by particular difficulties and conflicts those adolescents must resolve to go to the next stage. The ritual process model, in contrast, places a strong focus on the role of rituals and ceremonies in defining a person's sense of identity and purpose. According to this model, rituals mark important life transitions and events and reinforce cultural norms and values. Ritual participation helps people feel part of a wider group and gives them a sense of direction in everyday life (Abbey et al., 2021).

Again, while Erikson's model focuses on the internal psychological processes that contribute to identity development, the ritual process model highlights how social and cultural elements play a role in forming identity (Rubenstein, 2013). I consider the constructs of Erikson's psychosocial identity development and the ritual process model

relevant to my conceptual framework since both collaborate to provide insightful understandings of the intricate process through which adolescents feel a sense of identity and purpose.

It is worth noting that most perspectives on identity development and cognition are portrayed as universal across all human variability while mirroring conventional Euro-American ethnocentrism, as seen in the above discussion. An African view, in contrast, depicts phases of a person's cyclical ontogenesis as systematic grooming of responsible intelligence in participatory curricula, which clings to traditional cultural homogeneity (Lukong, 2020). This view provides developmental tasks that seem appropriate for each human developmental stage. In such curricula, information is not divided into distinct subjects but rather knit together into a single fabric adolescents learn while engaging in their families' and societies' socioeconomic and cultural activities. A unifying framework, "social ontogenesis" is created by combining various ethnocultural realities and divergent theoretical strands to explain human development.

A type of theory from an African viewpoint suggests that how individuals, mainly adolescents, learn and develop their identities is primarily influenced by the social ecosystem in which that growth occurs (Volk, 2023). The social ecosystem embeds all human activities in societies, including technological, cultural and political composition (Bronfenbrenner, 2005; Feinstein & Kirchgasser, 2015). In sum, a theory of social ontogenesis explains how people, particularly adolescents, engage in social cognition as members of social and cultural life and communities during their ontogeny (Danilov, 2020). Sociogenesis, viewed and described as an outcome of social rather than physiological elements, is the main central idea of this theory.

However, the social ontogenetic theory maintains that biology underlies social ontogenesis and does not exclude nature (Nsamenang & Akum, 2013). The physiological nature of the genetic code similarity within the human species manifests in an astounding variation of distinct individuality among cultures. In the current study context, the framework can be of immense relevance in explaining how adolescents in Bosomtwe utilise rites and rituals to form unique identities.

Therefore, theorists emphasising contextualism focus on how various ontogenetic routes and intellects are positioned in the socio-ecological contexts and cultural systems in which adolescents are raised. The genetic code's biological similarity to that of the human race manifests itself in a bewildering range of unique identities shaped by many ecocultural settings (Serpell et al., 2011). Obanya (2011) notes that any society can leave its mark on biological ontogenesis as a result of the suppleness of the biological schedule. By this, the individual's biotic system is metamorphosed into a cultural actor. In my study, I base my discussions on the various social ontogenetic paths that impact the development of adolescents' identities as they undergo their traditional rituals and rites of passage.

The fact that social ontogenesis is universal provides a creative incentive for conceptualising and creating empowering developmental knowledge (Nsamenang, 2006), particularly for adolescents in the Bosomtwe District of Ghana. In this case, it is a learning model that makes it possible to analyse how adolescents develop their psychosocial identity when they are members of cultural groups in the context of human development (Nsamenang, 2005; Nsamenang & Akum, 2013). This model opens up datasets and perspectives outside of constrictive Eurocentric frameworks in my study.

Development is, therefore, described by the African social theory as "the acquisition and growth of the physical, cognitive, social, and emotional competencies required for an individual to function or operate meaningfully based on the expectations of the family and community" (Nsamenang, 2005). As a result, this kind of growth involves a change in individuals brought on by their involvement in cultural events, notably rites of passage (Danilov, 2020). African parents can affect their adolescent's development through methodical and progressive social integration with the help of such a mindset. Morss (2020) argues that methodological and theoretical approaches distinguish this model of human ontogenesis from more individualistic ideas put forth by Freud, Erikson, and Piaget.

From an African perspective, Nsamenang and Akum (2013) argue that adolescents steadily and methodically individuate into and take on specific degrees of individuality and identity as they are ushered into and actively involved in cultural life. The individuation process is a mark left by ecoculture on the human being. In other words,

an adolescent develops a feeling of self and a sense of identity in their quest for individuality. According to the African worldview, for these adolescents to attain enlightenment and achieve full autonomy, they also need a civic conscience. To this end, I submit that such individuals can't develop a sense of self without considering how interdependent and socially responsible people are within their traditional setting. The core idea of the social ontogenetic paradigm emphasises an interdependent or relational script rather than an autonomous or independent framework.

Western perspective seems to draw Africans away from their origins, experience and understanding and distant from their knowledge sources. Lukong (2020) and Jacquemet (2015) argue that overreliance on Eurocentric ideologies has turned Africans into a crevasse of overreliance on others whose virtues and intuitions have been influenced by multiple ethnicities, historical events and ecosystems. While developmental psychologists could see themselves as learners, first and foremost, they would be able to benefit from the field of indigenous propensities (Smith & Pourchot, 2013).

To "ignite interest in and conduct a rigorous investigation of distinctively indigenous patterns of development, in an attempt to refuel developmental research in African countries and broaden the mental images, strategies and understanding of psychological science much further than existing (Western) moulds" a theory of social ontogeny is deemed more appropriate in this study (Nsamenang, 2005). As a learning posture, it offers better explanations, especially in understanding adolescents' identity development associated with traditional rituals and rites of passage.

I considered the concept of identity formation in my conceptual framework because it is essential to the research. I want to emphasise that I do not believe my design's conceptual framework is set in stone and unbending. As a result of the complexity of adolescent psychosocial development in African culture, I view my comprehension of the interconnected nature of a collection of concepts as evolving and pertinent at a particular moment. Therefore, I only emphasise some aspects of the Ritual Process Paradigm, social ontogenesis and psychosocial identity development theories that apply to my research study rather than adopting them in their entirety. By doing this, I develop my framework while concentrating on psychological, social, and emotional aspects.

### **3.2.1.1.3 Psychological, Social and Emotional Factors Influencing Adolescent Development**

In this study's framework, psychological, social, and emotional aspects stand in for the many forms of adversities resulting from rituals and passage rites (Luthar, 2006). This description is fundamentally based on the belief that rather than a single characteristic defining adolescent development (Rutter, 2008; Yates et al., 2015), these factors refer to a process that arises from the interdependence of several challenges (risk) and the positive experience despite stressful circumstances in this bio-ecosystemic setting. As stated in Chapter 2, psychological, social and emotional factors are associated with the adolescents' psychosocial identity as they undergo the traditional rituals and rites of passage. In this conceptualisation, a distinction is made between psychological, social and emotional factors.

Psychological factors, such as cognitive abilities, personality traits, and mental health, refer to the mental processes and behaviours that influence an adolescent's development. Social factors include the cultural, environmental, and social influences that shape an adolescent's development, such as family dynamics, social relationships, and cultural norms and values. On the other hand, emotional factors refer to an adolescent's emotional experiences, expressions, and regulations. This includes their ability to recognise, understand, and manage their own emotions and the feelings of others (Raghubir, 2018; Serrat, 2017). All of these factors are interconnected and can significantly impact an adolescent's development, including their self-esteem, identity formation, social skills, and overall well-being. The conceptual framework I adopt integrates aspects of the ecological perspective, social learning and factors resulting from the traditional rituals and rites of passage. I discuss Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological systems and Bandura's social learning theories as applied in this case.

### **3.2.1.1.4 Bronfenbrenner's Bio-Ecological Systems Theory**

I adapted concepts from Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological system theory to serve as the foundation for my conceptual framework. Concepts adapted from the model included person (personal traits), process, context and time. According to Bronfenbrenner, genetic make-up and ecological functioning play a major role in determining how an individual develops (Bronfenbrenner, as cited in Mulisa, 2019).

The theory is one of the modern ones that have frequently contested the conventional viewpoints on the relative significance of nature vs nurture issues in determining human development (Bronfenbrenner & Ceci, 1994; Moore et al., 2013).

This conceptual framework aided me as I attempted to comprehend the wholeness of societal and scientific problems and understand the completeness of adolescents' identity experiences (Banathy & Jenlink, 2004). It is essential to explore the ecology of the context in which these youngsters interact to understand the experiences of adolescents in their quest to develop their identities. Hereunder, I present the bio-ecological systems theory as its tenets will be applied as part of the general structure for the framework in this section.

Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological systems theory states that adolescent development occurs within a complex web of intertwined forces between the adolescent and the setting. Though there are many environments and processes, I was just interested in exploring how adolescents experience their psychosocial identity development in relation to traditional rites of passage. This study examines the development of an adolescent within the framework of the structure of relationships that shape adolescents' settings. I advocate that an individual's relationship with the ecosystem may be described from an ecological viewpoint in this study.

The bio-ecological model put forth by Bronfenbrenner provides a prism through which numerous environmental factors influencing how teenagers develop their psychosocial identities can be understood. A study into the relationship between these variables and adolescent development is essential because this knowledge is needed to guide strategic, health and economic planning, and education, development of counselling guidelines and other programmes (Witt, 2012).

The interactions between organisms and their environs are viewed holistically in the bio-ecological systems theory, with each element impacting the system as a whole. Therefore, changes in one part of the system could impact the other parts, and eventually, the entire ecological system. In other words, alterations or conflicts with one layer can reverberate through the others (Bray et al., 2010; Witt, 2012). In studying an adolescent's development in relation to traditional rites of passage, I feel that it is necessary to consider the adolescent and their immediate surroundings and how the

broader environment interacts with the adolescent. To that end, it is reasonable to assume that issues like poverty, religious disposition, peer group pressure, culture, self-esteem and family support impact adolescents dynamically and reach across a variety of contexts, such as the person, the family, the neighbourhood, the school, and the greater society. It is crucial to consider how one setting influences another to create ways to lessen or eliminate the effects.

Four multifaceted and interconnected aspects are at the core of Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological model. Whereas each dimensional component is described independently for clarity, it is accepted that all these facets continually interact (Ismail, 2018). This study focuses on gaining insight into adolescents (people) and systems (context and processes) to help identify the influences and barriers since the community is situated in one of these dimensions. To concentrate on giving support in the form of quality standards when establishing the psychosocial identity development of adolescents, I consider the impacts of the initiation rites. The four main components of Bronfenbrenner's PPCT (Person-Process-Context-Time) model that mutually influence those processes are the adolescent's proximal processes (personal traits), context, and time elements (Bronfenbrenner, 2006; Hayes, 2021). I go on to discuss these components.

The concept of proximal processes, which emphasises the development between the person (in this case, the adolescent) and the surroundings, constitutes the important initial part of the bio-ecological model (DiSanti & Erickson, 2021). Based on the person's experience, the evolution of such proximal processes may have a favourable or harmful effect. Repeatedly and over a more extended period, obstacles (both internal and external), such as poverty, loneliness, violence, or lack of family support, will diminish the effectiveness of these ritual processes. It follows that these processes must occur often and over protracted periods for proximal processes to be effective when implementing adolescent counselling guidelines. So, optimal practices must be applied regularly and over a more extended period to impact adolescents positively. It is crucial to consider the surroundings, the adolescent's encounter with it, and their view of it (Hayes, 2021).

The person's qualities, or their biological and genetic traits, constitute the second important part of this theory. According to Mulisa (2019), these traits are ingrained in each person and affect them internally and when interacting with others. These traits are broken down into three categories: personal stimuli (demand qualities, such as age and gender), mental and emotional resources (such as food and housing), and force attributes (desire to succeed or fail) (Van Vugt et al., 2014). According to DiSanti and Erickson (2021), there is constant contact between the development of the individual and the many systems, and this connection affects the individual.

The setting in which the adolescent is continually interacting is highlighted by the PPCT model's third key element, which he referred to as "context". As connoted by Bronfenbrenner's use of the word ecology, he considered development as emerging from the interaction of individual and context (Mercon-Vargas et al., 2020). The microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, and macrosystem are the different systems or nested structures that make up the context in Bronfenbrenner's PPCT model. Each engages with the chronosystem (DiSanti & Erickson, 2021). Considering the psychological, social and emotional factors in my study, the impact of the person (the adolescent, process, context and time) reinforces each of these five nested structures or environmental systems. Further information about these systems, which include the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem and chronosystem, is provided below.

### **3.2.1.2 The Microsystem**

According to Rathus (2006), a microsystem is the first and smallest unit of the five system levels. It is an inner setting in which an adolescent spends a large amount of time engaging with several other persons around the vicinity, such as family members, classmates and other peers in the neighbourhood. Thus, these people play a crucial role in the life of adolescents in three different ways: as the microsystem context in which development takes place, in terms of the personal traits of every family member, and, most importantly, in terms of the interactions between family and community members as a component of proximal processes (Mercon-Vargas et al., 2020).

In the same vein, Donald et al. (2010, p.37) describe microsystems as "environments in which adolescents are actively engaged in direct encounters with parents, teachers, peers and other siblings". These patterns of activities, roles and interpersonal relations

experienced between individuals and the systems, which include the tasks, interactions and routines of the daily activities the adolescent engages in, have a significant impact on many elements of cognitive, physical, mental, moral and spiritual development (Boyd & Bee, 2006; Cole et al., 2009). Hence, the microsystem is the immediate setting where proximal processes occur. It entails a constant facial landmark interaction with those closest to one's life and is defined by the people and things closest to them. Thus, every individual influences the other in turn.

Another dimension of the microsystem suggested by Boyd and Bee (2006, p. 34) "is the biological makeup and stage of development of an adolescent, commonly referred to as the adolescent's biological content". Berk (2007) asserts that all relationships must be viewed as bidirectional; for instance, an adolescent from a poor socio-economic background will be influenced by child-rearing practices, the type of school they attend and the quality of friends, all of which will have an impact on their cognitive function. In this study, I subscribe to the views of Haralambos and Holborn (2010), who opine that if the family setting is not welcoming, the adolescent's self-identity will be in crisis.

According to Bronfenbrenner, as quoted in Santrock (2009), the adolescent participates in these interactions, engages with others in reciprocal ways, and helps to shape them rather than simply being a passive recipient of interactions. Since adolescents' psychosocial identity development would be enhanced the more positive and nurturing these connections and circumstances are, I feel that this particular component of the Bio-ecological theory is relevant to this study. Besides this, how adolescents behave or respond to the microsystem's members will impact how they develop and their well-being.

As a component, the microsystem's surrounding environment is critical in adolescents' psychosocial identity development. According to the above review, the microsystem contains responsibilities, connections and routines of everyday activities that have a favourable or negative impact on a variety of the adolescent's cognitive, social, mental, physical, moral and spiritual development (Donald et al., 2010). Bronfenbrenner's microsystem is also eye-opening for researchers, educators, parents, the general public and adolescents themselves, as it encourages them to take advantage of the intricately woven interactions between adolescents and their immediate surroundings.

To assess what triggers an adolescent's psychosocial identity, I sought to study the adolescent at the microsystem stage to collect data about the demographic background of the adolescent as well as the setting.

### **3.2.1.3 The Mesosystem**

The second level of Bronfenbrenner's theory is the mesosystem. According to Bronfenbrenner (2008), the mesosystem is a group of connections between two or more settings where the growing adolescent plays a significant role. According to Donald et al. (2010), the mesosystem is a collection of microsystems that are constantly communicating with one another. In a nutshell, a mesosystem is a system of microsystems. Hence, family, school, and peer group relations affect each element during this phase. As a result, what occurs at home or among friends may affect how adolescents conduct themselves at school and vice versa.

Adolescents who are not accepted by their family, for example, may obtain assistance and understanding from neighbouring friends, or a teacher. In this way, while their parent's lack of support may make them nervous and uncomfortable, the relationships with their neighbours, social groups, or teachers may change their feeling of vulnerability over time (Mufanechiya et al., 2012; Tope, 2012).

Consequently, their relationships with their parents will alter. This interconnection within the microsystem is often referred to as a mesosystem. The role of parents at home, classmates, neighbours and educators at school, for example, has an impact on adolescents' academic success, career development as well as their personal identity development (Berk, 2007). In this case, the interrelationships between the processes are critical in shaping adolescents' psychosocial identity. The interdependencies between parents or guardians and the school, as O'Neil (2011) states, improve adolescents' self-identity and overall personal well-being.

According to Bee (2007) and Sprinthall and Oja (2006), adolescents' behaviour during the traditional rites of passage is influenced not only by their own psychological growth but also by the pressures and influences existing within the institutions in which they participate. For instance, adolescents who are exposed to unsupportive home environments can suffer from psychosocial transition issues, rendering it exceedingly harder for parents to be motivated in their parenting or to participate in the ritualisation

processes actively. In this way, Bronfenbrenner (2008) advocates the need for parents, community leaders and educators to build and maintain the home and school in a constructive, cooperative manner to foster adolescent growth.

In sum, based on the above discussions, the mesosystem describes the interrelationships between two or more environments. It entails the presence of other various microsystems, such as the home and the school. Unpleasant interactions in one system can have repercussions on the others. Adolescents from minority cultural backgrounds, for example, may face conflicts between their home and school cultures. This may have a detrimental impact on the interplay between the systems (Cole et al., 2009; Mulisa, 2019).

#### **3.2.1.4 The Exosystem**

Exosystems are one or more environments or setups in which adolescents are not active participants but which may impact their immediate environment (Bray et al., 2010; Cole et al., 2009; Donald et al., 2010). These environments affect the adolescent's life and identity development, but they do not get involved or partake in any active process of development. The media, school boards, health care services, parents' workplaces, sibling schools and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) are among these environments (Eriksson et al., 2011). A developing adolescent's typical surroundings include the household and parents' workplaces; activities at the parents' workplaces may have ramifications for the adolescent at home. The exosystem influences the adolescent's development. For instance, if a father quits his job or is dissatisfied with the manager's treatment of workers at the workplace, the father unconsciously passes on his dissatisfaction to the children (Bronfenbrenner, 2008), affecting the family's financial situation and living standards.

Again, whenever a father is unemployed, especially in a typical Ghanaian setting, it puts a heavy strain on the family and causes marital conflict, which causes children to show signs of stress, anxiety, violence, despair, and criminality, as revealed by Anum (2016) in her study of adolescents in Senior High Schools in Ghana on stress and coping strategies. Such bitter experiences by adolescents may have a negative impact on their academic success. However, parents are less stressed when they get engaged in their adolescents' lives, and they may help them solve the challenges they face in their life. Poor healthcare systems fit this description as well. Poor healthcare

systems may cause an adolescent to be chronically ill and hence regularly miss school, which will affect both his interactions with his relatives, instructors, and friends as well as his academic performance. Considering the preceding, when educators and school counsellors meet adolescents who are facing psychosocial identity challenges, they need to understand not just what happens at school but also what happens in each adolescent's home, neighbourhood, peer networks, and other elements such as the father's employment; all these which are not directly related to the adolescent.

### **3.2.1.5 The Macrosystem**

The macrosystem, according to Berk (2007), is Bronfenbrenner's model's outermost phase, composed of cultural and sub-cultural norms, beliefs, rules, attitudes, desires, lifestyles and political systems of the larger society. The phases mentioned above, including technological advancement, language, place of habitation and regulations, influence adolescent growth. According to Donald et al. (2010, p. 43), the macro system includes prevailing social and economic structures and customs, mindsets, and conduct that impact all other social processes. A cultural value, for example, can affect the proximal relationships in the adolescent's microsystems and the entire mesosystem. Similarly, how the government distributes goods and services in society affects all system layers. The macrosystem entails what is generally referred to as "a broad society and the entire social environment is two systems" (Boyd & Bee, 2006, p. 34).

From the aforementioned, the term "macrosystems" refers to the cohesion of those three structures (micro, meso, and exo), which may have favourable effects on society. These systems also serve as the basis for the lives of people and families. It suggests that the parent's workplace standards and values may be utilised to regulate the child's immediate environment, and the adolescent at home is not exempt from this. Psychosocial identity challenges, in the view of Santrock (2009), tend to overshadow an adolescent's progress, impairing academic ability and personal development, while some adolescents in such situations can resolve those challenges if given the required support or assistance. In Ghana, another example is in September 2017, when the government launched the Free Senior High School (FSHS) initiative, w to provide comfort to the number of parents who could not afford the high cost of Senior High School (SHS) education due to financial constraints (Chanimbe, 2019).

This current study also aims to understand adolescents' psychological, emotional and social challenges and how they affect their personal and academic well-being. This depicts the impact of a macrosystem on an exosystem or an entity, in this case, an adolescent in a particular school or family environment (Melson, 2014). In other words, the essence of a country's educational structure may impact a school organisation and can create psychosocial identity challenges for adolescents. Focusing on the macro system in Bronfenbrenner's model makes the case that no person exists in isolation and that it is crucial to consider all factors influencing the adolescent's functioning, as well as how they interact with family, peers, and the community. Therefore, the optimal identity development of the adolescent in this study will depend on all these factors, which comprise the numerous social experiences.

### **3.2.1.6 The Chronosystem**

Chronosystems integrate Bronfenbrenner's model's time factor, namely continuity or transition over time. Evolutions, such as a parental breakup, past incidents, or social circumstances, as well as changes in the adolescent, such as life transformations, exist (Bronfenbrenner, 2005, 2008). Concerning the chronosystem, Rathus (2006, p.23) maintains that "it is the shift in the environment that happens over time and has an impact on an adolescent's adjustment". This particularly emphasises the dimension of time where developmental changes are influenced by interactions or events in life, such as birth, the beginning of education, or the emergence of menarche, marriage, divorce, benefit or loss of employment (Berk, 2006; Yoosefi-Lebni et al., 2023).

The shifts alter current interactions between adolescents and their environments while simultaneously adding new developmental pathways. The emphasis is on how environmental trends impact adolescents' psychosocial identity development and academic life. Adolescents actively contribute to their own growth in addition to being influenced by their environment. Adolescents are less inclined to explore and engage in relationships that will help them grow if they believe their environment is unsafe. On the other hand, adolescents who are relaxed and assured in their abilities to participate in new circumstances aid in unfolding their psychosocial identity (Donald et al., 2010). The investigation and evaluation of suitable counselling recommendations for adolescents can be effectively guided by a bio-ecological systems model, considering the complexity and the various paths along which psychosocial identity development

may impact the adolescent's progress. Learning how these processes work is crucial to understanding how adolescents evolve and what variables contribute to their transition issues.

The bio-ecological paradigm considers all facets of adolescents' growth to evaluate the causative variables and to suggest alternatives to some of today's adolescents' behavioural, academic and emotional concerns that are sometimes associated with their traditional rites of passage. Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological model is seen to be useful in gaining insight into many of the aspects that influence the psychosocial development of adolescents. It further demonstrates how all aspects of the layers are interconnected and affect the developmental period of individuals. This model has allowed researchers to examine how adolescents' lives are balanced concerning all aspects of their surroundings.

The bio-ecological model will assist in implementing government policies and services that benefit adolescents' personal development and learning while improving society. Again, educators may use this model to evaluate issues of adolescents and help them rebalance their world. While it is critical to comprehend the root problems that exacerbate the adolescents' situation, it is also critical to consider when and how many adolescents subjected to such threats will be able to overcome them from the ecological systems perspective since any social setting can benefit from proximal mechanisms that foster resilience (Otsuki et al., 2008).

In light of the above discussion, the key interacting facets of Bronfenbrenner's theory that are relevant to this study are the following: 1) Person factors (the teacher's health and well-being); 2) Process factors (the types of relationships that occur within the adolescents' families, classroom environment, school, and the larger community); and 3) Time factors (changes over time including the progression in rites and ritual activities, increase in adolescent stress and decrease in overall adolescent well-being). Given this, it can be seen that Bronfenbrenner's perspective differs from that of behaviourists who believe that the environment is the only important factor defining an individual's behaviour. In light of the aforementioned viewpoint, I support using concepts from bio-ecological systems theory as the basis for my conceptual framework in this study.

The section that follows presents the relationship interface between the adolescent learning process and the social collaborations within Social Learning Theory.

### **3.2.2 Social Learning Theory**

Both positive and negative factors influence adolescent psychosocial development in their social environment. In the sub-sections that follow, I present an overview of Bandura's Social Learning Theory and the social dimensions associated with the theory.

The pioneer of Social Learning Theory (SLT), Albert Bandura, suggested in 1977 that people learn from their experiences with others in a social environment, such as peers and family members. According to Taylor et al. (2019), the environment or culture is a significant factor in the success of adolescents. Social persuasion affects the adolescent's psychosocial identity development since there is an interaction between both adolescents and their environment (Dishion & Tipsord, 2011). Bama and Borokonda (2019) argue that adolescents are more likely to think they will excel if they see their friends thrive. A person's history (or contextual factors) and personal attributes impact their educational experiences and, as a result, their behaviour during adolescent development (Baumrind & Moselle, 2014).

Adolescents are both "products and creators of their environments", according to Bandura (1989, p. 1) and Alexander et al. (2010, p. 497), because actions and ecological factors are controlled in both directions. They choose and set up scenarios that form the essence of their encounter environment in line with the SLT, which notes that a practical motivation that motivates individuals to bring forth more effort is likely to benefit personal growth (Reeve, 2018). According to the researcher, this concept offers a basis for looking at various ways rites of passage influence adolescents' psychosocial identity development. The concept accepts that the behaviour of the paradigm mimicked by observation affects adolescents' identity formation and behaviour.

Social Learning Theory focuses on a number of social factors, including friends, families, education, and poverty, and how these factors interact with a person's surroundings and other personal characteristics, such as gender, race, social support and obstacles, to affect adolescent development (McCullough, 2011). According to

Bandura (2002, p. 269), the model is based on three concepts: “studying others, imitating others and modelling. Adolescents discover that these social variables are appropriate for them through these three modes of their socialisation process and many other variables”. Adolescents’ psychosocial identities are often influenced by the world they are forced to live in. This is why this concept is used in this study to investigate how adolescents experience their psychosocial identity development associated with their undergoing traditional rites of passage.

Social Learning Theory affirms that adolescent development is influenced by both personal and external factors (Akers & Jensen, 2011). Adolescents exist in sociocultural contexts with diverse goals, common beliefs, traditions, resources, societal pressures, opportunities and sociocultural constraints (Bandura, 2002). The core tenets of social learning theory as associated with adolescent psychosocial development are set out below,

Firstly, people learn by seeing how others act and the consequences of their actions. According to Bandura, adolescents observe what goes on around them and then consider the circumstances around those behaviours (Bandura, 1989). Social learning theory, as applied to the current research, assumes that adolescents experience signals from the media, older siblings, teachers, and parents, all of which may influence their psychological, emotional and social development either positively or negatively. For example, if a parent shows no or little affection (caring) toward the adolescent during the ritualisation process, he may feel unloved or abandoned, resulting in disappointment or depression. On the other hand, excessive social influence by parents can often make adolescents feel they cannot do what they enjoy, resulting in negative self-concepts. This example indicates that if the behaviour modeller is loved, which parents and teachers frequently do for their children or pupils as they age, an adolescent is more likely to replicate that behaviour.

Secondly, it is possible to learn without modifying one's actions. According to behaviourists, learning may be represented through a lasting shift in behaviour; however, social learning theorists argue that since individuals may evaluate their own learning by interpretation alone, it may not always be reflected through their actions. That is, learning may or may not result in a behaviour change.

Thirdly, cognition affects learning. In its understanding of human cognition throughout the past three decades, SLT has been profoundly cognitive. People's personal levels of awareness, as well as their expectations for future reinforcement or punishment, can significantly impact their actions.

Lastly, SLT may be considered a connection or bridge between the behaviourist and cognitive learning theories. As a result, it encompasses cognitive and behavioural approaches to learning and change and a wide spectrum of theory and practice in these areas.

In this case, I was able to determine if the above findings could be obtained in Ghana using participants from various backgrounds, such as Bosomtwe, via this analysis. Miller et al. (2008) affirmed that SLTs can describe adolescents' psychosocial identity development, so it was considered acceptable for the present research, which assessed its association with traditional rites of passage. Since social variables such as peer groups, education, and family relationships influence psychosocial challenges among adolescents (Maree, 2021; Vannucci & McCauley Ohanessian, 2019), the concept was extended to this study. In this regard, I was aided by Bandura's SLT in understanding how to develop their psychosocial identities and its impact on adolescents' personal well-being and academic performance in this study (Van Ouytsel et al., 2020)

### ***3.2.3 Integrating the Theoretical Constructs and Present Study***

Theories have been crucial in drawing attention to the remarkable changes during adolescence. The concepts drawn from the theories mentioned above are pertinent in light of this study because they emphasise a complicated web of interrelated factors between the adolescent and the setting of many strata of the environment. Their identities are developed or gained through these ritualisation processes, which provide learning environments.

Erikson's theory remains pertinent and significant to human development in contemporary times. Because of his legacy, his theory has been implemented globally in all areas of human development, allowing adolescents to select their own pursuits, establish their own identities, and make independent judgments. Erikson (as cited in Chen, 2019) believed that the primary psychological task of adolescence is identity

development and that many factors affect how individuals develop their identities and how it leads to the acquisition of new cognitive and motor abilities. Erikson thus restates the belief that adolescents' identities emerge when they can assess their qualities and connect them to expression spaces found in their environment (Normandin et al., 2021).

Again, the co-participation of adolescents in social and cultural life throughout their ontogeny is addressed by the social ontogenesis theory (Tchombe, 2019). The theory is pertinent to my study because it grounds human development as being influenced by the social ecology in which it takes place and how Indigenous people acquire and apply knowledge. It advised moving beyond the relatively limited scope of cognitive development in cross-cultural studies to advance our knowledge of how adolescents adopt the prevalent social categories, values, and norms in the context of their expanding social relationships. Beelmann (2020) contends that social ontogeny enables comprehension of adolescent development in close proximity to actual psychological phenomena since it focuses on developmental phenomena in context; as a result, it may be useful in this setting.

Furthermore, it was crucial to include SLT in this framework because the study focused on adolescents' development. Social Learning Theory describes how adolescents acquire and assimilate social norms and behaviours from those around them (Akers & Jennings, 2019). The theory can be used to connect with adolescents who are acting out or struggling to move forward and treat identity challenges. Additionally, adolescents' psychological, social, and emotional development—a process that enhances their mental health, prosocial behaviours, academic achievement, and attitudes toward education—can be supported by SLT. Social Learning Theory offers a framework beyond categorising peer influence as beneficial or detrimental to adolescents (Chuang, 2021). It offers an additional understanding of how adolescents learn socially as they undergo a significant social re-orientation. During this time, traditional rituals and rites of passage play a bigger role in helping them develop their identities.

Moreover, Bronfenbrenner's Bio-ecological Systems Theory offered a thorough knowledge of adolescent development. The best way to understand adolescents' development is to incorporate Bronfenbrenner's Bio-ecological Systems Theory

(Currie & Morgan, 2020). This idea is crucial to this study because it illuminates how various, interconnected circumstances can either promote or inhibit teenagers' sense of belonging. It also identifies the elements that should be supported to foster adolescents' sense of community as they undergo their traditional rituals and rites of passage. Therefore, with all its interrelated elements, this theory can offer suggestions for what constructs to emphasise to assist adolescent development best (El Zaatari & Maalouf, 2022). As applied in this study, the bioecological model demonstrates its adaptability, strength, and capacity to thoroughly explain the emergence of a sense of belonging, which confers immeasurable advantages on adolescent development.

Each of the constructs mentioned above that describe their experiences highlights how individuals are always interacting with one another and the bio-ecosystems that appear to affect an adolescent's psychosocial development in the context of this particular study. These factors, times, and contexts influence an adolescent's social interactions and sense of self. In light of this, "psychosocial identity" refers to various psychological, social, and emotional experiences that may be gained when participating in traditional rituals and rites of passage in society.

### **3.2.4 Conclusion**

The above discussions on the study's conceptual framework provided a guiding perspective on adolescents' psychosocial identity development for a more comprehensive understanding. The conceptual framework, which considers the holistic approach to behavioural problems, provides strategies and solutions that encompass various components of the rites and rituals in comprehending adolescents' psychosocial identity development. The research methodology that was utilised to carry out the study will be covered in more detail in the next chapter, as it was introduced in Chapter One.

## **CHAPTER FOUR RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

### **4.1 Introduction**

In the previous chapter, I situated the study within a conceptual framework. The development of this conceptual framework, which provided the basis for the current study, was foregrounded on key tenets of Erick Erikson's psychosocial identity development, Nsamenang's social orthogenesis theory, Bronfenbrenner's Bio-Ecological Systems Theory and Bandura's Social Learning Theory within the wider positive psychology paradigm. In Chapter 4, I explain the research methodology, strategies and procedures I used to conduct this investigation. Firstly, I explain why I chose qualitative research as a methodological paradigm and interpretivism as a meta-theoretical paradigm. Secondly, I go into further detail about the phenomenological case study design I used and the participant selection and sampling techniques.

Throughout the discussion, I describe the benefits and drawbacks of the various decisions I made concerning these issues. Following that, I go into the many stages of this study, the data gathering tools utilised, the data analysis process, and how the study's findings are presented, analysed, and interpreted. I discuss my decisions in light of the research questions developed in Chapter 1 as a basis. I elaborate on the ethical considerations that guided the study in this chapter's conclusion, provide strategies for ensuring trustworthiness, and reflect on my role in gathering data from the study participants.

The primary research question and the sub-questions are highlighted in the following section to clarify the research design and methods.

### **4.2 Research Questions**

The study was guided by the following research questions:

#### ***4.2.1 The primary research question***

How do adolescents experience their psychosocial identity development in relation to traditional rituals and rites of passage?

### **4.2.2 Research sub questions**

The research sub-question explored in the literature review is:

- a. What are Western and African viewpoints on the processes involved in adolescents' psychological, social, and emotional identity formation?

Sub-questions explored in the empirical research:

- b. What traditional rituals and rites of passage do adolescents in Ghana undergo?
- c. How do adolescents in the study experience the traditional rituals and rites of passage?
- d. How do traditional rituals and rites of passage influence an adolescent's psychosocial identity development?
- e. What knowledge about adolescents' psychosocial identity development and their associated rites of passage can inform counselling guidelines for adolescents in the Bosomtwe District of Ghana?

The literature review provided partial answers to several of the above sub-research questions. Empirical research was conducted in the Bosomtwe District of Ghana to contextualise replies to the study question and sub-questions. The empirical study was conducted as set out in the sections below.

### **4.3 Paradigmatic Perspectives**

A research paradigm is the basic assumptions, values, beliefs and perspectives about the researcher's observations of the social world (Aliyu et al., 2014; Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2011). Authors agree that the structure, pattern, system, or framework of concepts, presumptions, and values that are interrelated and explain the nature of the inquiry is referred to as a research paradigm (Denscombe, 2007; Rehman & Alharthi, 2016). According to Alhassan (2017), the purpose of a research inquiry is constituted in the research paradigm. Therefore, the present study's primary goal is to examine and understand how adolescents experience their psychosocial identity development associated with their traditional rites of passage. In this regard, the interpretivist research paradigm is most suitable for this study.

### **4.3.1 Meta-Theoretical Paradigm: Interpretative Approach**

The term "meta-theory" describes the philosophical assumptions regarding the theoretical nature of the phenomenon under study and the inquiries made regarding it. It stands for a significant group of assumptions that underlie the theories, models, and paradigms that make up the overall framework for the study. As a result, the intellectual atmosphere of specific social scientific disciplines now includes meta-theoretical ideals and/or beliefs (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Walliman, 2016). Since the purpose of my research is to examine, comprehend, provide meaning to, and depict the lives of adolescents in the experience of their traditional rites of passage, I found that using the interpretivist (Merriam, 2019) worldview as a meta-theoretical paradigm was most suitable for this study.

Bailey (2008) asserts that research using an interpretive paradigm emphasises social interactions and the methods and processes through which individuals construct their social environments. The interpretivist paradigm is the foundation for this qualitative research since it focuses on how adolescents experience, interpret, and comprehend their social environment (Mason, 2006). Accordingly, Glesne (2011) argues that interpretivism aims to shed light on how humans perceive the world.

In this study, I followed an interpretive paradigm as it explains and contextualises the views of teachers', parents' and adolescents' experiences. When researchers use their investigative skills to witness the lives and stories of the untold, Glesne (2011) contends that their listening capacity is essential. According to Thanh and Thanh (2015), the interpretivist viewpoint enables researchers to investigate the present by elucidating how people identify themselves in a particular environment. According to Kivunja and Kuyini (2017), the latter comprises three dimensions: ontology, epistemology and methodology. The specific dimensions of this paradigm are discussed next.

#### **4.3.1.1 Ontology**

How the nature of the particular reality is determined in the pertinent study is the ontological dimension of a paradigm (Daigneault, 2014). The researcher must describe the concepts and the connections between those pertinent concepts to understand the particular reality. Since the researcher is examining several realities and the meaning of those realities is being produced or reconstructed by human

collaboration between the researcher and study participants, the interpretivist paradigm embraces a relativist ontology (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). In relation to this study, relativist ontology acknowledges that reality is a human experience and that there are several interpretations for every given experience. The experience becomes several realities for the researcher doing the investigation because the investigator is aware that these perceptions of reality are subjective and consist of multiple realities (Ejnavarzala, 2019).

#### **4.3.1.2 Epistemology**

According to Smith (2020), 'epistemology' is concerned with possibilities, nature, sources and limitations of knowledge in the field of study. The knowledge of this study is that the real world of the adolescent is interconnected. Ejnavarzala (2019) reiterates that epistemology is the connection between the researcher and the knowledge acquired and the understanding of the knowledge. The rationale behind choosing interpretivism is connected to the aim of the research. In terms of the latter, I aimed to explore how adolescents in the Bosomtwe District of Ghana experience their psychological identity development in relation to participating in traditional rituals and rites of passage in the selected independent schools.

#### **4.3.1.3 Methodology**

Cope (2014) notes that reality is a subjective concept that is created by the application of particular techniques to the particular study that is being conducted. According to Bloomberg (2018), the interpretative paradigm must ensure that it can generate reality through a cooperative effort between the participant and the researcher. It follows that in qualitative investigations, the researcher plays a crucial role in the study approach (Creswell, 2014). Because the researcher collects data via individual interviews and observation to provide a fair assessment of the data, the interpretivist paradigm permits a naturalist methodology (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017).

#### **4.3.1.4 Strengths of interpretivist paradigm**

The interpretivist paradigm has the following advantages:

The interpretive paradigm enables the researcher to comprehend the participants' inner lives, subjective experiences, and personal viewpoints (Neuman, 2012). The researcher must show empathetic understanding for the subjects to comprehend their behaviour and activities fully. As a result, I tried to connect with the participants to

comprehend their ideas, viewpoints, and comprehension of the current phenomenon under study. The goal of interpretivism is to comprehend how a researcher interprets the meaning of a given action as it has meaning for those with whom we interact in addition to the method by which the researcher has attempted to understand the participants' self-understanding of a specific action (Creswell, 2014; Neuman, 2012).

It enables me to engage with the participants, appreciate their experiences, and grasp their descriptions of their reality. Since the data used in interpretivist research tend to be reliable and honest, primary data collected through these investigations may have a high level of validity. This study's fundamental objective was to depict adolescents' physical environment as an interpretive world rather than the literal one due to the complexity of human behaviour, opinions, and experiences. Thus, it was essential to grasp the social background and to rely, as far as possible, on the experiences and opinions of the adolescents, parents and teachers about the topic of adolescent psychosocial identity development (Creswell, 2014).

Again, interpretivists contend that human nature is too complex to offer specific, theoretical solutions to issues that affect people (Neuman, 2012). The interpretivist approach enables more in-depth investigation of qualitative related studies such as cross-cultural variations in organisations, ethical concerns, leadership challenges, and factors influencing efficiency and management.

#### **4.3.1.5 Limitations of the Interpretivist Paradigm**

Notwithstanding these strengths outlined above, Merriam (2019) argues that interpretivism as a meta-theoretical paradigm is frequently condemned for the following reasons: This kind of approach is subjective. It places more emphasis on people's subjective experiences. According to Berg and Lune (2012), interpretative studies frequently exhibit bias, particularly on the researcher's part, and cannot be generalised. Therefore, the interpretivist paradigm gives rise to multiple meanings or realities. Bias on the part of the researcher could cause participants' opinions, experiences, and perceptions to be misinterpreted.

In addition, primary data produced by interpretivist research cannot be generalised since participant opinions and values markedly impact data. Consequently, the data's representativeness and veracity are rather impaired. Johnson and Christensen (2014)

assert that there is no distinction between the investigator or researcher and the subject under examination; hence, the researcher must be aware that subjective reports and less controlled interviews may occasionally be insufficient, erroneous, or deceptive (Creswell, 2014).

However, notwithstanding the limitations, interpretivism as a meta-theoretical paradigm was an effective instrument that allowed me to comprehend the evolution of adolescents' psychosocial identity development. To overcome this challenge, Taylor et al. (2015) suggested using a research journal in the form of a reflective journal to chronicle subjective experiences to help others read her subjective discoveries and assess how they could inform their approaches. To share her personal experiences, she wrote in the first person. I carefully considered the papers included in the research, utilised for cross-referencing, verification, and evaluation, based on their subjective methods of collecting and interpreting data to prevent personal bias in the current study (Bloomberg, 2018). In this regard, I recognised that people create their own meanings, ascribe their own interpretations to their environments and take into account the participants' beliefs and attitudes.

#### **4.3.2 Methodological Paradigm**

Three main techniques for social research exist: mixed methods, qualitative approaches, and quantitative approaches (Devetak et al., 2010; CressMagwa & Magwa, 2015; Tewksbury, 2009). According to Frey (2018, p.7), "qualitative and quantitative techniques offer two very distinct perspectives on the world while the mixed method combines the two approaches". According to Devetak et al. (2010), an approach refers to the principles, ideas, beliefs, assumptions, and conventions that apply to a particular study. The qualitative method was used in this investigation. I first discuss the quantitative and qualitative approaches to clarify why I chose the qualitative technique for this study.

##### **4.3.2.1 Qualitative Research Approach**

This study uses a qualitative approach, which is a more conversational and visual approach to gathering data than the quantitative approach. According to Creswell (2009), the purpose of qualitative research is to gather data from participants' first-hand accounts without heavily relying on statistics as the basis for interpretation. Extensive descriptions are used in qualitative research, such as "the context, the

persons participating, and the activities of interest" (Merriam, 2019, p.15). In contrast to quantitative research, the qualitative technique to research gives readers a more in-depth grasp of the phenomenon being studied. Merriam goes on to say that "words and images, not figures, are used to communicate what the investigator has discovered about the study problem" (p. 16).

#### **4.3.2.2 Rationale for Qualitative Research Approach**

Four primary considerations led me to choose a qualitative research design for the study. The study's main purpose is to examine how adolescents experience psychosocial identity development as they undergo traditional rites of passage. As a result, it was vital to determine how persons directly affected by this development, such as teachers, parents, and adolescents, saw the situation. I believe there is a need for information on how High School teachers and parents/caregivers perceive adolescents, what factors influence what, how teachers and parents view adolescents' rite of passage and psychosocial identity development, and whether adolescents believe that rites of passage have an impact on their life adjustment. Bhatta (2018, p. 28) noted that "the consent and perception of these crucial persons are likely to affect adolescents' overall identity development". In other words, are parental and teacher consent and support positively impacting adolescents' identity?

An additional inquiry was if particular values and ideas held by teachers and parents influenced their support and evaluation culture and agenda, as well as their perception and interpretation of adolescents' psychosocial identity development. Regarding increasing adolescent support systems and prevention efforts, what would be the most important to stakeholders? These concerns or issues are raised to illustrate why qualitative approaches are required in this study rather than rehashing the key research questions stated in chapter one. These issues, in my opinion, necessitate data that reflects participant perspectives. As a result, it is critical to hear adolescents, teachers, and parents speak and reflect on the meanings they attribute to adolescent psychosocial identity issues linked with traditional rites of passage to understand what influenced them. These aims necessitated a qualitative research inquiry (Creswell, 2014; Dawson, 2012), which can reveal the impact of context (social, institutional, personal, etc.) on perceptions and practices. A qualitative research approach was also chosen in response to calls for more qualitative approaches to research adolescents'

personal and learning development, as well as the need for a research strategy that would not just close the gap between policy and practice in adolescent psychology but would rather promote adolescent growth and development in Ghana (Sefotho, 2015; Taylor et al., 2015; Yin, 2016).

Another factor that influenced my decision to employ the qualitative approach was the need for in-depth knowledge and understanding of adolescent psychological, emotional and social challenges. Among the crucial features of the quantitative approach employed in this study was evaluating participants' varied perspectives and experiences about psychosocial and emotional issues experienced by adolescents as reported by them. To put it another way, I employed the qualitative research approach to arrive at the most reliable findings that efficiently answered both the primary and secondary research questions of this study.

According to Tewksbury (2009), qualitative research is largely concerned with micro-level problems. This qualitative study sought to gain a deeper understanding of very specific individuals and circumstances as opposed to generalising them. To give detailed and accurate information about the development of the adolescents' psychosocial identities, I concentrated on a small sample of participants, including 28 adolescents, 12 teachers and 12 parents from the local communities in the Bosomtwe District of Ghana. The qualitative approach permits a multi-method investigation of a phenomenon to understand, interpret, and analyse it with respect to the significance people give to it. The concepts that developed from this qualitative study reflected participants' meaning but not based on the researcher's values, views, or judgments.

Magwa and Magwa (2015), Henning et al. (2011), and Hossain (2011) argue that Qualitative researchers study people in their natural environments to determine how the environment affects their experiences and behaviours, microeconomic, and sociocultural aspects of their lives. In the view of Yin (2016), participants in qualitative research are also encountered in their natural environment, such as the communities and schools. Participants in this study had the chance to openly express themselves in their various schools, homes and communities (which were their natural settings) about topics such as the nature of adolescents' rites of passage, psychological, emotional and social challenges that adolescents face, and how knowledge of

adolescents' psychosocial and emotional challenges can aid in the development of counselling guidelines.

The researcher ventured into the natural surroundings in Bosomtwe to understand the participants' impressions of the topics discussed better. Meeting the subjects in their natural environments allowed me to gain a greater grasp of their reality clearly. The qualitative research method allowed the researcher to actively participate in the study process. Lincoln and Guba (2010) confirm that in qualitative studies, the researcher and the participants engage in interactions that affect one another, realising that "knower and known" are linked. Similarly, Willig (2013) claims that all qualitative techniques recognise the researcher's role in the research process. According to Burns and Grove (2013), the qualitative technique is participatory and systematic since the researcher and the subject of study have a close relationship.

Furthermore, qualitative research has the advantage of examining social phenomena holistically (Chinyoka, 2013). The qualitative technique employed in this study considered a contextual explanation of the intricate interlinkages between causal variables and impact, as well as possible ways to reduce psychosocial, emotional and social difficulties among adolescents. As a result of the importance of context and experience in diverse perceptions and sensations, the study required the use of quantitative approaches. To this end, I could gain a deeper grasp of the complexities that impact adolescents' psychosocial identity development using this strategy. Tichapondwa (2013) argued that the advantage of qualitative research is the ability to quickly change the structure and focus of the study as new information becomes available. Some study questions may change due to the researcher understanding who and what to ask.

#### **4.4 Research Methodology**

The study's methodological strategy is discussed in this section. According to Creswell and Poth (2018), research methodology is a set of clear norms and processes on which a study is built and against which all claims to knowledge are examined. Bloomberg (2018) emphasises the arbitrary nature of reality and relies on particular methods to assist in constructing the reality of the study under investigation. It is essential to apply the interpretative paradigm in a way that allows the researcher and participant to work together to create reality (Badu-Nyarko, 2011). Therefore, it is clear

that the researcher is essential to the research approach in qualitative investigations (Creswell, 2013). The interpretivist paradigm also embraces a naturalistic approach because researchers obtain information through observation and individual interviews to provide a balanced data report (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017).

#### 4.4.1 Research Design

Creswell and Plano-Clark (2011) describe research designs as strategies for collecting, assessing, interpreting, and reporting data that aid in making the best decisions for the study's research questions, purpose, and problem. Walliman (2016) also defines research design as the science and art of organising methods for investigations to acquire the most trustworthy results. It also gives the researcher a more detailed plan for directing and organising the study to achieve the research goals. The design used for a study is based on its objectives. Descriptive research aims to collect data to test theories or respond to inquiries about the existing conditions of the study's subjects. Table 4.1 describes the study's research strategy.

**Table 0.1: The Research Design and Methodology**

<b>Research Design</b> Qualitative Phenomenological Case Study
<b>Data Collection Strategies (Methodology)</b> Interviews with 12 teachers (3 from each school), 12 parents (3 from each school), and 8 adolescents (2 from each school) Focus Group Discussions with 20 adolescents (10 males, 10 females) Document Analysis; Field notes
<b>Trustworthiness</b> Dependability, Credibility, Transferability and conformability
<b>Pilot study</b> Instruments tested in a Junior High School one parent and one (1) teacher interviewed, one (1) focus group discussion
<b>Transcriptions and Member-checking</b> Researcher and Participants involved Ethical Considerations
<b>Data Analysis Plan</b> Inductive methods of data analysis ATLAS-ti scientific software programme (De Vos, et al., 2011)

On this basis, the next section discusses the phenomenology case study design that was used for this current study.

#### **4.4.1.1 Phenomenological Case Study Design**

Phenomenology aims to develop a complete, accurate, transparent, and cohesive description and understanding of a particular natural world. As a result, I decided to generate data that accurately captures and depicts a phenomenon. With this in mind, I set out to convey, as clearly as possible, the formation of adolescents' psychosocial identities as a phenomenon that affects people on a social level.

According to Leedy and Ormrod (2010), the goal of a qualitative phenomenology study is to comprehend an event from the respondent's point of view. Yin (2016) and Henning et al. (2011) concur that a qualitative approach reflects people's views in the study. Collecting individuals' viewpoints is a major goal of the qualitative phenomenology inquiry. Phenomenology focuses on an individual's thoughts, beliefs, experiences and feelings (Denscombe, 2007).

According to Finlay (2014), the essential question in phenomenology is "the purposeful relationship between the subject and the interpretations of the phenomena they are focusing on and experiencing." Questions about phenomenology point to;

What is it like to have this kind of experience?

What does it mean to have this kind of experience?

How does the lived world express itself to me?

Various types of phenomenology include realistic, constitutive, transcendental, existential, and hermeneutical phenomenology (Johnson & Christensen, 2014). Considering the purpose of the study, realistic phenomenology was deemed more appropriate for this study. Realistic phenomenology, Husserl's original paradigm, analyses both universal and distinctive experiences among study participants. Because I intended to gain insights into the participants' lives and grasp the personal meanings drawn from their lived experiences, I applied realistic phenomenology (Johnson & Christensen, 2014). Though the preceding arguments highlighted the usefulness of the qualitative phenomenological paradigm, they did not write off its few drawbacks. It is time demanding, as seen by Chinyoka (2013). When working from a phenomenological paradigm, Gray (2011) states that data processing is often not

simple because data does not always fall into distinct categories, resulting in several audio recordings and interview notes that should be analysed. I nevertheless employed a variety of strategies to find a solution. I reviewed the interview transcripts and the unorganised notes, and listened to the audio tapes to obtain a sense of what was stated when the data appeared scrambled.

Badu-Nyarko (2011) emphasised that individuals must see a phenomenon in order to draw inferences regarding its existence. Observing the entire population is often impossible. However, qualitative phenomenological research does not require observation of the whole population because the emphasis is on the depth of study but not generalising it.

The study aimed to explore how adolescents in Bosomtwe District in Ghana experience their psychosocial identity development associated with their undergoing traditional rites of passage. A qualitative method based on phenomenological case study design was best suited to accomplish the aforementioned. Apart from Edward Husserl (1859 – 1938), other prominent academics contributing to phenomenology included Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1923), Martin Heidegger (1927), and Jean-Paul Sartre (1943). Creswell (2009, p. 13) defines phenomenology as “an approach to research in which the researcher identifies the essence of human experiences as they relate to an event as experienced by the participants”. While delving deeper into the topic, the qualitative phenomenological study relies on tape-recorded interviews (Ganga, 2013). Instead of making preconceived assumptions about the events leading to the data collection, the goal was to let the events unfold spontaneously.

The discussion that follows focuses on the methods used for data collection in this study.

#### **4.5 Data Collection Procedures**

In this section, the population, the technique I employed in participant selection, and the process and strategies for gathering data, are presented.

##### ***4.5.1 Location of the study***

There are 260 administrative districts distributed across 16 regions in the Republic of Ghana. Bosomtwe District, part of the Ashanti Region, is one of these districts. It has a total population of 131,939 people, with a youthful population of those between the

ages 0-19 years constituting the majority (52.2%). The district with 67 settlement communities also has a mostly rural population of 69.7% of the population. The district has a homogenous socio-cultural identity but with Ashanti's dominating (89%). Other tribes in the district are Fantis, Ewes, Guans, Mande, Gurma, Grusi, Mole Dagbani and Kotokoli, who co-exist peacefully and harmoniously. Politically, the District Chief Executive is in charge of overseeing its administrative operations. The district has 250 schools, comprising 85 kindergartens, 86 primaries, 70 Junior High schools, 6 Senior High and Vocational Schools, one (1) Midwifery Training School and two (2) private universities in the District (Ghana Education Service, 2022; Owusu-Agyemang, 2017).

The district is rich in minerals such as gold, clay, sand and gravel deposits. The only meteorite lake in West Africa, Lake Bosomtwe, is also located in the District. These resources have attracted the attention of both Ghanaians and other expatriates, such as the Chinese, to engage in mining and tourism activities in the area (Owusu-Agyemang, 2017). Most residents commute to work or engage in business activities at Kumasi (Ashanti Region's capital and Ghana's second-largest city). The remainder work within the neighbourhood by also engaging in petty trading, farming or small-scale mining industries. It is a low-income, high-density dormitory urban centre with rising numbers of impoverished people (Ghana Statistical Service, 2022). Declining industrial activity and economic meltdown in Ghana as a whole have posed great difficulties in the lives of the people of Bosomtwe. The Bosomtwe District is therefore assumed to represent a typical community of at-riskiness for adolescents.

#### ***4.5.2 Population of the Study***

According to Alhassan (2017), a population refers to persons in the universe with specified traits or assets of entities that represent all the requirements of an investigation. Furthermore, Taylor et al. (2015, p.43) define a population as "the research objects". They state further that the objects consist of "individuals, institutions, human products, events, or even the circumstances under which they are subjected". Taylor et al. (2011) define a population as the total number of cases that satisfy a certain set of requirements. It is worth stating that, regardless of the basic unit, the term "population" points to the entire collection of elements for which the researcher is seeking information and drawing conclusions, regardless of the fundamental unit. It can also be considered the target group the researcher is

gathering data from for conclusions to be drawn. Most of the population of interest is vast, diverse, and dispersed across a wide geographical area. The population in this study pertains to adolescents, teachers, and parents in the Bosomtwe District of Ghana.

#### **4.5.3 Sampling**

According to Badu-Nyarko (2011, p. 106), sampling refers to “the process of choosing a segment or a portion of the population to represent in a research study”. Similarly, Creswell and Creswell (2018) note that sampling is the process of choosing a portion of the constituents of a population. Creswell and Creswell (2018) concurred with Alhassan’s findings when they described sampling as making a condensed and deliberate selection from a set of items, individuals in a community, an entity, or a society. Sampling is critical because conducting a study using a sample rather than a complete population saves money, time, and energy (Badu-Nyarko, 2011; Saunders et al., 2009). In other words, getting in touch with all of them can be time-consuming and costly (Etikan et al., 2016).

Therefore, researchers choose a sample of the population to investigate based on these factors. Since researchers need a lot more control over their participants, Magwa and Magwa (2015) believe that gathering data from very few individuals was usually highly precise, complete, and pays attention to detail than investigating an entire community. Participants were chosen from a group of Junior High School students, parents, teachers, and guidance counsellors in the Bosomtwe District of Ghana. It was done in anticipation that such a sample would yield sufficient and meaningful information and high-quality data to provide fresh insights into the psychosocial development associated with adolescents’ traditional rites of passage.

The sample for this study was chosen using a non-probability sampling technique. In contrast to quantitative research, qualitative research typically uses non-probability samples that are much smaller. Oliver (2010) argues that these data are much more detailed than probability samples. The setting, actors, and events all impact the data gathering in a qualitative study. In much the same vein, my decision to employ this technique resulted from the changing character of events caused by the actions within the settings. The researcher used purposive sampling in non-probability sampling to pick a sample. Purposive sampling is defined by Oliver (2010) as a sampling approach

where the researcher carefully picks participants depending on their ability to give substantial information in the study.

Badu-Nyarko (2011) argues that purposive sampling's major purpose, the key to answering the study questions, is to concentrate on particular features or characteristics of a population of interest. Using this form, I knew the type of people I wanted; in this case, the participants had a specific understanding of the issues or phenomena under investigation. Purposive sampling gives rich, in-depth data that reflects the study's objectives. Cases with a lot of information might teach one a lot about the topic under study, which is adolescents' psychosocial identity development. As a result, the qualitative researcher is primarily interested in the amount of information obtained instead of the number of participants. In this case, the purposive sampling was considered most appropriate because, in line with the viewpoint of Magwa and Magwa (2015), I utilised my discretion to choose individuals who could most effectively respond to the research questions and accomplish the study's goals.

#### **4.5.3.1 Sampling Schools**

This research was carried out in four distinct schools in two different area council settings within the Bosomtwe District in Ghana. There are likely to be diverse influences on and approaches to dealing with adolescents' psychosocial identities in each of these contexts. The exact selection of schools was influenced by additional considerations as well. Due to their accessibility and the potential for my direct involvement, the distance from my place of employment to each of the specific schools was, for example, a consideration in selecting the schools. The necessity for participant representation from various communities within the District results from the fact that adolescents are exposed to various contexts in schools due to the various settings of the schools.

In choosing the schools, the focus was on convenient access to the area councils for the researcher. So, I purposely selected two schools from Kuntanase area council, which are hereafter referred to as School D and School F, while the schools selected from the Boneso area council are referred to as School K and School N, respectively. All schools were multicultural and co-educational institutions. Firstly, permission was sought from the District Education Directorate and also from the individual headteachers to use the schools for the research, and it was granted.

The District Guidance and Counselling coordinator was requested to collaborate with the researcher to aid the study process. All communication, including asking permission to utilise the school and notifying participants about the research, sampling and procedures, was delivered in writing and orally to the individuals concerned (see Appendices). Hence, for each school, seven (7) adolescents, three (3) teachers and three (3) parents of the adolescents selected were selected as participants. Thus, a total of forty-two persons made up the sample of this study.

#### **4.5.3.2 Sampling Adolescents**

Twenty-eight adolescents were purposively selected for this research. They were selected from the four junior high schools sampled for this research. There were fourteen boys and fourteen girls, and all these adolescents had different home and cultural backgrounds. To prevent gender bias, the researcher purposefully chose a proportional representation of each gender. These learners were selected because they had experienced traditional rites of passage themselves and often interacted with their identity development with other students and staff members within those schools.

#### **4.5.3.3 Sampling Teachers**

To recruit teachers for the study, the researcher was able to contact them through the heads of the various schools. Twelve teachers were carefully chosen from the school; three from each school. The headteachers of each Junior High School assisted the researcher in selecting the teachers. The criteria targeted professional teachers who were primarily involved in school counselling activities and those who had served on the disciplinary committee in the above-mentioned schools. They have ongoing contact with and knowledge of adolescents who could be struggling with social, emotional, or psychological difficulties.

The research topic and eligibility criteria for participants were conveyed to the heads, and the researcher was invited to give a presentation to the teachers about the study. The need for voluntary involvement was emphasised to the teachers, and those who were interested expressed an unflinching desire to participate in the study.

#### **4.5.3.4 Sampling Parents/Caregivers**

The study included twelve parents from the neighbourhoods of the selected schools, adding to the adolescents and teachers. Multiple data sources were used to help

triangulate data (Lashley, 2017) and authenticate the study's findings (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). According to Devetak et al., (2010, p.78), combining several perspectives in a single study is best described as an approach that gives any subject more rigour, complexity, richness and depth.

With the help of the headteachers of the targeted school, I could get the list of parents whose wards had undergone the traditional rites of passage and possessed knowledge of the topic being studied. All the parents in this study had adolescent children who attended any one of the schools in consideration. These parents were chosen by the head teachers because they participated actively in the Parent Association (PA) of their school. The heads of the school made available the students' admission register for me to obtain the parents' phone numbers. In line with Creswel and Creswel (2018), I called most of the targeted parents to seek their consent and involvement in the study. With assistance from some student participants, I successfully contacted a few parents whom I could not talk to on the phone at their various homes. This allowed me to explain the study's goal to the parents, the foreseeable risks, and possible benefits of the study, and arrange an interview time that worked for each of them.

In a study, Kivunja and Kuyini (2017) underline the importance of individuals' identity being inaccessible or untrackable. In line with this, study participants were promised that participation was optional and that responses would be assigned a code or pseudonym. They would, therefore, remain anonymous in all publications and other research reporting materials, such as conference proceedings, that are submitted for publication.

#### ***4.5.4 Data Collection Method***

Data generation is a crucial component of any research project since, after the proper data has been gathered, the analysis of the data will determine the study's conclusions and recommendations. In-depth interviews, focus groups, observations, and document analysis are just a few of the research approaches used in qualitative research, which is a method of investigating people's lived experiences in depth (Henning et al., 2011). These qualitative methods are very efficient in bringing to light individual experiences and views from their own point of view (Chinyoka, 2013).

According to Burns and Grove (2013), data generation is a thorough and methodical process of obtaining data about the issue under study by employing various research tools. Khan (2008, p.97) defines research tools as "the ways and means of conducting a study". This study's most suitable data-gathering tools were qualitative interviews, focus group discussions, observations, and documentary analysis. I chose a generic interview guide because it allowed me to present a common range of subjects from which I collected data to establish how individual interviews and FGD questions should be sequenced (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). A journal, notes, and interviews were gathered, in addition to audio tapes that would be transcribed. As data was obtained, I could examine for similarities and contrasts and areas of uniqueness using the qualitative method of gathering extensive descriptions of adolescents' psychosocial identity development.

#### **4.5.4.1 Interviewing**

In qualitative research the most popular form of data generation is interviewing (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The term interviewing is defined by Tuckman (2012, p. 216) as a "verbal exchange of information between the researcher and participants, using oral questions". An interview, according to Hossan (2011, p. 153) and Magwa and Magwa (2015, p.71), "is a technique used to engage study participants and allow them to voice their opinions". Examining these definitions critically, it is evident that an interview is a process in which people are asked particular questions about a subject area and are expected to respond for a defined purpose. The primary source for interpreting and evaluating data was the text of the interviews. The interview is more than just a series of questions the interviewer asks the interviewees to elicit their responses. Hence, the interviewer's involvement becomes very critical.

In a qualitative study, the investigator's role is to enable the subject of the interview to fully immerse the interviewees in their environment. The quality of the information acquired during the interview process is significantly influenced by the interviewer. The interviewer is the most important instrument in the research process because of how they view their function and the role of the participant, as well as how the interviewer skillfully crafts questions and performs the interview.

As a data-generation strategy, interviews have been found to have a wide range of advantages. One of them is that it is adaptable, as Interviews could be tailored to a variety of situations. It was not necessary for participants to be able to read in order to take part in any of the interview sessions. It also allows me to examine nonverbal behaviours and can be used to rectify participants' misunderstandings. Interviewing as a data collection strategy has some disadvantages, such as being more expensive and taking longer than other techniques as compared to questionnaires. It has a lower level of anonymity compared to other methods. When discussing delicate matters, interviews are less effective than other methods.

#### **4.5.4.2 Types of Interviews**

The interview format determines the interview type (Tom et al., 2011). The upcoming sections will discuss the three primary types of interviews.

##### **4.5.4.2.1 Structured Interviews**

Structured interviews, also known as standardised or scheduled interviews, are those in which the same questions, in the same order and with the same wording, are asked of all participants. Structured interviews are described by Tom et al. (2011) and Chiromo (2006). To them, an interview is defined as a series of questions asked by an interviewer who is not permitted to change the questions asked. None of the interview questions may be changed or edited by the interviewer, such as phrasing, topic or order of questions. In a structured interview, Pathak and Intratat (2012) point out that specific questions are created before the interview.

##### **4.5.4.2.2 Unstructured Interviews**

In an unstructured interview, the interviewer is not bound by any preconceived methods or questions. It takes the shape of a discussion in which the interviewer has no constraints on the wording or sequencing of the questions (Gill et al., 2008). The interviewer has the authority to ask questions on the spot, go deeper into the issues, and, in some situations, follow the order determined by the circumstances. Due to the lack of pre-planned interview questions or probes, it has been criticised as being time-consuming and challenging to manage, but it offers some suggestions for exploring issues. Many people have embraced it because of participants' flexibility and lack of limits when responding to challenges. Participants may bring up crucial concerns that the investigator had not considered, providing information pertinent to the focus of the

study, or they may begin discussing entirely unrelated topics. In this way, each interview and its outcome are unique in unstructured interviews.

#### **4.5.4.2.3 Semi-Structured Interviews**

The majority of interview formats, structured and unstructured, lie in the middle between the two extremes mentioned above. This kind of interview that falls between the two is known as a semi-structured interview. The most popular type of data generation tool in qualitative research, semi-structured interviews, was employed in this study to enable the researcher to explore the participants' perspectives on adolescents' psychological identity development in relation to their traditional rites of passage. Semi-structured interviews are employed when more insightful data is anticipated from a more narrowly focused yet conversational two-way discourse with participants. While preparing for such interviews, only themes and sub-themes are recognised as inquiries rather than specific questions.

Specific questions would inevitably come up when analysing the themes and sub-themes (Pathak & Intrat, 2012). This gives the interviewer more freedom to examine concerns as they come up rather than trying to predict them. The order and exact language might be changed depending on the direction of the interview. Turner (2010) argues that this type of interview enables the researcher to follow up with pointed questions. Participants can freely express their perspectives and experiences because these semi-structured interview questions are open-ended. Based on the above discussion, I used semi-structured qualitative interviews in this study to gather information from teachers and parents.

Like any other qualitative research data-gathering instrument, the goal of a qualitative interview is to get an inside look at a phenomenon. Qualitative interviews are thought to help people understand social phenomena better (Gill et al., 2008; Holloway, 2005). Qualitative interviews, according to Ary et al. (2010), Burns and Grove (2013), Chiromo (2006), and Tichapondwa (2013), are adaptable. They were chosen for this study for this reason, among others. Direct interaction with participants allowed me to probe and clarify questions the participants misunderstood (Tichapondwa, 2013). In this view, I used open-ended questions with some probes which focused on what rites of passage adolescents go through, how they experience those rites of passage, teachers' and parents'/caregivers' perceptions of adolescents' rites of passage and the

challenges they face, and how knowledge of adolescents' psychosocial and emotional challenges could inform the development of counselling guidelines. (see Appendix N).

#### **4.5.4.2.4 Focus Group Discussion**

Focus Group Discussions (FGD) were used to obtain data from the adolescents for this study to get a more comprehensive view of the issue being studied. Most qualitative researchers conduct one-on-one interviews. However, FGDs can also be beneficial because they tap into a group's synergy (Padgett, 2009). An FGD intends to interview a group of individuals with characteristics similar to or identical to those of interest to the researcher and who will give their unique viewpoints on the study. According to Kitzinge (as cited in Mayan 2009), a group interview can be described as FGD if participant engagement serves as the main focus of data generation and analysis.

Another way to explain the FGD is that it is a group interview in which several people are grouped and offer their perspectives on a specific occurrence or problem of concern (Stuckey, 2013). An FGD is made up of a small group of individuals bound by a common interest. An FGD should be large enough to generate a wide range of thoughts and viewpoints, yet small enough for everyone to participate in the conversation. In relation to this, Padgett (2009) maintains a group of 7–10 people is ideal. Other suggestions for a successful FGD include a group of 9 to 12 people (Carey & Asbury, 2016; Onwuegbuzie et al., 2009).

I chose the FGD for adolescents because I wanted a wider range of responses than I could get from one-on-one interviews. I realised that gathering data in this manner would allow me to dig further into adolescents' psychosocial identity development as they experience the traditional rites of passage in their communities. Each of the four schools from which the participants were selected had its own FGD. There was an average of seven (7) people in each group. The experiences recounted gave a wealth of information and sufficient data to establish the extent to which the traditional rites of passage had affected the adolescents' lives. Out of the participants from the four focus groups, I interviewed a total of twenty-eight (28) adolescents.

In a moderated atmosphere, all recruited adolescents interacted and answered questions (Mayan, 2009). Upon expressing an interest in participating in the FGD, the participants were contacted to schedule a convenient time and date. This scheduling was done so the adolescents felt driven since they were in charge of the process. It was also to develop a healthy interpersonal bond for easy communication between the participants. The focus group meetings were held at the schools' Information Communication Technology (ICT) centres of the selected schools. These meetings were held when the centre was not in use for actual ICT activities or lessons to maintain privacy and avoid distractions during the focus group discussions.

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) centres in schools are stimulating settings, so they are big enough to support a round table seating arrangement so that everyone can make eye contact. The participants of each focus group were able to contribute effectively during the interview because they were all adolescents of a similar age and were already acquainted. In a nutshell, because all focus group participants attended the same school, they could easily relate to one another.

Participants were more calm and able to express themselves without constraints during the FGD since they had comparable features and shared a common relationship. As a result, the group became more homogeneous, and the experiences became practically universal. The goal was to learn more about the experiences of adolescents in the Bosomtwe District rather than to establish a consensus on identity development. This arrangement is in line with authors who have claimed that the focus group's objective is information gathering rather than reaching a consensus (Carey & Asbury, 2016).

It is beneficial for a researcher conducting a focus group discussion (FGD) to have a moderator who can accentuate the depth of the conversation while ensuring everyone is heard so the researcher can genuinely listen and pay close attention (Mayan, 2009). I employed a data collection assistant who had received training in leading focus groups by posing the appropriate questions. The moderator was a qualified teacher who held a Bachelor of Education from the University of Cape Coast and was presently enrolled in the Municipality's National Programme as a teacher. The moderator had two days of training before the study, with one-on-one interviews as practice.

Before the FGD, participants were made aware that I would merely be there to ask clarifying questions. They were informed that the group discussions would be taped and transcribed for later analysis. Each FDG lasted from forty to fifty-five minutes. During the sessions, questions were posed using a semi-structured interview guide (Refer to Appendix O). I sat in the room during the FGD while the data generation assistant moderated the sessions and only came in to ask probing questions when the questions and responses were unclear. I could recognise and characterise the phenomenon of psychosocial identity in both the school and home contexts from the experiences provided by these adolescents by engaging them in an FGD with the help of a moderator.

An FDG is helpful when a researcher wishes to quickly discover important themes by simultaneously interviewing many people. Due to the clarity of the context and contents of discussions, Badu-Nyarko (2011) claims that FGD responses have a high face "validity". There are a few disadvantages to FGDs. One issue is getting people to give up their time for the FGD because it must adhere to the schedules of the other group members. Other drawbacks include a misleading challenge in differentiating between an individual and a group viewpoint and a challenge in analysing and summarising data because of a significant volume of tangential information (Sherraden, 2011). In this instance, the results could be doubtful. I employed various data collection techniques, including focus group discussions, document analysis and interviews, to triangulate the data.

#### **4.5.4.2.5 Observation**

The study also employed observation as a research method. I used non-participant observation, in which I watched closely from a distance and made notes in my field notebook. In this case, the aim of using observation in this study was to understand adolescents' psychosocial identity development associated with their undergoing traditional rites of passage better. This research method allowed me to witness events in the adolescents' natural environment, providing direct awareness (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). I could establish a sense of place and value of adolescent psychosocial identity in the study area through fieldwork, visiting schools and homes, and listening to teachers and parents. All these "inconspicuous measures" (Carey & Asbury, 2016; Cope, 2014) provided a valuable source of data corroboration or contradiction and

functioned as a vital means of triangulating various parts of the data. I also studied aspects of adolescent profile. The key observation questions were: What are the rites of passage that adolescents undergo? Secondly, how are the rites of passage experienced by adolescents?

Another key consideration was adolescents' psychological, emotional and social challenges. The focus here was on the nature of these challenges and how they can influence adolescents' personal and academic development. These observations also served as an avenue for triangulating information gathered through interviews, focus groups, and document analysis. This data provided a more complete picture of adolescents' psychosocial identity development in the Bosomtwe study region.

Finlay (2014) posits that observation uses less sophisticated and time-consuming subject-selection processes. When participants do not collaborate or cannot provide information, observation can still provide data. It investigates events as they happen and approaches reality in its inherent structure. Carey and Asbury (2016) concur that observation provides first-hand information rather than depending on accounts from others. Observation has several drawbacks, including the inability to provide information about the past and future and unpredictability. It cannot be used when huge populations or events are being researched. Furthermore, it cannot directly investigate people's opinions, beliefs or attitudes (Cope, 2014).

#### **4.5.4.2.6 Document Analysis**

Pedaste et al. (2015) define document analysis as a technique where a researcher evaluates or scrutinises domain-related information (both printed and electronic) to provide voice and meaning to a topic under study. Frey (2018) asserts that a qualitative study uses a systematic approach to assess written evidence and respond to specific research questions. He further claims that document analysis involves repetitive inspection, assessment, and interpretation of the data to get meaning and empirical knowledge of the construct being examined.

Documentary analysis is important to every case study topic, as Badu-Nyarko (2011) posited, and should be the subject of defined data-gathering plans. It can also be used to confirm evidence from other sources. The study's primary focus was on documentary sources. The youth policy document, which represents the shifting fronts

of adolescent reproductive health in Ghana, was one of the documents chosen, highlighting the current policy on adolescent reproductive health policy the Republic of Ghana.

The National Youth Policy of Ghana and the Ghana Statistical Service Report for 2021 were specific documents used in this category. Other documents included the Ghana Health Service's 2016 Adolescent Health Service Policy and Strategy, the Ministry of Education's 2015 Report on the Impact of Rites of Passage and Cultural Practices on Adolescents and Young People in Ghana, and the Ghana National Survey of Adolescents' Wellbeing, published in October 2018. All of these resources helped me thoroughly understand the main issues and effective strategies applied in Ghana to deal with the psychological, emotional, and social difficulties that adolescents face. They also helped to clarify how perceptions and practices associated with rites of passage for adolescents impacted the creation of youth policies in Ghana.

The documents contributed to answering the research questions: What rites of passage do adolescents undergo? Furthermore, what knowledge about adolescents' psychosocial identity development and their associated rites of passage can inform counselling guidelines?

I classified the data according to the main questions and, by recognising patterns within the data, coded the data to identify the themes. Skimming, reading, and interpreting the data in the document were all steps I utilised in the document analysis process (Love, 2013).

Alhassan (2017) contends that the fundamental benefit of conducting document analysis is that it provides access to information that otherwise would be impossible to obtain. As a result, the researcher can get the language and words of informants who may or may not be alive at the time of the study. Creswell and Poth (2018) point out that utilising documents saves a researcher time and money by eliminating the need for transcription. Magwa and Magwa (2015) claim that by using document analysis, participants will not realise they are being researched, which will eliminate some bias. In this way, data from the participants is acquired without them having to interact directly. Gablinske (2014), on the other hand, claims that documents are rarely

prepared with research in focus. In this study, I integrated document analysis with additional research techniques that complemented it, such as FGD and interviews.

#### **4.5.4.2.7 Field Notes**

Field notes are a set of records from a researcher's observations in a specific location or region (Percy et al., 2015). They are frequently used to gather crucial contextual data in qualitative research. Throughout this study, the researcher took field notes to document what was observed, including what Finlay (2014) describes as the context or location, what occurs there, and every participant's expression. I recorded in my notepad what I heard and saw when I visited schools since some parents and instructors in some schools were cancelling scheduled individual interviews. They must attend workshops to report. The headteachers were occasionally absent from the school, and their helpers could not assist. Field notes were used to assist with sound recording and to describe the study process.

#### **4.5.4.3 Piloting the Interview Questions**

To determine if the research tool is appropriate for the study, Creswell (2012) suggests researchers ought to test the tool. Creswell (2012, p. 63) defines a pre-test as a "preliminary measure used before the delivery of the data gathering tool's final edition". Its goal is to assist in identifying the shortcomings and deficiencies in the interview questions. Given this, I carried out a pre-test to improve the research tools' validity and reliability. For the pre-test, three adolescents participated in an FGD and individual interviews were conducted with a parent, an adolescent, and a teacher afterwards. These individuals from a different nearby school had similar characteristics to the study participants.

Participants in the pre-test were subjected to the same inclusion and exclusion criterion as those involved in the final study. Five typing errors identified during the pre-test were corrected in the interview guide's final edition or version. Hence, I was able to edit the interview guide questions as a result, making them more lucid and understandable for the participants. Through the pre-test, I was again able to adjust the length of time needed by the adolescents for the focus group discussions. The 45 minutes that was allocated for the FGD was found to be inadequate and, therefore, needed to be increased to an hour.

#### **4.5.5 Data collection procedures**

An FGD with participants and individual face-to-face interviews were two methods used to generate data for the study. Interviews and FGDs, as stated by De Vos et al. (2011), have “key advantages”. They are a good way to gather big volumes of data swiftly. As stated earlier, they are especially good at gaining “in depth information.” The researchers further emphasise that verbal interviews and focus groups, on the other hand, have limitations because they require personal connection and cooperation. The author continued that participants may be reluctant to provide information, and the researcher may pose questions that fail to elicit the desired responses from participants. Participants in the research study frequently lost track of their thoughts and mentioned material that was irrelevant to the subject.

Before going to the schools, I requested approval from UNISA's Ethics Review and Clearance Committee, the Bosomtwe District Education Directorate, and the various heads of schools in Bosomtwe through official communications with a clear description of the aim of the study to carry out the research (refer to Appendices A, B, C, D, E and F). Having gained the approval of these bodies, I then proceeded to the schools for consent and assent and met with all of the participants

The adolescents and their parents were told that a specific room would be required for the FGD and the interviews. Additionally, participants were informed that a voice recorder would be used during the interview to capture their comments. They had the chance to ask any queries they had concerning the procedure. These inquiries received an answer. Parents and guardians approved their children's participation in the study by reading and signing the consent forms (refer to Appendix L). Adolescents under 18 read and completed a child assent form to express their concerns in writing (refer to Appendix M). Parents and teachers were expected to read and sign the consent documents (refer to Appendix K).

The next stage was when I scheduled FGDs and interviews with each participant. Interviews were scheduled at the specified times and locations with the participants who met the criteria above. When selecting the teachers, I ensured that both male and female opinions were represented by maintaining gender balance. For example, teachers who had worked in the selected schools for more than two academic years were preferred over those who had only been there for a shorter period. It was

essential to have a quiet space that afforded a degree of privacy so that adolescents felt comfortable sharing their experiences (Annamalai et al., 2015). In these circumstances, the heads granted permission for the focus group discussion (FGD) and interviews to take place at the Information Communication Centre. Participants were given a nose mask as part of the COVID-19 safety precautions, and physical distancing was observed during the interviews and FGD. Participants also had access to flowing water (supplied in a veronica bucket), soap and tissue paper, as well as hand sanitiser.

An interview guide or schedule, according to Khan (2008), aids in the conduct of interviews. With these insights, I developed an interview guide to minimise unneeded deviances from the study's goal and course for each stakeholder group (refer to Appendices N and O). These arrangements kept the interviews and discussions on track. I got acquainted with the interview guide to make it appear more natural and less scripted (Ary et al., 2010). Each participant was also informed about the study's ethical considerations, including participant anonymity, confidentiality, and the aim of the study. Participants were encouraged to volunteer for the study, and their choice to leave at any time and for any reason was upheld.

According to Ary et al. (2010), to gather qualitative data as efficiently as possible, researchers must have a skillset and approaches to collect thorough and representative data during interviews and FGD. As stated by Gill et al. (2008) and Seidman (2013), to help participants build confidence, they should be reassured at the beginning. I established a friendly yet professional rapport with the participants, expressing gratitude for their cooperation and willingness to answer questions. However, I could not greet them by shaking their hands, although that is the custom in the selected areas, because of the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak and its resulting limitations. I went on to say that the interview would take about 45 minutes, while the FGD would last for one hour.

After obtaining the participants' permission, I audio-taped the FGDs and individual interviews to prevent data loss. This enabled me to record the accounts of the participants precisely. The use of voice recording meant that the entire interview was recorded verbatim. An interview should be audio recorded to do a complete analysis of the data (Willig, 2013), as this prevents prejudice and offers a permanent record of

what was said. Before beginning the interview, I double-checked that the audio tape recorder was operating, as Turner (2010) instructed.

One of the most significant abilities required by the interviewer during the process is listening attentively without making needless disruptions when participants share their thoughts (Gill et al., 2008). I conducted the FGD with adolescents and semi-structured interviews with parents and teachers to gather the data. It was useful to conduct semi-structured interviews and FGDs in the school community because it gave me a sense of the school climate and allowed the participants to voice their experiences in their natural environment. I listened intently as the participants voiced their impressions on adolescents' psychosocial identity development associated with traditional rites of passage via interviewing and FGD. I focused on listening, probing, and reacting to the participants.

Probes were used to elicit the dialogue's precise meaning and the language's general meaning (Ary et al., 2010; Klenke, 2008). "Probes are useful for eliciting more detailed responses and increasing the diversity of responses" (Klenke, 2008, p.129). When the participants' statements seemed hazy or inadequate, the pre-set probes were employed. When it comes to probes, the most common forms of queries were "When?", "Who else?", "Where?", and "What?" 'Could you clarify that?' and similar inquiries or 'What other psychological and social challenges do you think adolescents encounter?' were also asked (refer to Appendix N and O). During the interview sessions, I encouraged responses by nodding, smiling, and showing interest in what the interviewee was saying. According to Turner (2010), by refraining from reacting strongly to the comments made by the participants, the interviewer maintained as much objectivity as possible.

Throughout the interview process, I also used essential tactics like restating participants' responses and combining them into additional questions. These tactics helped to a large extent to maintain the cohesion and continuity of the interview (Ary et al., 2010; Klenke, 2008; Mathers et al., 2002; Willig, 2013). When some interviewees did not comprehend the questions, the interviewer repeated them and explained their significance. Interviewees had the chance to go into greater detail about their points. I had complete control over the topics covered and in what order, as well as the wording of the questions. I was free to ask them whatever question I

wanted and in any way I wanted throughout the process. Chinyoka (2013) recommends paying great attention to nonverbal communication cues during interviewing and focus groups. This is the researcher's only opportunity to gather these verbal and nonverbal cues (Chiromo, 2006; Tom et al., 2011). The researcher noticed nonverbal communication indicators, including the use of hands and facial gestures, as well as other emotional and physical manifestations that, for instance, indicated pain, perplexity, or fury while interviewing the participants. In this way, the researcher in this study was able to learn about problems with psychological identity related to adolescents' traditional rites of passage using both verbal and non-verbal cues. While the informants were responding to questions, the interviewer made notes. A notepad was also used by the researcher to record some of the nonverbal clues expressed by some of the individuals.

#### **4.6 Data Analysis and Presentation**

Fieldwork notes, interview transcripts, texts, and images, according to Holloway and Wheeler (2012), are challenging to assess methodically and meaningfully. Furthermore, it is impossible to show all of the acquired data. Contrarily, data analysis organises and clarifies the issue being studied. Large amounts of information must be reduced to understandable themes, patterns, trends, and correlations as part of data analysis (Creswell, 2014). Qualitative data analysis is described by Denscombe (2007, p. 307) as "the process of adding order, structure, and meaning to the mass of acquired data." Focus groups, interview transcripts, field notes, and other sources provided the data for this qualitative study.

For this study, I refrained from including unjustified assumptions in the data analysis by suspending my previous experiences, knowledge and prediction in relation to adolescents' psychosocial identity development, as pointed out by Ahing (2010), Denscombe (2007) and De Vos et al. (2011). I studied the transcripts with an open mind, hoping to find out what came up directly from the transcripts. As suggested by Lincoln and Guba (2010), thematic content analysis was used to conduct the data analysis. When the study utilises a phenomenology case study research design, thematic content analysis works effectively (Finlay, 2014).

The stages in data analysis involve gathering, displaying, coding and distilling data into themes, classifying data into categories and subcategories, arranging it into a coherent narrative, and producing a qualitative text story (De Vos et al., 2011). Before being used for a study, data must be gathered, prepared, and organised to make it simple to analyse. Preparing the data is the initial step in qualitative data analysis (Denscombe, 2007). Because qualitative data is difficult to replace, I prepared backup copies of original materials, recordings, and photocopied field notes (Denscombe, 2007; Holloway & Wheeler, 2012). After properly organising and preparing the data, the following steps were followed:

### ***Step one***

The first step in using interview data is to transcribe interviews (Leavy, 2011). Tape recordings of all interviews and FGDs were made and transcribed. Since data transcription enables the extraction of a great deal of meaning and insights from the data, it is widely acknowledged as a crucial component of qualitative research (Shalin, 2014). Converting spoken content into written language is the first step in data analysis. This interpretive process involves making decisions (Bailey, 2008). The transcripts' double spacing and wide right-hand margin allowed me to annotate the key passages by adding my own notes. I completed the transcriptions myself because, as Shalin (2014) points out, giving the transcriptions to someone unable to make the best choices regarding things to include or exclude could compromise the credibility of the results.

I fully involved myself in the data throughout this process, taking note of the volume of information needed, potential inclusions and exclusions, and nonverbal cues. Each written transcript was read several times while the corresponding audio tape was played to confirm accuracy. I looked through the transcripts without coding to get acquainted with the data. Given the nature of the study, I attempted to improve the accuracy of the themes by giving supporting data in the participants' own words. Quotations were the primary source of information in in-depth, open-ended interviews. What people say, what they believe, how they feel, what they have done, and what they know are all things from which one might gain knowledge (Lopez & Whitehead, 2013). It was necessary to become completely engrossed in every aspect of what was said, done, observed, and depicted in the interviews to reflect on the facts. My

familiarity with the data grew during the process due to the iterative nature of the technique. After transcribing the data and becoming accustomed to the written word, the work of analysing the data commenced.

### **Step two**

I started the unitisation sub-process using the transcriptions (Lincoln & Guba, 2010). Following the unitisation of the transcriptions, the categorisation procedure commenced (Finlay, 2014). The process of grouping units with comparable features is known as categorisation. Lincoln and Guba (2010) claim that:

*Units are discrete pieces of information that can be interpreted without any further information. A unit can be a single sentence or a lengthy paragraph, but in any instance, the test of its unitary character is whether the remainder of the unit would be substantially harmed or rendered unintelligible if any part of it were eliminated. (Lincoln & Guba, 2010, p. 23).*

Data organisation, analysis, and categorisation were done using the ATLAS-ti scientific software (version 8). As mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, Atlas.ti was utilised for coding all data sets. I converted the data into portable document format (pdf format), imported it into Atlas.ti and electronically coded all data sets. The codes were generated from the keywords in the interview questions related to some of the keywords in the research questions.

### **Step three**

The third step was interpretative coding. According to Ahing (2010) and Denscombe (2007), data interpretation comprises classifying and categorising data by identifying themes and ultimately deriving conclusions. The iterative process involved all the tasks stated above (Denscombe, 2007; Ganga, 2013), and as the codes, themes, and categories got increasingly refined, each task was revisited. In this manner, I reviewed the transcripts again, focusing on the categories that the software had generated.

### **Step four**

Finally, I create a broad picture of the data. Using the connections, patterns, and themes in the data as a foundation, I built ideas and reached some general conclusions. Denscombe's (2007) reiteration of these ideas served as the foundation

for my data analysis and any broader conclusions I could draw. The final step was to communicate the results. I evaluated the study in light of alternative explanations for the same data by contrasting the new extended conclusions with previous theories in the literature. There are recommendations made at the end of the procedure. The themes and categories are thoroughly covered in Chapter 5.

#### **4.7 Quality Assurance**

Ahing (2010) and Denscombe (2007) assert that quality assurance is integral to the research process and must be addressed, which is supported by Mabuza and Mash (2014). Quality assurance is attained when the qualitative research accurately captures the participant's experiences. Guaranteeing the trustworthiness of data and method of analysis is the key strategy to achieve quality assurance in qualitative investigations. Denzin and Lincoln (2018) argue that a study is trustworthy only if the reader of the research report agrees with it. In qualitative research, factors including credibility, dependability, conformability, transferability, and authenticity are used to determine trustworthiness (Matlala et al., 2014). These factors are discussed in the following sub-section.

##### **4.7.1 Credibility**

A key factor in assessing the value of qualitative studies is the credibility of the findings (Cohen et al., 2011). Qualitative researchers can use this to show that their data is accurate and suitable in various ways. The degree of agreement between the participants' actual opinions and how the researcher represented them is referred to as the credibility construct. Shenton (2013) provided a variety of approaches for researchers to ensure that their research is credible. Among them were the following:

- Use of appropriate and well-known research methods
- A thorough explanation of the subject being investigated
- Meetings between the researcher and supervisor(s) on a regular basis
- Using a variety of approaches to triangulate data.

Member verification was employed (Lincoln & Guba, 2010) to ensure credibility in this study. First, at the conclusion of each interview and FGD, I summarised what had been stated and allowed participants the opportunity to confirm that the description closely reflects their viewpoint. Following that, transcripts of interviews were shared with some

of the participants as a way to “confirm the most important factual evidence” (Yin, 2016, p. 114).

Likewise, Kusi (2012, p.152) agreed that “credibility can be ensured in a qualitative investigation by triangulation” and that the data was important and credible (Denscombe, 2007; Lincoln & Guba, 2010). Triangulation, according to Denscombe (2007, p. 134), comprises “examining things from many angles in order to have a greater grasp of the subject being studied”. In this study, data from several participants were compared with data from other information sources to assess the credibility of the conclusions. Data from at least three groups of participants: adolescents, teachers, and parents (informant triangulation) were gathered for this study. According to Creswell (2014), researchers strive for convergence among various and dissimilar sources of information to construct themes in a study. When everyone on the team concurs, the information is considered credible. Repetition of the information throughout the literature review also helps triangulation.

Moreover, the idea of triangulation encompassed information from space triangulation, which uses several geographical, social, and cultural contexts (Denscombe, 2007). The locations comprised rural and urban communities within the Bosomtwe District in Ghana to obtain a more complete picture that would enhance the findings' completeness. Data is more credible when it is triangulated. Ahing (2010) believes that spending time with people and developing relationships with them also ensures credibility. I established this relationship by discussing the study's goals and gathering personal data; this relationship served as the basis for gathering data. The results of qualitative research significantly rely on fieldwork, which provides a solid foundation for data-driven findings and raises the research's credibility. This is one of the most significant benefits of qualitative research (Denscombe, 2007; Mabuza & Mash, 2014).

#### ***4.7.2 Transferability***

Transferability is the extent to which study findings can be applied to different situations, locations, or sections of the population (Holloway & Wheeler, 2012). A thorough description of the procedure was used in this study to achieve transferability, and purposeful sampling was used to select the right participants for the study. Transferability was also established by giving readers of the study enough information about the research subjects and study environments to enable them to decide whether

and how the study's findings may be used in their own context. As Matlala et al. (2014) suggested, I provided detailed descriptions of the findings supported by particular wording from the participants to ensure transferability.

#### **4.7.3 Dependability**

Lincoln and Guba (2010) utilise the term dependability in qualitative research, which is analogous to reliability in a quantitative study. The dependability of a study's findings is referred to as their consistency. It refers to the extent to which the methods consistently provide nearly equal outcomes under the same circumstances (Holloway & Wheeler, 2012). Kusi (2012, p. 103) posited that "one may assure the dependability of the outcomes of a study by asking unambiguous questions, avoiding bias and subjectivity during data collecting, and triangulating the data". He also recommended explaining the researcher's positionality as a strategy to improve the "reliability of the research outcomes". To achieve this, I became practically an intrinsic component of the data collection procedure as an investigator (Denscombe, 2007). I considered the techniques and choices made by other researchers and assessed what constituted credible procedures and logical conclusions. This serves as a proxy for the ability to reproduce research.

An audit trail was conducted to confirm dependability (Ahing, 2010). Readers can follow a researcher's results to see how conclusions were arrived at and to offer guidance to other researchers who might want to carry out a related study by following an audit trail. To ensure the dependability of the research, I acquired all of the raw data for this study, including field notes, audio recordings, and interview transcripts, and kept it in an audit trail.

#### **4.7.4 Confirmability**

Confirmability, defined as the researcher's objectivity and neutrality, determines if the study's conclusions are unbiased. Analysing qualitative data cannot be totally divorced from the researcher's identity, values, and opinions. According to Alhassan (2002), researchers should always strive for objectivity/confirmability and integrity in their scientific study. I kept my regular views and beliefs aside throughout the study and avoided making any judgments on adolescents' identities. Every attempt was made in this study to be impartial to participant responses and set predetermined views aside to assure confirmability.

## **4.8 Ethical Considerations**

Every study that involves gathering data from humans has specific moral requirements. It is essential to treat those people morally to respect their humanity (Finlay, 2014; Oliver, 2010). The study environment is just like any other place where people engage. Ethics becomes the bedrock of doing successful and relevant research. Participants were assured that the research would be carried out ethically.

De Vos et al. (2011) describe ethics as a set of moral principles put forth by an individual or group of individuals, widely accepted, and providing guidelines and behavioural expectations about how to behave in relation to study participants, employers, corporate partners, other research assistants, and students. Magwa and Magwa (2015, p.104) denote that “ethics is a code of conduct for professionals that should guide researchers as they conduct their research”. As a result, ethics, in some way, impact all sorts of research. Research is a field that must be directed by a code of conduct. According to research ethics, people should be treated with respect and should not be abused or exploited. All social study entails ethical considerations.

### ***4.8.1 Permission to Conduct the Study***

Basit (2010, p. 56) claims that “getting the necessary sample is not always easy since potential volunteers can be too busy or uninterested”. Access to conduct this study was negotiated over time. The University of South Africa Ethics Board granted permission for the study to be carried out (see Appendix A), as did the Ghana Education Service (see Appendix B) and headteachers of the affected schools (see Appendices C, D, E and F).

According to Oliver (2010), Basit (2010), and Lincoln and Guba (2010), strong relationships between the researcher and participants must be established if participants' opinions are to be properly understood. I used the opportunity to interact with the subjects to establish a non-hierarchical relationship with them. This was to facilitate a full comprehension of participants' perspectives on adolescents' psychosocial identity development as they experienced traditional rites of passage (Basit, 2010). I was familiar with the setting and timetable of the schools where the data was gathered. So, for instance, it would be rude to ask for fieldwork access when teachers and students are busy preparing for examinations or inter-school games and sports competitions.

#### **4.8.2 Informed Consent and Assent**

I started by submitting a thorough proposal for ethics clearance, asking the university for permission, and describing how the study would be conducted. After an explanation of the protocols for conducting the interviews and FGD, the teachers and parents gave their consent, and the adolescents offered their assent with their parents'/guardians' consent to participate in the research.

When participants agree to participate in research after being fully aware of the facts involved, they give informed consent (Basit, 2010; Oliver, 2010). Information regarding the study's objectives, prospective outcomes, methods of participation, estimated interview duration, potential uses for the data, and the researcher's identity, location, contact details, e-mail, and institution where the researcher worked were all provided to the prospective participants (refer to Appendices K, L and M). According to Basit (2010, p. 60), "informed consent makes the assumption that people are able to decide whether or not to partake". In other words, they are mature and cognitively capable enough to understand what is involved.

I was responsible for upholding all applicable ethical standards throughout the research procedure. I obtained the consent of the participants by formally writing to them. Teachers and parents were viewed as independent agents with the freedom to decide whether to join the study. The child assent form was filled in the case of adolescents under the age of 18, and their parents or guardians had to guarantee their participation. As a result, all the participants consented freely and without compulsion.

#### **4.8.3 Confidentiality and Anonymity**

Confidentiality refers to the Information exchanged in a trusted relationship, which is treated with secrecy, with the understanding that it will not be disclosed to others without their consent. The participants' identity must always be kept private. Contrarily, anonymity means that nobody can recognise the participant (Matlala et al., 2014).

Participants received assurances that their information would be handled in the strictest of confidence. The right to privacy of study participants should be respected both during and after the study. Magwa and Magwa (2015) reiterated that researchers should maintain appropriate anonymity and confidentiality of information when creating, storing, transferring, and disseminating data under their control, whether in

written, automated, or in any other medium. Based on observations from Magwa and Magwa (2015) and Matlala et al. (2014), I was required to protect the privacy and confidentiality of the information that participants shared with me by holding interviews in private locations and keeping transcripts locked away but accessible to just me and my supervisor.

Participants were warned not to divulge their names or identities of their schools or other people during the interviews and FGD to protect their privacy and prevent data from being linked to their identities or the identities of anybody else. In a study, maintaining anonymity refers to participants being anonymous. According to Neuman (2012), anonymity is safeguarding an individual's identity. According to Oliver (2010), employing fictional names, letters, or numbers to identify participants is the most popular approach to ensuring anonymity. As a result, I separated participant's names and their schools' identities from the dataset to create anonymity and confidentiality. In other words, the study's anonymity was ensured by not releasing the genuine names of the schools and individual participants. During transcription and reporting, data was protected by utilising pseudonyms. The audio tape recordings were saved in a secured location. These precautions imply that the participants' identities were kept a secret. Candidly, I eliminated any identifiable details in the transcribed data.

In addition, I notified the participants that the results would be published as a thesis and journal articles. I promised the participants that their privacy, identity, and confidentiality would be preserved throughout the process of writing the thesis and the journal articles. Participants' identifiers and any identifiers that may be traced back to them were erased.

#### ***4.8.4 Protective Measures for Participants***

I adhered to the University of South Africa's Research Ethics Policy's ethical guidelines. As I said in the letter of agreement and assent to the participants, there were no risks related to the empirical study. I prepared plans for counselling sessions for the participants and their referral to other specialists if needed if the interviews caused the participants grief or fear when they recalled negative incidents. The participants' lack of signs of psychological discomfort or trauma, however, precluded me from referring them to a therapist for a debriefing session after the individual

interviews and FGD. There were no bodily harm or hazards associated with the data collection method.

#### **4.8.5 Freedom to Withdraw**

I anticipated that because I was in a position of authority, the participants might feel under pressure to take part in the study. Therefore, I made it obvious to them that anyone could leave the session at any time if they so desired. A trust principle in a study is the participant's freedom to leave without being penalised (Matlala et al., 2014). Participants were informed of this before the interviews and FGD. The participants were also told that dropping out of the study would not affect them.

#### **4.9 Role of the Researcher**

The researchers are an essential part of the research process in qualitative studies. Lichtman (2010) asserts that researchers must define their function in the research process. My responsibilities as a researcher included collecting, transcribing, and analysing data and drafting the research report. As a result, the researcher performs various tasks that help achieve the study's objectives. Additionally, Berg and Lune (2012, p. 47) assert that “the process of information gathering necessitates the use of appropriate protocols or procedures”, which, according to Creswell (2012), include obtaining permission at various levels and protecting the confidentiality and anonymity of participants by using pseudonyms (Chong & Yeo, 2015).

For the participants to provide informed consent, it is also part of the researcher's job to clearly explain the study's purpose to them (O'Leary, 2012). This requirement suggests that information is processed using a human tool rather than an inventory, a survey, or a machine. According to Kankam and Weiler (2010), to minimise bias when conducting research, a researcher must identify the relevant aspects of their personality, including preconceptions, expectancies and prior ideas. This concern entails being aware of and making an effort to counteract personal bias at every stage of the investigation. I prepared for data collection by going through the required steps, including requesting ethical consent, creating consent letters, locating participants and conducting interviews with them.

#### **4.10 Reflexivity in Phenomenological Studies**

Researchers who are reflective carefully evaluate the empirical process of knowledge construction. Dampson and Mensah (2014) claim that the fundamental presumptions in dealing with reflexivity include the condition of the investigator's experience and perspective influencing the field they choose to study, the study's purpose, its methods, the applicability of the findings, and the organisation and communication of the conclusions. Considering this viewpoint and the literature's recommendations (Alhassan, 2017; Lincoln & Guba, 2010), reflexivity in qualitative investigations covers several tactics, including advancing the investigator's views, stance, values, and beliefs throughout the study procedures.

Another method is to keep a reflective journal, which continuously records entries in a private diary regarding each step taken while conducting the research. These are a few examples of methodological choices, study logistics, and consideration of one's own values and interests. In the current study, I had to keep a diary to document my personal opinions, values, experiences, and interests for each stage while the research was being undertaken. An effort is made to include and present these reflections within the bigger study pool based on personal information. In fact, by adding more information to the study's creation, this strategy helps to improve the study's quality.

#### **4.11 Chapter Summary**

The chapter addressed the study's methodological issues in relation to its objectives. This chapter goes into great length about the methodology and design of the study, participant selection, the data collection process, the researcher's role in data collection, how the data were processed for analysis, the data analysis method used, and research-related ethical issues. The study's purpose was achieved by using the qualitative research approach to analyse adolescents' psychosocial identity development as they undergo traditional rites of passage in the Bosomtwe District of Ghana.

I used the phenomenological case study design to obtain sufficient insight into the subject of the investigation. According to Kruger (2013), phenomenologists are interested in comprehending social and psychological occurrences from the perspectives of the individuals involved. Individual, semi-structured interviews were

conducted with teachers, parents, and those who had been specifically chosen, and FGD was conducted with the adolescents. The ATLAS-ti data analysis process was used to analyse the data. According to Yin (2016), this approach entails a rigorous process of assessing, choosing, categorising, synthesising, and interpreting data to address the study's main premises.

#### **4.12 Conclusion**

To conclude, I employed the qualitative study inquiry approach to understand adolescents' psychosocial identity development as they undergo traditional rites of passage. The phenomenological case study design paradigm was suitable for the empirical research. It applied to this study because it is predicated on the idea that people have many interpretations of reality, some of which may be impacted by their environments. Therefore, researchers need to comprehend the intricate world from the perspective of those who live in it. Thus, I held the opinion that the only people who could truly understand the complicated environment that teenagers live in are the adolescents themselves, their parents, and their teachers.

The researcher discovered that to grasp participants' perspectives, qualitative researchers must actively engage with them. The data gathering and analysis methods covered in this chapter are largely consistent with the phenomenological paradigm used in this study and the qualitative research strategy. Overall, the researcher thought that the technique and research design would aid in examining adolescents' psychological identities in the Bosomtwe District of Ghana. The presentation of the field data's findings will be the central issue of the next chapter.

## **CHAPTER FIVE PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS**

### **5.1 Introduction**

In Chapter 4, I discussed the research methodology, paradigm, and design that I employed to answer the research questions posed in Chapter 1. I also justified my methodology choices by discussing its advantages, disadvantages, and suitability for this research. After that, I discussed the ethical considerations applied to this research.

In this current chapter, I present and discuss the key findings emerging from the analysis of data collected from the study field in response to the overarching research question, namely, “How do adolescents experience their psychosocial identity development associated with their undergoing traditional rites of passage?”

I organised the data using the framework of the sub-research questions and the issues raised earlier in Chapter 1. These sub-research questions posed in Chapter 1 were as follows:

#### **Research sub-questions explored in the literature review:**

- a. What are Western and African viewpoints on the processes involved in adolescents' psychological, social, and emotional identity formation?

#### **Sub-questions explored in the empirical research:**

- b. What traditional rituals and rites of passage do adolescents in Ghana undergo?
- c. How do adolescents in the study experience the traditional rituals and rites of passage?
- d. How do traditional rituals and rites of passage influence an adolescent's psychosocial identity development?
- e. What knowledge about adolescents' psychosocial identity development and their associated rites of passage can inform counselling guidelines for adolescents in the Bosomtwe District of Ghana?

The themes, sub-themes, and categories from the observations, interviews, and focus group discussions of the participants from the data were identified during the thematic analysis of raw data. These themes, which were formulated based on the information and knowledge obtained, revealed the underlying meaning of the accounts of the study

participants. In other words, the themes that shared common meanings were grouped into sub-themes and categories.

As indicated earlier in Chapter 4, I present the data using direct quotations from the study's participants during the individual interview sessions and the focus group discussions. Also, I used more than one participant quote to support the issues that emerged from the theme identified within the data.

I provided excerpts from my research journals and information from the document analysis to enhance and enrich the discussion of the themes, sub-themes, and categories. I concluded the chapter by providing a summary of the research findings.

**Table 0.1: An overview of the themes, sub-themes, and categories**

<b>THEME 1</b>			
Adolescents' psychological, emotional and social experiences in their identity development			
<b>Inclusion criteria:</b> All information relating to Adolescents' psychological, emotional and social experiences in their identity development		<b>Exclusion criteria:</b> All other views not relating to Adolescents' psychological, emotional and social experiences in their identity development	
<b>Sub-theme 1.1</b> Understanding identity development	<b>Sub-theme 1.2</b> The psychological experiences of adolescents	<b>Sub-theme 1.3</b> The emotional experiences of adolescents	<b>Sub-theme 1.4</b> The social experiences of adolescents
<b>THEME 2</b>			
Traditional rituals and rites of passage adolescents undergo			
<b>Inclusion criteria:</b> Participants' views clearly show an understanding of the traditional rituals and rites of passage adolescents undergo		<b>Exclusion criteria:</b> Participants' views that do not clearly show an understanding of the traditional rituals and rites of passage adolescents undergo	
<b>Sub-theme 2.1</b> Adolescents' rites of passage at Bosomtwe	<b>Sub-theme 2.2</b> Phases of adolescent rites of passage <b>Categories:</b> 2.2.1 Separation 2.2.2 Transition 2.2.3 Incorporation	<b>Sub-theme 2.3</b> Role rites of passage <b>Categories:</b> 2.3.1 Preserving the best core values of a society 2.3.2 Upgrading the social status of the individual 2.3.3 Teaching important skills and virtues 2.3.4 Preventing promiscuity 2.3.5 Raise seed capital to help them start a trade or vocation	
<b>THEME 3</b>			
How adolescents experience rites and rituals of passage			
<b>Inclusion criteria:</b> Any data that illustrates how adolescents experience rites and rituals of passage.		<b>Exclusion criteria:</b> Any data that does not illustrate how adolescents experience rites and rituals of passage.	
<b>Sub-theme 3.1</b> Positive experiences <b>Categories:</b> 3.1.1 Eliminating cognitive dissonance 3.1.2 Producing joyful moments 3.1.3 Enlightenment	<b>Sub-theme 3.2</b> Negative experiences <b>Categories</b> 3.2.1 Psychological distress 3.2.2 Embarrassment and a form of ridicule 3.2.3 Rituals unacceptable to Christian faith and beliefs		
<b>THEME 4</b>			
Rites and rituals of passage and adolescent psychosocial identity development			
<b>Inclusion criteria:</b> All information relevant to rites and rituals of passage and adolescent psychosocial identity development		<b>Exclusion criteria:</b> All information not relevant to rites and rituals of passage and adolescent psychosocial identity development	
<b>Sub-theme 4.1</b> Psychological impact <b>Categories:</b> 4.1.1 Developing self-esteem 4.1.2 Personal maturation	<b>Sub-theme 4.2</b> Social Impact <b>Categories:</b> 4.1.1 Cultural identity 4.1.2 Providing means of socialisation		

## **5.2 Presentation and Discussion of Findings of the Study**

Several themes were formulated from the analysis of the raw data gathered, which were then clustered into four major themes with their related sub-themes and categories aligned with the secondary research questions posed in Chapter 1. These major themes, sub-themes, categories, and criteria, as presented, are explored in detail for the analysis and interpretation of the data in the study.

### ***5.2.1 Theme 1: Adolescents' Psychological, Emotional and Social Experiences in Their Identity Development***

The study intended to ascertain participants' understanding of adolescents' psychological, emotional, and social experiences concerning their identity development. To come up with the sub-themes that support the main theme above, I analysed the data from the individual interviews and focus group discussions on how adolescents, teachers, and parents perceive these youngsters' psychological, emotional and social experiences. I categorised data on this theme into four sub-themes: understanding identity development, psychological, emotional and social dimensions. The psychological experiences of adolescents describe the degree to which the adolescents increase their ability of introspection, their ability to think abstractly, their ability to absorb the perspectives of others, the ability to cope with personal problems and crises such as anxiety, depression, mood swings, and the establishment of personal value system or behave independently from others. In other words, an adolescent's experience during this period entails developing one's self-concept, self-esteem, and thinking capacity. Emotional experience applies to how adolescents can manage their own feelings and the feelings of others they may encounter. In this sense, emotions focus on reactions or attitudes towards pleasant or unpleasant situations or stimuli and how they manage their frustration, anger, surprise, fear, sadness, happiness, disgust, pride, embarrassment, and shame in their daily encounter.

On the other hand, social experiences describe the level of increasing autonomy from family and establishing the greater importance of peer relationships. Adolescents' attention shifts from being self-centred to focusing on the larger values of peers, parents and adult groups. Clearly, adolescents' experiences entail how they relate efficiently with others through creating intimate relationships. Adolescents become

increasingly focused on friends and seek emotional and economic independence. They display decreasing interest in family activities and parental influences through their attachment to peer groups. Their quest to seek autonomy often leads to conflict with their parents. Table 5.2 gives the overview of Theme 1, its sub-themes, inclusion and exclusion criteria.

**Table 0.2: Overview of Theme 1 and its sub-themes**

<b>THEME 1: Adolescents' psychological, emotional and social experiences in their identity development</b>			
<b>Sub-theme 1.1</b> Understanding identity development	<b>Sub-theme 1.2</b> The psychological experiences of adolescents	<b>Sub-theme 1.3</b> The emotional experiences of adolescents	<b>Sub-theme 1.4</b> The social experiences of adolescents
Inclusion criteria for sub-themes	All information relating to Adolescents' psychological, emotional and social experiences in their identity development		
Exclusion criteria for sub-themes	All other views not relating to Adolescents' psychological, emotional and social experiences in their identity development		

The four sub-themes that emanated from the main theme are discussed next:

#### **5.2.1.1 Sub-theme 1.1: Understanding Identity Development.**

Teachers, parents, and adolescents who described identity development in terms of systematic maturation and substantial stability indicated that the concept entails the formation of self-concept, self-esteem and a unified mental picture that every individual has of self and their own system of ideas. This concept implies that how the behaviour, abilities and unique characteristics of adolescents are perceived are different. In this instance, adolescence may be characterised by exploration, adventurous activities, searching, imaginative activities, open communication and curiosity. In line with the above, one of the teachers during the interview session explained:

*“In my view, identity simply refers to how individuals establish how they are different from others. That is who you are. No two people are alike, we are all unique or different in many ways” (SC1, TR 2, P22, line 3-37).*

It is clear to the teacher that identity development encompasses the uniqueness of individuals and how people discover themselves to be different. Answering a similar question, another adolescent, during the individual interview session on the conceptualisation of identity development, added that:

*To my mind, identity development is about forming a strong sense of oneself. I must say that in order to be accepted in society, one's identity must be based on individual social constructs that are acceptable to community members. Identity formation is key to adolescents understanding of self and effective participation in social systems. (SC 3, TR1, P9 line 1-17)*

Emerging from the above two responses from the teacher and the adolescent during the individual interview sessions is the view that identity development is highly social and based on family, cultural, and societal expectations. The participants expounded that adolescent identity development is a complex process since adolescents form a clear and unique view of themselves. A parent elaborated on the subject of identity development during an interview as follows:

*"It refers to the conscious sense of individual uniqueness. Adolescents with well-developed identities are well-equipped to face adulthood with certainty, confidence and are committed to a clear self-determined chosen goal" (SC2, PR2, P20-41 line 35-57).*

The above quote suggests that adolescents' identity development is based on their understanding of personality, the internal and subjective concept of oneself as an individual. In some instances, an adolescent's identity is likely to be influenced by sociocultural factors. This quote implies that the participants believe that the idea of self-identity among adolescents pertains to their ability to have opinions that are defined confidently, consistently, and with stability based on greater self-awareness and societal anticipations. As a result, the identity formation processes affect not just psychosocial functioning but also academic accomplishment, which is likely the most significant objective indication of effective adolescent functioning.

#### **5.2.1.2 Sub-theme 1.2: The Psychological Experiences of Adolescents**

Teachers, parents, and adolescents who described the psychological experiences of adolescents indicated that the period led to an improved mental process to understand and analyse issues. This implies that adolescents experience cognitive changes that allow them to think abstractly and engage in rigorous mental analysis processes. In

line with the above, a teacher who doubled as a Girl Child Officer in one of the schools visited during the interview session had this to say:

*The psychological experience has to do with the mental or cognitive processes the adolescent goes through. At this stage of development, the individual is able to think in an abstract manner, appear creative and becomes clear-sighted in their analysis of situations and life choices. Also, they become self-conscious and make rational decisions based on their intuition. (SC2, TR2, P10 line 2-38)*

The above quote seems to suggest that adolescents' psychological experiences in their identity development are characterised by increased reasoning prowess, autonomy, and rational decisions for a meaningful life and personal well-being. In this sense, learning activities that aim at developing the brain should come from both the school and the home for learning to take place effectively. When responding to the same question on the psychological experiences of adolescents, one parent, during the interview session, voiced that:

*Psychologically, it involves how adolescents think and their self-consciousness. In this way, these young people develop a sense of self-awareness and reflect on their values. They just do not accept what they are told without question. Let me also add that when they fail to make progress in this regard, they become confused in their minds. Then, depression, anxiety, and the like set in, and their eating pattern may change. If care is not taken, they may think of ending their lives. (SC4, PR3, P60 line 9-28)*

It seems that the parent is suggesting that psychologically, the adolescents' quest to find answers to numerous questions about their identity makes them aware of who they are. When adolescents make significant strives to discover their identity, it reduces their anxiety and sense of frustration. Thus, parents and teachers must give attention to adolescents' needs. Almost similarly, one of the teachers who double as the school guidance and counselling officer, during the interview, expressed his views as follows:

*“Adolescents are interesting people and quick in whatever they do. They are full of ideas, energies and they offer many different views. They seem to be mindful of what they do and are fearless to question whatever they see as strange” (SC1, TR4, P71 line 7-20).*

In support of the above views on the psychological experiences of adolescents, the participants who based their understanding on developed mental processes and behaviour confirmed that adolescents should be engaged in activities that will enhance their brain development and creativity. In other words, adolescents should be conscious, creative, and analytical in problem-solving situations, as psychological impacts are connected to self-esteem. The above responses suggest that psychological experiences encompass constructs such as intellect, perceptions, and consciousness. According to the teachers, parents and adolescents, psychological experiences should represent self-acceptance, environmental mastery, autonomy, purpose in life, positive relationships, and a subjective mental state. In this sense, it is implied that in adolescents' psychological experience, the parents and teachers should encourage adolescents to elaborate on their mental capabilities.

### **5.2.1.3 Sub-theme 1.3: The Emotional Experiences of Adolescents**

Most of the adolescents, teachers and parents who participated in this study shared their views on adolescents' emotional experiences at this stage of human development. It was established that most of the participants believed that when adolescents become emotional, it increases their ability to perceive, assess and manage emotions. This finding implies that emotional experiences allow adolescents to build skills and develop strength for optimal health and stability. In other words, adolescents increase their capacity for emotional awareness, self-management, and empathic understanding. In support of the above view, one of the teachers, during an interview, remarked:

*Personally, I believe emotionally it pertains to how they behave or react toward others. Furthermore, it triggers how they respond to or confront issues. As adolescents develop, they act and react positively or negatively to their feelings. They are uncomfortable with criticism, especially from their parents. In this regard, when they develop negative*

*emotions or feelings out of these circumstances, it makes them angry and tense. (SCH 3, TR2, P51 line 11-44)*

The above quote suggests that adolescents' emotional experiences pertain to how they perceive their own life experiences, talents, and personal characteristics and how these can impact their sense of their own worth or value. Adolescents learn from their teachers and parents, which is important to limit their exposure to risky behaviours in the learning process. In this sense, a caregiver can equip the adolescent with healthy responses or techniques to confront stressful situations and traumatic events. When responding to the same question on emotional experiences, one of the adolescents, during an individual interview, expressed his opinion as follows:

*From my own understanding, emotional experience has to do with the feelings of adolescents. Adolescents seek autonomy at this point in their lives. Any frustration or setback may provoke them to exhibit signs of anxiety or depression, increased irritability or anger, and a feeling of loneliness. (SC2, AD3, P11 line 7-24)*

It is clear to the adolescent boy that the increasing negative emotions strongly influence behaviour and skills development. Answering a similar question, another adolescent girl, during a focus group discussion on adolescents' emotional experiences, added:

*From what I have seen as an adolescent, I can say that we experience a wide range of emotional issues and are concerned about almost everything around us. We want to feel good, have friends who love us, and move freely. But sometimes our parents want to dictate to us regarding whom should walk or move with when we should come home and even go to bed. It gives us a bad feeling since we are no more kids. When they interfere with our activities it usually ends in conflict and rebellion, which is unhealthy between someone and their parents. (SC1, AD3, P16 line 3-18)*

Emerging from the above response from the adolescent during the focus group discussions is the view that adolescents experience identity development as a reaction to their feelings within or outside themselves. In other words, the participants

perceived adolescents' ability to communicate their thoughts, emotions and empathise with others in their experienced interaction, which are connected to their emotional miens. The participants elucidated that the positive relationship between parents and their adolescents is salubrious for growth, emotional stability, and mental soundness. A parent elaborated on the subject of adolescents' emotional experience during an interview as follows:

*The truth is that adolescents can be described as both cold and warm water in terms of their emotions. They are such that they can switch moods rapidly. They can exhibit self-confidence and suddenly show signs of worry. They can be happy and all of a sudden become distressed. I must add that their expedition to experiment with romantic relationships, academic work pressures, and conflict with peers and parents exacerbates their labile emotional state. (SC 3, PR4, P7-8 line 34-55)*

According to the aforementioned remark, the parent participants based their opinions on emotional experiences by assessing adolescents' emotional health, behaviour, and responses. In some situations, an adolescent's expression and mood swings put them at a higher risk of developing family problems, anxiety, insecurity, and despair. This implies that the participants believe that adolescents are likely to make reference to the self as having that state.

#### **5.2.1.4 Sub-theme 1.4: The Social Experiences of Adolescents**

Most of the adolescents, teachers, and parents who participated in this study explained that adolescents' social experience is based on interpersonal interactions, where adolescents are expected to develop communication and social skills. It was established that most participants believed that social experience is lifelong, where they begin to recognise their own identities, social relationships, interactions, functionalities, and networks. In other words, the adolescents' social experiences duel more on relationship-orientated goals such as intimacy and social approval. In support of the above view, one of the teachers, during the individual interview sessions, remarked:

*To my mind, the social experiences of adolescents involve acquiring interpersonal skills. In their quest to form their own identity, they begin to detach themselves from their parents and rather attach themselves more to persons of the same age bracket. But in all these, they sometimes get into trouble because of their over-reliance on their friends' advice. Some learn how to steal, smoke, drink, and engage in other social vices from these peer groups. (SC 1, TR4, P79 line 12-24 & 35-51)*

The above quote suggests that society expects events to occur at certain times in the adolescent's life. The adolescent learns to establish new connections outside the context of their families and identify roles they can play within the broader community. In this sense, the adolescent develops the ability to become more conscious of the feelings of others and maintain a healthy relationship. Adolescents will need support to become aware of their own feelings, resist bad peer influence, examine their inner feelings, and handle diverse social situations. When responding to the same question on adolescents' social experience, one of the adolescents, during a focus group discussion, expressed his views as follows:

*From my own understanding, in adolescents' social experience, they want to spend less time with their parents and may focus more on their peers. They usually join famous groups like the Girls and Boys Brigade, Red Cross Society, Drama and Debating Club, Amnesty International, Junior Choir, etc. Through these groupings, they engage in boyfriend-girlfriend" relationships. (SH 2, AD1, P12 line 17-35)*

Emerging from the above two responses from the adolescents during the focus group discussions and interviews is the view that attachment to peers is dominant in adolescents' identity development. In other words, the participants perceive peer group activities as more important to adolescents as they shift from their parental influence. The participants expounded that adolescents seek independence since they want to become autonomous in their decisions, freely link with persons of the same age group, and associate with their role models. Thus, the desire to be independent is one of the social experiences that all adolescents experience as they go from childhood to adulthood.

### **5.2.1.5 Discussions of Findings of Theme 1**

My discussion of the findings for this theme is presented following the order of the sub-themes that emerged from exploring adolescents' psychological, emotional, and social experiences in their identity development. The findings from the data gathered from individual interview sessions, focus group discussions, and field observations revealed that the participants described adolescents' identity development in terms of three dimensions, namely a) psychological experiences, b) emotional experiences, and c) social experiences.

#### **5.2.1.5.1 Psychological Experiences**

The study established that some participants described adolescents' psychological experiences as attaining higher cognition, characterised by their ability to think abstractly, comprehend and analyse issues affecting human existence. This finding of the current study on the psychological experiences of adolescents is consistent with Saxe and Powell's (2006) research study, which found that the changes in the development of an individual's mental potentialities during adolescence involve changes to perception, imagination, reasoning, thinking and language acquisition.

Accordingly, Antwi-Danso (2019) reiterates that the adolescent develops the capacity to reason hypothetically and deductively. It is likely that in an enabling home and school environment where adolescents' ideas and independent thinking are valued and treated with respect, their cognitive thinking skills develop. In other words, when parents, teachers, and caregivers support adolescents' cognitive growth, they develop the power to manage complex situations affecting their personal well-being, make judgments, and plan for their future endeavours. These findings on the psychological experiences of adolescents also align with a research study by Kuwornu-Adjaottor et al. (2019) that described the psychological experiences of adolescents in terms of intellect and cognitive development. To them, adolescents exhibit the capacity to think quickly and make decisions through their mastery of proverbs and riddles.

Likewise, Claessens et al. (2017) describe adolescents' identity development in terms of their psychological experiences. They assert that adolescents' psychological experiences mainly concern a change from concrete to abstract thinking or mental processes. This change could allude to the strength of adolescents' imaginations, which seem fascinated by their philosophical and intellectual pursuits, where they

envisage future occurrences and other possibilities. In this way, as they transition into maturity, adolescents gain the ability to completely interact, contribute, and put plans into action.

According to a study by Friedman et al. (2010), identity and psychological experiences are closely related, which increases adolescents' capacity for self-reflection and awareness. My study's findings on adolescents' psychological experiences support previous studies (Collier & Morgan, 2008; Sirgy, 2018) that assert that adolescents' psychological experiences include one's capacity to adapt to change and resolve intrapersonal and interpersonal challenges. They go on to say that it also encompasses the ability to be fully aware of oneself, to perceive and assess circumstances, and to comprehend and value the perspectives of others. It seems that Sirge (2018) and Collier and Morgan (2008) suggest that psychological experiences involve adolescents striving for excellence, realising their immense value, and analysing others' thoughts.

In line with Piaget's Theory, individuals attain the capacity for formal operations at adolescence. Therefore, they can use deductive reasoning power and no longer rely just on concrete things or objects to make rational judgments but also on problems and issues that require a complete analysis (Antwi-Danso, 2019). In other words, Piaget suggests that at this point, the experience of adolescents who are at the formal operation stage should be dominant by virtue of their improved mental abilities, which are characterised by the acquisition of the ability to think abstractly, reason logically and draw conclusions from the information available. This suggestion implies that the adolescent is no longer frustrated when dealing with abstract concepts since their thinking is propositional.

Similarly, a theorist like Bronfenbrenner in the bioecological systems theory assumes that knowledge is situated and collaborative among individuals and their surroundings (Bronfenbrenner, 2008). In Bronfenbrenner's view, the adolescent can advance best in knowledge through reinforcement and interaction with community members in cooperative activities (Witt, 2012). Therefore, according to Bronfenbrenner, the adolescent is dominant within the microsystems (including the adolescents' family, peers, school, and neighbourhood), who reciprocally interact with others and help construct the settings.

Moreover, Vygotsky, like Bronfenbrenner, Piaget, Dewey, and others, argues that since social influences greatly impact cognitive development, adolescents should collaborate closely with their parents and teachers (Owusu-Banahene, 2007). In other words, Vygotsky suggests that there should be a degree of mutual respect and openness in the adolescent-teacher and adolescent-parent relationships. Antwi-Danso (2019) concurs with the view of Vygotsky on the basis that enhanced adolescent cognitive skills serve as psychological tools that originate through social relations. The implication is that the adolescent should actively participate in the learning and decision-making processes.

#### **5.2.1.5.2 Emotional Experiences**

The study revealed that some participants described adolescents' identity development according to their emotional experiences, which are characterised by their ability to perceive and manage emotions and affections. Similarly, Nursafira et al. (2019) state that emotional experiences focus on the feeling tone and the affective part of adolescents, with which they respond to circumstances. More so, Gari posits that how adolescents express their feelings about themselves, other people, and things around the environment describes their emotional identity development. This could allude to the fact that adolescence is when one's coordination grows between emotions, attention, and behaviour. This means that in an enabling school environment, the teacher and the students equally share the control of the learning environment, mutual respect, and understanding.

Carr (2015) suggests that adolescents' emotional experiences can be portrayed as attaining emotional/responsive maturity. She further adds that adolescents reach a stage where they hardly exhibit long temper tantrums in front of peers and older people (Carr, 2015). In this regard, they find a more appropriate way and suitable time to express their emotions warmly and friendly. This indicates that the affiliation dimension allows adolescents to have open discussions with their parents and teachers on matters pertaining to their school work, career, and personal-social issues, resulting in high educational, social, and emotional outcomes.

Obeng (2012) describes adolescent identity development in terms of emotional experiences. According to him, emotional experiences describe a complex arrangement of convictions about the adolescents' attitude toward themselves at a

stage where they may become ordinarily conscious and cognisant of others. This also relates to the level of affiliation or friendliness one shows toward the other person. In line with this view, Homan and Tylka (2015) suggest that adolescents would feel good about themselves and act appropriately based on the affection, protection, appreciation, and recognition they receive from others. However, they would rather feel intimidated and anxious if they do not have these experiences. Similarly, Sharma (2012) avers that uncontrolled aggression makes adolescents unable to regulate their feelings and may cause them to behave inappropriately. It seems that Homan and Tylka (2015) and Sharma (2012) suggest creating a healthy relationship that provides a conducive atmosphere where the adolescents feel loved and the support of caregivers to withstand the daily challenges they may be confronted with.

The description of the processes of adolescents' identity construction by participants concerning their emotional constructs resonates with Erik Erikson's theory (Erikson, as cited in Cote, 2018). Central to Erikson's theory of psychosocial identity development is the acquisition of an ego-identity, where identity crises are seen as the most essential characteristic of adolescents. Erikson adds that adolescence presents a period during which the individual must establish a sense of personal identity and avoid the dangers of role diffusion and identity confusion. These views on the identity construction of adolescents in accordance with the emotional dimension are also confirmed by Kroger (2015), who argues that for adolescents to reach the maturational level, they must assert their autonomy. In other words, Erikson suggests that adolescents' search for identity is critical at this stage and their failure to achieve that may lead the individual to experience self-doubt and role confusion.

Aligned to adolescents' identity development, Erikson suggests that since adolescents depend on social feedback as to what others feel and think about them, they should be connected to earlier cultivated roles and skills, healthy peer relationships and be provided with adequate role models from older generations (McAdams & Zapata-Gietl, 2015). Furthermore, Erikson points out that individuals rarely identify with their parents in adolescence. As such, they may often rebel against their parents' dominance and traditional value system, making them emotionally destabilised (Cote, 2018). The views of Erikson converge with the views of the participants who described adolescents' identity development according to emotional constructs.

### **5.2.1.5.3 Social Experiences**

Participants in the study believe a close link exists between social experiences and adolescents' identity development. The result from this study is in line with the findings of Oppong-Frimpong and Amissah (2009), who asserted that social interactions resulting from group affiliates not only enhance adolescents' academic potential but also improve their social life skills. Implicitly, social experience is viewed as a fertile ground for the development of adolescents' identities. To this end, Valkenburg and Peter (2011) contend that social interactions tend to focus on the adolescent's ability to develop a sense of self by acquiring interpersonal skills.

Participants in this study stated that adolescents establish new connections outside the context of their families and identify roles they can play within the broader community. The positions or views of the study participants were compatible with the observations of Rosenberg (2017), who reported that most adolescents experience a social identity element that entails a self-concept formed from their group affiliations. The findings of this current study are also consistent with the views of Adamsons and Pasley (2013), who explain how people integrate societal expectations. To them, adolescents gain from social connections as they move on to occupy particular social positions or statuses. The relationships adolescents foster are based on the behavioural expectations associated with such status changes. This implies that adolescents could enhance their interpersonal skills and engage in academic conversations through such social connections.

Given that adolescents develop their social identities by comparing and contrasting themselves with others, especially their peers, providing an opportunity for them to engage in sports, religion, school, gender, and other social interest groups is paramount. Group affiliations, particularly with guidance and support from caregivers, provide adolescents with a new era of social learning (Tiggemann, 2015; Twenge & Martin, 2020). Linked to the results of this study, Hill et al. (2017) espoused that through such interactions, adolescents gain an opportunity to strive to become members of prestigious groups. They further add that adolescents tend to participate in group activities, such as clubbing, partying and other social activities. In this logic, positive interaction may enhance identity formulation among adolescents. Accordingly, Antwi-Danso (2019), echoes that adolescents wish to distance

themselves from their parents once the consequences of their actions are observed at home. They prefer to make their own decisions without being influenced by others.

The results from this study agree with the assertion made by Adamsons and Pasley (2013), who acknowledged that during adolescence, individuals become more devoted to their peers and prefer to adhere to their peers' standards to avoid being labelled with disparaging words. This implies an improved social interaction that exposes adolescents to various forms of social networks. This view is also corroborated by other researchers (Hill et al., 2017; Hur & Gupta, 2013; Sirgy, 2018), who posit that social interactive groups and platforms offer opportunities for adolescents to interact with others who share similar values, beliefs and interests. By so doing, they have the opportunity to shape their behaviour and also learn from others. Based on this, adolescents affiliate with several social groupings to acquire social skills and the approval of their peers. This makes them feel good about themselves as they develop their personal identities (Hur & Gupta, 2013).

Additionally, the results of this study suggest that the claims by Allen et al. (2014) that social connections are crucial for adolescents' development are similar to those of this study's findings. More specifically, Allen et al. (2014) observe that adolescents join peer groups to form social ties and provide support for one another, which is consistent with the present study's findings. This observation was demonstrated notably during the COVID-19 pandemic era, when governments worldwide, including Ghana, had to place physical restrictions on people's freedom of movement in almost all cities and villages to help stop the menace's spread. Since movements (of all kinds) were prohibited, adolescents used social media to keep their already established social ties (Kutufam, 2021).

The findings of this research study were further supported by Obi-Ani et al. (2020), who noted that healthy social networking encourages adolescents' mental health and identity development by minimising factors of dissatisfaction that may cause anxiety, loneliness and depression. Therefore, I contend that a well-connected adolescent benefits from various social encounters with a wide range of people and organisations. In light of this, the study's participants reported that social contacts help adolescents develop positive attitudes and a sense of self-confidence that lessen (if not completely

eradicate) concerns of loneliness and despair (Cauberghe et al., 2021; Hur & Gupta, 2013; Obi-Ani et al., 2020).

The literature contends that adolescents benefit from a sense of self-autonomy, which raises their self-esteem (Kou, 2022). Adolescents define themselves this way depending on their values, morality, and worldview. In accordance with this assertion, these adolescents might join groups to express their aspirations, passions, and identities (Umar & Idris, 2018). A well-adjusted adolescent would be socially connected and motivated to concentrate on the learning activities in this setting, enhancing their identity development.

The results of this study support Anderson and Jiang's (2018) premise that adolescents join peer groups to understand people of the same age bracket better. My findings are endorsed by Dayana et al. (2020), who proclaim that when adolescents gain autonomy and form relationships outside the framework of their immediate families, they place more value on social engagement and time spent with their peers. Adolescents interact with others to boost their mood and reach their highest level of fulfilment (Sobaih et al., 2020; Spies-Shapiro & Margolin, 2014; Twenge & Martin, 2020).

When adolescents learn from their encounters with others in a social environment, their experiences with their peers and family members are a significant determinant of their success in life (Buku & Edoh-Torgah, 2020; Oppong-Frimpong & Amisah, 2009; Taylor et al., 2019). This is in line with Bandura's Social Learning Theory, which postulates that various social variables, including friends, families, education, and poverty, impact an individual's optimal level of growth and development (McCullough, 2011).

Participants agreed that group activities were an excellent way to learn social skills, including forming and maintaining connections. Kou (2022) asserted that adolescents might develop fundamental social skills through group activities. This was in line with the findings of this study. For instance, while adolescents continue interacting with peers, relationship maintenance and negotiation skills are enhanced (Mulisa, 2019). This study's results align with Albert Bandura's assumptions for the social learning theory. According to him, learning happens primarily due to an ongoing change in

human performance or performance potential brought on by a person's constant engagement with their environment (Mwamwenda, 2013). In this way, it is impossible to fully comprehend human behaviour without considering the context in which it occurs. In other words, classmates, families, and the entire community provide avenues for adolescents to learn.

Based on Bandura's (2002) social learning theories, this study discovered that adolescents can watch, mimic, and model the skills and abilities displayed by their peers when interacting socially. Bandura (2002) states that social learning happens when a reward is given to a person who watches another person's action or behaviour to learn or mould that behaviour. Accordingly, Gonzalez-DeHass and Willems (2012) suggest that adolescents need to concentrate on what they want to learn for learning to be effective. Consequently, the person must transform the memory into a vision or words. This study can conclude that adolescents attend to a model and code in their memory which they have observed; hence good strategies must be implemented to engage adolescents to imitate higher-status models. This is likely to generate a greater impact on desirable behaviours.

#### **5.2.1.6 Summary of Theme 1**

The analysis of the participants' responses on the views on adolescents' psychological, emotional and social experiences revealed that there are different occurrences in adolescents' identity development. Most teachers, parents and adolescents base their perspectives on how adolescents think, behave and relate with others. It seems that the psychological experiences of adolescents encompass constructs such as mental ability and problem-solving capabilities, while their emotional experiences involve examining their inner feelings, expressing their emotions verbally and being considerate of others' pain or suffering. Social experiences, on the other hand, include building new social connections and establishing identities within the wider community. In other words, the noticeable adolescents' psychological, emotional and social experiences, according to the teachers, the parents, and the adolescents, are happenings within oneself and the environment. In this sense, adolescents should operate on levels deemed acceptable to society's norms. An analysis of the participants' responses suggests that adolescents express some complex emotions, develop the capacity for abstract

thinking, create linkages and show awareness of how they feel and how others feel. Following this logic, adolescents' psychological, emotional and social experiences. According to the teachers, parents and the adolescents in this study, are characterised by the expansion in their social cycle and roles, different types of peer influence, improved cognitive capacity, changing ways of interaction and loyalty identified with peers. These were the core elements shared by the majority of the participants in the study when responding to the question on adolescents' psychological, emotional and social experiences in their identity development process.

### 5.2.2 Theme 2: Traditional Rituals and Rites of Passage Adolescents Undergo

The above theme regarding traditional rituals and rites of passage performed for adolescents in the Bosomtwe District of Ghana has produced three sub-themes: bragoro rites, phases of bragoro rites and the role of adolescent rites of passage. The study established ample evidence that adolescents undergo puberty rites, locally known as *bragoro* and traditional rites and accompanying rituals. Table 5.3 gives the overview of Theme 2, its sub-themes, and the inclusion and exclusion criteria.

**Table 0.3: Overview of theme 1 and its sub-themes, inclusion and exclusion criteria**

THEME 2		
Traditional rituals and rites of passage adolescents undergo		
<b>Sub-theme 2.1</b> Adolescents' rites of passage at Bosomtwe	<b>Sub-theme 2.2</b> Phases of adolescent rites of passage <b>Categories:</b> 2.2.1 Separation 2.2.2 Transition 2.2.3 Incorporation	<b>Sub-theme 2.3</b> Role of rites passage <b>Categories:</b> 2.3.1 Preserving the best core values of a society 2.3.2 Upgrading the social status of the individual 2.3.3 Teaching important skills and virtues 2.3.4 Preventing promiscuity 2.3.5 Raise seed capital to help them start a trade or vocation
Inclusion criteria for sub-themes	Participants' views clearly show an understanding of the traditional rituals and rites of passage adolescents undergo	
Exclusion criteria for sub-themes	Participants' views that do not clearly show an understanding of the traditional rituals and rites of passage adolescents undergo	

### 5.2.2.1 Sub-theme 2.1: Adolescents' Rites of Passage at Bosomtwe

As the participants opined, the first sub-theme that emerged was bragoro rites, a traditional rite of passage for adolescents. The study revealed that male or female adolescents undergo some form of traditional rites and rituals locally referred to as Bragoro within the Bosomtwe District of Ghana. In light of the above, the participants reported that adolescents transitioning from childhood to adulthood undergo some form of traditional ceremonies, symbolising their transition into adulthood. Within the context of this study, *bragoro rites* refer to the traditional rites and rituals performed to usher adolescents into adulthood. To support this, one of the teachers, during an interview, opined:

*Every child undergoes several rites and rituals from birth until death. For instance, there is a grand naming ceremony to welcome a newborn baby. Likewise, when people reach adolescent age in this community, we normally perform bragoro also known as puberty rites for them to show they have come of age. This is to signal their transition into adulthood. (SC 3, TR1, P 21-22 line 55-79)*

The view of the teacher implies that traditionally, the people in this area admonish youngsters who are maturing into adulthood to be taken through the customs laid down by their lineage. In other words, the participants believe that it is necessary for persons who have attained the adolescent age to submit to bragoro rites. As clearly stated by the participants, Bragoro rite is essential in Bosomtwe, and it is required that all adolescents undergo it at puberty. During a focus group discussion, an adolescent also backed up the necessity of puberty rites and stressed the physical signals that required this process.

*The rite of passage that adolescents undergo in this community is "bragoro" and is usually performed every year. It is done to initiate the adolescent into adulthood. The process for this initiation begins when it is noticed that the child's body has begun to show clear signs of changes that make them appear mature or look like adults. For girls, it is after they have experienced menstruation (menarche) or the flow of blood for the first time in their lives. (SC 3, AD 3, P10 line 34-56)*

In view of the above quotation, the adolescents' rites of passage are seen as important trademarks or symbols in shaping the lives of boys and girls. One of the parents expressed his views as follows:

*The parents of the girl are obliged to inform the queen mother of the community of this new change. It is a signal that their daughter is now ready and qualified to be ushered into adulthood. Likewise, the adolescent boy who has come of age is normally presented with some tools for trading or a cutlass or a gun by the father which means he is of age and ready to fend for himself. (SC 1, PR 2 P31 line 2-36)*

The above responses from the participants seem to concur that community members highly cherish adolescents' traditional rituals and rites of passage, and the ceremony associated with the practice contributes to shaping the individual's values and quality of life. In other words, the rites and rituals would be geared towards equipping the adolescent with adult roles.

#### **5.2.2.2 Sub-theme 2.2: Phases of Adolescent Rites of Passage**

The focus of this section is to discuss participants' understanding of the processes involved as adolescents undergo traditional rituals and rites of passage in the community. To come up with the categories that support the above theme, I analysed the data related to the various activities performed to commemorate the initiation process. The categories that emanate from the central theme are separation, transition and incorporation.

##### **a. Separation**

Most participants revealed that separation was the first phase of adolescents' rite of passage. The participants asserted that the individual is identified with an old support group before the initiation process and has to be removed from the former self. They indicated that the symbolic actions and rituals performed at this phase helped the adolescent to be detached from the earlier fixed social structure. In relation to this, some adolescents narrated their experiences during individual interviews and focus group discussions. One of the adolescents had this to say:

*Personally, after the queen mother had performed the virginity test to see if I was a virgin, prayers were offered to the gods, and a concoction was sprinkled over my body. A day was set for the initiation process to begin. I was taken and kept together with other girls who also were being prepared for the rites. For days, I had no access to old friends. They allowed us to interact among ourselves. I developed close ties with my fellow girls, and I was free to express my opinion about my expected roles as a young adult. (SC 4, AD5, P 21 line 13-56)*

The above quotation implies that the adolescents undergoing the initiation initially had a sense of separation from their everyday lives but had a new feeling of togetherness with other peers undergoing the initiation process. This would provide opportunities for the exchange of ideas between the “matured” youngsters. Discussions on married life, childbearing, education progression and career characterised the new relationships. During a focus group discussion on the subject of the phases of adolescents’ rites of passage, an adolescent added that:

*Likewise, initially, when I was confined, I was sad and felt lonely because I could not see most of my favourite friends I used to play with. Fortunately, I got some new friends who were also prepared to be passed through the same rites. We were assigned some elderly women who were very supportive, patient and often discussed key issues bordering on the rudiments of life and its challenges with us. (SC 3, AD4, P26 line 31-63)*

It seems that the older women who interacted with the initiates in a friendly way helped establish a more relaxed learning atmosphere for the adolescents. It also means that the adolescents in this state had the opportunity to redefine their identity by formulating their career and personal goals. Almost similarly, one of the teachers stated:

*I still remember when the initiates are confined at a place as part of the initiation process, they develop a close relationship and have a lot to share among themselves. Through this relationship, they are able to talk about sensitive issues such as healthy lifestyle, family life, choice of life*

*partners, housekeeping and child-rearing practices and many others.*  
(SC 3, TR3, P 72 line 1-29)

In line with the above quotation, adolescents privileged to undergo this initial process should not encounter many problems with their anticipated roles as young adults. As a result, they are well-prepared and adjusted to function in society. When responding to the same question during the focus group discussion, an adolescent expressed his sentiments as follows:

*As this phase gave me the opportunity to interact with other initiates and elderly women, I became certain of what was expected of me during the bragoro rites and my foreseeable roles in later life. During the interactions, we were given the opportunity to share our thoughts, skills and targets. (SC 1, AD 1, P 81 line 1-33)*

The above quotation implies that for adolescents to function as expected, the initiates, the community leaders and parents should operate at equal levels. This means that the initiates and community leaders should work closely together from a social inclusion and openness position. This would allow the initiates to exchange ideas freely and gain more insight. In this sense, leaders should create enabling learning environments during the separation phase that give initiates opportunities for open discussions on life issues with them. In the same vein, a teacher expressed her views as follows:

*During this initial phase, adolescents are secluded from the community for a period usually between three days to a week in my community. It is used to teach the initiates important lessons that are not limited to: the secretes of womanhood, how to maintain a good marriage, birth control measures, how to relate to men and maintain their dignity in society.*  
(SC2, TR 2, P9 line 1-36)

The teacher's view and expectation is that if the period of seclusion or separation is observed properly and utilised effectively, the adolescents are likely to mould their personal, social and vocational goals. There is a convergence of findings on the association between adolescents' rites of passage and good health and family living. An analysis of the Ghana Living Standards report and Ghana Statistical Survey report

of 2021 indicated that mothers scored high marks in knowledge of birth control and sex education. This implies that if adolescents experience an initiation, they gain knowledge and training that could result in healthy lifestyles.

### ***b. Transition***

The study established that the second phase of adolescents' rites and rituals of passage is the transition process, where the initiates have lost their old selves but are yet to develop a new identity. Most participants who participated in the individual interviews and focus group discussions confirmed that adolescents who were yet to be re-integrated into society received instructions and guidelines from community elders to enhance their active involvement in the training process. In support of the above view, during the focus group discussions, an adolescent had this to say:

*The transition activities commence with spiritual cleansing in a river to drive away evil spirits. The initiate rides on the back of an elderly woman to the riverside and rides the same way back home. This is done to wash our past and make up fresh beings of us. Libation is then poured by the traditional priest. The elderly women and the queen mother of the town instruct us on what to do as the activities unfold. (SC1, AD3, P 21 line 37-62)*

This implies that rituals performed for the initiates are critical to safeguarding adolescents' smooth transition to acquire a distinctive identity. The initiates progress through this rite successfully when those in authority give the necessary directives and advice. Some parents also concurred with the adolescent's perspective during the interviews, saying:

*"This period where the adolescents have lost their old selves is characterised by a state of confusion, testing and training. We must understand that the initiate is in transition and has not acquired a new form of identification (SC2, AD2, P87 line 1-37)"*

This means that the transition stage is full of ambiguity, mutilation of self and a paradox for the initiate. The adolescents would have the opportunity to learn from the community elders to unlock the perplexity or bewilderment surrounding them. A parent, when responding to the same issue of transition during an interview, stated:

*Before the final stage, a set of rites are carried out to aid the transition process. The physical nature for boys may involve circumcision and for girls, it involves shaving of hair on their head and private parts. "Afterwards, the initiates are carried to the riverside for purification. The coaching and counsel given to the initiate is likely to make them participate actively and appropriately in the rituals conducted" (SC4, PR4, P 110 line 35-51).*

Community elders should create a conducive atmosphere that gives the initiates confidence, valour, and gallantry so the adolescents can participate actively in the rites and ritual processes. An assistant head teacher explained during the interview session:

*When adolescents are given guidance on the bragoro rites and they feel a sense of comfort, confidence and security, they are meaningfully engaged all the way through the initiation. It makes the adolescents become fearless in the bragoro rite process. (SC 3, PR 1, P 80 line 19-40)*

Given the above quotation, if initiates are given tutorials and directions meaningfully connected to planned activities, it alleviates their fear and confusion. This makes them participate more actively in the rites and ritual process. Another teacher expressed himself as follows:

*If you are given guidance on what will occur at the transition stage, the level of anxiety and confusion is reduced. You are comfortable participating because they have explained to you what the traditional priest will be doing and the other things to expect. (SC 4, PR 2, P 91 line 38-47)*

This means that directions from the elders provide the platform for the initiates to effectively participate in the transition activities with full confidence and enthusiasm. When responding to the same question on the preparedness of initiates to go through the transitional phase of the bragoro rites and rituals during the interview session, a parent indicated:

*“If adolescents are given adequate guidelines and their minds are prepared for the ritual activities, definitely, they are definitely more likely to be calm, physically and psychologically prepared for the whole process” (SC 1, PR 2, P38 line 35-49).*

The above quotation implies that parents, queen mothers and other community leaders should create an unrestricted communication platform, give guidance and prepare the initiates physically and mentally before the rite commences. This would allow the adolescent to clarify all sorts of misconceptions and confusion surrounding the rites and rituals. These directives and effective communication and instructions would fuel their participation throughout the event processes.

### ***c. Incorporation***

The study indicated that adolescents' rites of passage are important to their identity development relative to being finally incorporated into the community. The grand ceremony at the final phase of the initiation process stimulates their motivation to learn. In support of this view, during an individual interview, a teacher had this to say:

*This is the last phase of the bragoro rites. Community leaders organise a durbar and the initiates are presented to the entire members of the community. They are dressed in rich Ashanti costumes and beads around their necks, wrists and waists. The initiates having completed the process are incorporated back into the society amidst merry-making. Family members, well-wishers, friends and all gathered to sing and dance to the traditional songs. The community see them now as individuals with new identities and accords them high respect. (SC 1, PR 3, P41 line 33-58)*

Adolescents are motivated to complete the final phase if they are accorded a new position and identification by community members. The adolescents enjoy equal opportunities just like other adults during the incorporation phase. Most participants confirmed a strong link between the incorporation phase of bragoro rites and identity formation. One of the adolescents narrated her experiences in the following manner:

*It is very true that the recognition you receive motivates many adolescents to participate in the bragoro rites. During the grand durbar, everybody comes around to congratulate you. We dance, sing and rejoice with the whole community. Your peers who are yet to go through the rites see you differently and hold you in high esteem especially now that you are at a different level. (SC2, AD5, P120-121 line 40-62)*

The final phase of the incorporation provides the adolescent with an opportunity to be re-integrated into society, thereby advancing magnificently into family life. A parent during the interview session pointed out:

*When the initiates are brought to the gathering on the grand occasion, young men mostly of marriageable age assemble at the durbar grounds to feast their eyes on these beautiful young women who are being outdoored. These young men's mission is to select their prospective wives. However, for young women who have plans of continuing their education, their parents most often decline the offer. (SC4, PR1, P 85 line 2-17)*

It is suggested from the above response that the grand durbar is necessary and thus performed for the initiates to showcase their worth and beauty. It is a time for young men and women to be allowed to appear at their absolute best and exhibit their dexterity, skills and abilities. A teacher expressed his views as follows:

*Initiates are not only celebrated through merry-making but also a libation is poured and rituals performed for the initiates. The purpose of these sets of rituals is to ensure a final successful journey or transition into adulthood since the individuals have returned as transformed persons. (SC 1, TR 1, P87 line 20-41)*

The above quotation implies that the incorporation phase of the initiation rites provides opportunities to form a new identity where the initiates progress into a higher level of social standing. Adolescent graduates acquire different roles and are no longer classified as children.

### **5.2.2.3 Sub-theme 2.3: Role Rites of Passage**

The focus of this section is to present and analyse the data gained from the interviews, focus group discussions and reflective journals on the implications arising from the performance of adolescents' initiation rites. Categories that emerged from this sub-theme are preserving the best core values of a society, upgrading the individual's social status, teaching important skills and virtues, preventing promiscuity, and raising seed capital to help them start a trade or continue education.

#### ***a. Preserving the best core values of a society***

The study established that the adolescent rite of passage aims to preserve society's best cultural values. Most of the participants in the focus group discussions and interviews confirmed that rites of passage for adolescents provided a platform for adults to share the traditions, cultural heritage and cherished values of society with their youngsters. One of the teachers intimated in his response:

*Interestingly, one key role of bragoro rites is to hand down the traditional values, and our cultural heritage which has been handed down by our forefathers. It is geared towards inculcating norms, standards, beliefs and principles that have bounded and guided the community over the years. (SC3, TR1, P24-25 line 30-48)*

This quote implies that the rites and rituals allow adolescents to learn the principles and values that preserve society. It seems adolescents' rites and rituals of passage provide opportunities for adolescents to listen to their elders. An adolescent during the individual interview indicated:

*When I went through the rite of passage last year, I learned a lot from my kinsmen. I was taken through the basic values of society, such as the need to be truthful, honest, hardworking and sincere in whatever I do. The elders took their time to emphasise them. (Sch1, P4, P12 line 15-30).*

The implication of the above is that if the community elders can impact their experiences into the initiates during the initiation process, the adolescents would gain much insight into the standards and norms of the society. Another adolescent shared the same sentiments by expressing her views as follows:

*When I was taken through the process of initiation, my elders tried to preach to us the good values in our community. They told us about the moral uprightness of our forefathers and the basic tenets that made them outstanding in the communities. For instance, stealing, telling lies, and living a promiscuous life were all mentioned as detestable during the training process. (SC3, TR2, P107 line 19-51)*

This comment means that if proper education and sensitisation are carried out during the initiation process, the adolescent will feel empowered with the knowledge given on core principles and values that bestow high moral standards associated with society. A School Health Education teacher expressed himself as follows:

*It is important to seize this opportunity to emphasise the core tenets of society when taking them through this process. The young ones must be taught what is acceptable and the standard of morality expected of them so that they do not bring shame to our community or themselves. (SC1, TR2, P68 lines 2-19)*

The above implies that the performers of the rites need a conducive learning atmosphere where the queen mother and her relations are open to sharing, approachable and concerned about their youngsters. This will help the adolescents to familiarise themselves with the ethics, codes and ideas. A parent added:

*“Adolescents are willing and always feel comfortable sharing and learning from people who listen to them and are approachable. Adolescents also emulate the cultural values shared with them” (SC1, PR3, P50-51 line 37-52).*

In support of the above view, I incorporated an excerpt from my research journal to strengthen the point that traditional rites of passage performed for adolescents enabled adolescents to emulate the right values and practices of society.

*On a particular occasion when I visited the school, I asked a JHS 2 pupil to buy an item from a nearby shop for me. She quickly ran to get me the item. Upon her return, she knelt on one knee as she presented the item to me as a sign of respect. I took the item and asked her to keep the*

*change, which she declined. When I asked her why she refused to accept the gift, she indicated that she was taught during her bragoro rites that accepting such offers meant she was being paid for her services and that is wrong. She further pointed out she had been taught that it was her duty to run errands for any elderly person who needed assistance. (Researcher, notes from the research journal.)*

This implies that adequately trained adolescents are likely to incorporate Ghanaian cultural values and traditional components into their daily lives. In other words, the initiates are likely to adopt good values and principles when the initiation process provides them with opportunities to learn the practices and acceptable standards shared by society.

***b. Upgrading the social status of the individual***

The study established that partaking in initiation rites and rituals can influence the individual's social standing. This includes being given more recognition and participating in decisions affecting the community. The majority of the participants, therefore, confirmed that adolescent initiation is associated with increased social status. One of the adolescents emphasised that:

*Speaking frankly, my involvement in bragoro has given me high recognition in society. People now see me as a mature person and no longer treat me as a child. I am seen differently and I try to behave as an adult after the initiation. The way I used to dress and even talk in public has changed. (SC3, AD1, P 37 line 42-58)*

This means that when adolescents complete the bragoro rites and ritual processes, they are mostly respected. The above view of an upgrade in social status tallies with what I received from the parent participants. One of the parents expressed his view as follows:

*"I have seen that all initiates are accorded some form of respect, and that promotes their behaviour such as playing roles as adults. This places reverence on their opinion and particularly their communication with other members of the society". (SC2, AD5, P 111 line 17-38)*

The implication of the above is that adolescents' rites and passage rituals promote the initiates' dignity and worth. The social studies teacher also shared the same sentiments with a parent whose ward participated in the initiation process. The teacher indicated:

*Rites and rituals that are experienced by adolescents make them look and behave like adults. The new adult roles they assume make all and sundry put a premium on what they do and what they say. People in the community see them as grownups and give them the necessary courtesy they deserve. (SC2, TR1, P 83 line 34-52)*

This implies that adolescents who have successfully undergone the rites of passage assume a high place and role in their community. An adolescent also added:

*The adolescents' initiation process helped to establish a different place for us in society and set new goals. We assume different roles as expected of many adults. Bragoro rites ensure a safe passage from childhood to adulthood. We are seen as capable of participating in adult endeavours. (SC1, AD1, P61 line 22-46)*

This means that the necessary recognition that any adult enjoys must be conferred on the youngster to maintain harmony in the community. Candidly, when adolescents are respected by their kinsfolk, they focus on performing adult roles as anticipated and thus become productive as young adults.

### **c. Teaching important skills and virtues**

The majority of the participants in the focus group discussions and interviews revealed that there is an association between adolescents' initiation rites and rituals and the acquisition of skills. The participants reported that adolescents who participated in rites and rituals of passage in the community were likely to be taught some new skills. In line with the above, an adolescent expressed her views as follows:

*When we were taken through the initiation process, we were privileged to be given some form of training. We were taught how to dance, cook, sing some traditional songs, handle a man and so on. It was a great opportunity to learn from our elders. (SC3, AD5, P14 line 16-34)*

Given the above, if adolescents are given sensitisation and tutoring through the initiation process and activities, they are likely to enhance their skills because they will enjoy the learning activities during the initiation period. A teacher had this to say:

*Rites performed for adolescents are interesting and helpful over the many years I have grown to witness. It is an opportunity to train youngsters in housekeeping, home management, marriage life and childbearing. In this sense, they gain mastery over many tasks and control over what happens in a real-life situation and reduce anxiety in adult life. (SC1, TR1, P115-116 line 30-63)*

This implies that older community members should create an enabling environment that allows adolescents to participate and imitate during the learning process. Creating a conducive learning environment would help facilitate a speedy learning process among adolescents. A physical education teacher expressed his sentiments as follows:

*“When adolescents are supported to acquire home-keeping skills and their expectations are clearly communicated to them, they demonstrate a better understanding of how to play their roles as adults” (SC2, TR1, P20-21 line 43-52).*

The Physical Education teacher seems to suggest that the elders in society should create an appropriate learning environment that supports the adolescents' learning. In other words, if adolescents are supported in the training process, they will acquire the necessary skills needed for adult life. An assistant headteacher shared the same sentiments as the physical education teacher. He had this to say:

*These days initiates learn to be good mothers and fathers from the different forms of training which are incorporated into the initiation activities. Such training is centred on housewifery, dressing, child caring and ideas about marriage to enable them to become good wives. (SC2, TR1, P69 line 2-17)*

The implication of the above is that bragoro rites provide the adolescent with training in home management, housecraft and childbearing. These experiences, therefore, equip individuals for married life.

#### ***d. Preventing promiscuity***

It seems that the adolescents, teachers and parents stressed the fact that the initiation ceremony was indeed a key contributor to preventing adolescents from living promiscuous lives. Almost similarly, during the focus group discussions, the adolescents supported that rites of passage helped them live chaste lives. One of the adolescents expressed her views as follows:

*Bragoro is one ceremony that serves as a check for adolescents to live a good life. In this sense, pre-marital sexual activities are discouraged. In fact, it is even taboo or forbidden to engage in sex until you have gone through the rites. Your parents will be highly disappointed in you because you have brought shame to them, especially when you are a girl and you become pregnant when you have not gone through bragoro rites. (SC1, AD1, P11 line 40-67)*

The above quote implies that bragoro rites have served as a guide for young ones to recognise sex before marriage as a taboo. On the other hand, abstaining from sexual intercourse before marriage prevents the spread of HIV and AIDS. During the focus group discussions, an adolescent also added:

*Though we were told to abstain from sex before bragoro due to the humiliation the society would subject us to when we were caught, in fact, I have realised it helped us to avoid the deadly HIV and AIDS disease. It is clear to me that premarital sex and adultery are frowned upon and that equally goes a long way to curtail the spread of certain infectious diseases. (SC3, AD 1, P8 line 16-38)*

The above quotation implies that the imposition of no sex before bragoro rites thereby contributes to minimising the spread of sexually transmitted infections. Pertaining to the issue of bragoro rites as a determinant of adolescents preventing premarital sex, one of the parents, during the interview, expressed her view as follows:

*The issue is that when you have come of age, especially when you are a girl, your parents must present you to the queen mother. She will have to find out whether you are qualified for the rites or not. This is done through the virginity test. They do that by finding out whether you have slept with a man or not. They may insert a finger in your vaginal or let you sit on a special stool. If you are successful, there is massive jubilation and excitement for your family members. However, if you do not pass the test, there is shame and humiliation. Due to this embarrassment, the adolescents are compelled to stay away from sex before the bragoro rites is performed for them. (SC1, PR 3, P97-98 line 42-76)*

The above quote seems to explain that the harsh treatment meted out by the community members if one is found to have lived a promiscuous life is indeed an issue for adolescents to consider before reaching the stage of puberty. The teachers also confirmed the significant role bragoro rites play in shaping the sexual life of the adolescent. One of the Guidance and Counselling teachers interviewed added that:

*Since they know they will be going through the ceremony, it makes them careful in what they do, especially their sexual life. They know it is a taboo to engage in sexual acts before bragoro rites. The consequences are quite excruciating and they would therefore not attempt [it]. (SC2, TR2, P71 line 17-35)*

In view of the above responses, it is important to note that the quality of sexual life experienced by the adolescent can be related to the enactment of bragoro rites.

**e. Raise seed capital to help them start a trade or vocation**

Most participants in the interviews and focus group discussions reported that bragoro rites help raise funds for adolescents. An adolescent had this to say:

*I want to say the ceremony was really beneficial to me. There was an appeal for funds at the grand durbar and people contributed money which was used to pay for my first-year school fees and buy some books at the Senior High school. Without that money, it would have been*

*difficult for me to continue my senior high school education. (SC4, AD4, P37 line 19-33)*

This implies that the community should create an avenue to raise money through these rites that could be used to meet the needs and interests of adolescents. If the adolescents' needs, aspirations and interests are met, they will develop a sense of belonging to the community and willingly partake in the bragoro rites. One of the adolescents shared her experience as follows:

*In my case, I had a lot of donations such as a sewing machine and some physical cash. After the ceremony, my parents encouraged me to enter into an apprenticeship so I could become a seamstress. The money gathered helped in acquiring some shoes and cloth for myself to start my work. (SC1, AD2, P111 line 16-32)*

Bragoro rites help to secure students' self-reliance by giving them some items such as hair dryers, sewing machines, guns and other tools. In responding to the same question on raising capital, one of the teachers had this to say:

*Many initiates were privileged to receive some valuable items that were used to develop their career. The girls received items such as sewing machines and/or hair dryers while the boys received guns, farm and machine tools from their fathers or uncles. (SC4, TR2, P77 line 56-71)*

A Guidance and Counselling teacher suggested that the items received through the donations promote the adolescents' vocational or career goals. One of the parents during the interview session added:

*Initiation rites provide opportunities for adolescents to fulfil their future aspirations. When these items are realised from the ceremony it minimises parents' financial burden and gives the young ones hope that they now have something to pursue their dream jobs. (SC1, PR4, P50 line 28-38)*

Given the above view, adolescents need to patronise bragoro rites since they meet the needs and goals of the adolescent. This will accelerate their ability to be financially self-reliant in future.

#### **5.2.2.4 Discussions of the findings of Theme 2**

This section discusses the traditional rituals and rites of passage performed for adolescents. The three sub-themes that emerged from this theme are adolescents' rites of passage at Bosomtwe, phases of adolescents' rites of passage, and the role of rites of passage.

##### **5.2.2.4.1 Adolescents' rites of passage at Bosomtwe**

It emerged from my study that adolescents at Bosomtwe undergo some traditional rituals and rites, widely known among the indigenes as bragoro. The findings of my study resonate with Salm and Falola's (2002) findings that community leaders usually organise special ceremonies to celebrate the transition of adolescents to adulthood in Ghanaian societies. Furthermore, a study by Kissi-Abrokwah et al. (2021) indicated that puberty rites are practised among most communities both in the southern and northern parts of Ghana to usher these young individuals into adulthood, thereby giving them recognition as full members.

Similarly, Siweya et al. (2018) claimed that rites and passage rituals allow adolescents to receive social beliefs, religious beliefs and cultural values. In this regard, adolescents learn the customs and traditional values that guide the practices of the community. In support of the findings of this current study, Skinner et al. (2013) substantiate the point that the initiation ceremonies provide adolescents with fertile scenery to socialise and redefine their identity. It is, therefore, plausible to argue that adolescents get the opportunity to socialise and express themselves directly and indirectly through the initiation process. They strengthen their communication, language and collaborative skills and increase the power of perception, leading to better comprehension.

The findings from this current study support Markstrom (2011), who notes that during this sacred moment of transcendence, the adolescent being initiated discards the old identity and puts on a new one. This means that if adolescents successfully undergo

the transition process, they can discard their old selves through the support they receive from their parents, friends and community leaders.

In line with the findings of this study, Berg and Denison (2013) assert that rites and rituals of passage allow adolescents to form a new identity, learn the traditional ideals of their community and act as responsible adults in our society. Therefore, the participants of this study believe that rites and rituals of passage, as instituted by the traditional authorities, provide a new dimension of social learning that enables adolescents to shape their personalities and discover their new roles in the community. In this regard, adolescents' rituals and rites of passage become critical tools in the processes leading to the formation of adolescents' identities. The findings of this study are commensurate with the tenets of Dunham et al.'s (1986) Ritual Process Paradigm, which stipulates that when adolescents undergo traditional rites, they can generate a distinct kind of identity (Hunt, 2002).

The participants in this study expressed their concern that initiation rites and rituals for adolescents in Ghana keep changing and, in some cases, have faded out due to modernisation and the introduction of Christian and Islamic values and formal education into the Ghanaian culture and in this regard, the findings by Akweongo et al. (2021) resonate. They echoed that some communities no longer practised initiation rites and rituals, and in some cases, minors, that is, children below the adolescent age, were used. In line with the findings of this study, Asare-Doku et al. (2017) pointed out that factors such as modernity and societal developments have had a major impact on adolescents' initiation process. In other words, modern social changes have skewed and altered some of the initiation processes adolescents undergo in recent times.

The participants of this study concur that traditional activities performed to commemorate these rites and rituals are deeply linked to intrapsychic processes, and this necessitates adolescents' personal and collective attention from community members for them to complete the transition processes. Adolescents would be exposed to information readily available from the ritual leaders and get the opportunity to interact with other community elders on a wide range of issues that affect adolescents' well-being. In this sense, adolescents may mark the initiation process to compensate for weaker social skills through their encounters with very important

community leaders (Kissi-Abrokwah et al., 2021). It means an adolescent is dripped with courage and feels the comfort of good interpersonal relationships that enable them to perform tasks and form a positive self-image. Scheer et al. (2007), in agreement with the current study's findings, claimed that traditional rituals and rites of initiation allow adolescents to encounter a wide range of information, knowledge and experience to learn from and report on. In this regard, experiencing a wide range of activities during the transition process is central to developing adolescents' psychosocial identity and well-being.

#### **5.2.2.4.2 Phases of Adolescent Rites of Passage**

The participants in this study acknowledged that rites of passage for adolescents in their settings are in phases. The discussion revealed that participants viewed these rites and rituals in three phases, namely the separation phase, the transition phase and the incorporation phase. Their views corroborate those of Kyalo (2013) and Wozniak and Allen (2012), who established that in African cosmology, rites of passage for adolescents are divided into three stages: separation, transition, and incorporation. Measured against Dunham et al.'s ritual process paradigm model, it may be concluded that distinct kinds of identity are generated at each level. As such, initiates can be identified with the three different forms of identity (Dunham et al., 1986; Hunt, 2002). In line with the foregoing, initiates are first separated from their former selves according to the steps involved in the ritualisation process, after which the transitional process starts and ends when the person has gained a new identity and is reintegrated into society.

Forth (2018) claimed that the adolescent is isolated or temporarily withdrawn from society at the separation phase. This claim substantiates the results obtained from this study. More so, Kyalo (2013) widely acknowledged that the separation phase of adolescents' rites of passage involves an individual or a group of initiates losing their identity. Elaborating on this view further, Hensley (2019) clarified that this kind of separation, as entailed in the ritualisation process, involves an estrangement whereby the individual is temporarily geographically displaced.

According to the participants, the symbolic activities and rituals carried out during the separation phase of the initiation ceremonies aided the adolescent to get disassociated from the pre-existing rigid social structure. In line with the

aforementioned, Wozniak and Allen (2012) claimed that the separation stage of a rite of passage is typically unforeseen or abrupt, splitting ties to oneself, the family and the greater community. Similarly, Shamsuddin (2020) found that initiates in this phase are cut out from their familiar social environments, homes, or recognised "natural world". In this case, adolescents are confined in a setting that offers a potent path to self-discovery.

My research showed that the transition phase is the second stage adolescents go through throughout their traditional rituals and rites of initiation. In this regard, my findings agree with those of Blumenkrantz and Goldstein (2010), who discovered that initiates shed their prior identities during the transition phase but had not yet fully reintegrated into the community with a new identity. Boakye (2010) described this phase with the view that Initiates are given instructions and guidance during the transition period, all intended to prepare them for their anticipated new societal responsibilities. This situation speaks volumes about initiates who learn the roles and expected behaviours of the new stage as they proceed through this second stage to the final stage (Kyalo, 2013).

The study found that the ultimate stage of the initiation process is the initiates' reintegration into society following a successful transition. Boakye (2010) noted that at the incorporation stage, individuals who have successfully completed the first two stages are re-admitted into society as new individuals. The results from this study's participants corroborate those of Boakye (2010) in this regard. He also asserted that at this final stage of inclusion, ritual leaders would typically carry out unique tasks to reintegrate the subject into society and give them unique personalities (Boakye, 2010).

As established in the current study, initiates who have successfully completed the transition process are reintegrated into society amidst merry-making. Community members treat them respectfully since they perceive the initiates differently as unique people with new identities at this stage. Similarly, Scheer et al. (2007) admit that after gaining new skills, knowledge, and perspectives, individuals return to society as altered individuals endowed with dignity.

Accordingly, a previous research study revealed that the events characterising the incorporation stage are intricately linked to intrapsychic processes and demand individual and collective community attention (Scheer et al., 2007). The results of this study appeared to support Markstrom and Iborra's findings from 2003, according to which successful incorporation occurs when the society maintains its balance in the face of the person's shift in status. I deduced that the community members, especially the young men who had assembled to watch the final stage, were of marriageable age and planned to select among the lovely young women being paraded. The participants in the study unanimously agreed that parents feared that their children's plans to continue their education after the rites may be jeopardised or distracted. They, therefore, rejected such proposals (*SC4, PR1, P 85 line 2-17*).

#### **5.2.2.4.3 Role Rites of Passage**

This study's results revealed that traditional rituals and rites of passage play an important role in society and address key issues affecting adolescents' psychosocial identity development. For instance, as claimed by the study participants, these rites focus on transmitting key values cherished by society to adolescents. A study by Glozah and Lawani (2014) on social change and adolescent rites of passage confirms these findings that adolescents' rites of passage transmit the shared values of a community and develop processes to promote their future success. Additionally, De-Whyte (2018) found that the ritualised process renews and rejuvenates these values for ritual leaders who conduct the process and the adolescents who participate. In this case, adolescents who participate heed the rituals through which the transition occurs.

Participants agreed that rituals and rites of passage preserved the best core values of a society. With most adolescents, teachers and parent participants, this was at the top of the list concerning the significant roles which the adolescents' initiation process plays. Participants indicated that some basic values of the society were learnt during the initiation process, such as the need to be truthful, honest, hardworking and sincere. Blumenkrantz and Goldstein (2010), whose study focused on rites of passage as a framework for community interventions with youth, confirmed the current findings. The current findings also allude to Maphalala and Muzi's (2014) findings that the rituals and rites performed during the initiation for adolescents ensured the continuation and

viability of society's belief and value system. This was indispensable as far as the study participants in the Bosomtwe District of Ghana were concerned.

Boateng and Agyeman (2018) emphasised the need for a relatively extended period of training and selection during the initiation to preserve the best interests and values of the culture in which those adolescents find themselves. Similarly, this current study revealed that the duration of these rites affects adolescents in the Bosomtwe District of Ghana. Boateng and Agyeman's (2018) claim calls for attention from all relevant authorities and opinion leaders to ensure that the initiation processes remain an intrinsic aspect of society and promote cultural heritage. Therefore, there is a need for a policy to direct adolescents and community leaders on how to perform the initiation rites.

My findings resonate with Lapushkina (2020), who indicated that adolescents' initiation rites boost their self-confidence and the individual's social standing. It remains clear that the individual being initiated would be able to express a stronger group identity and feel more content. The study participants indicated that it uplifted the social status of the initiates, as they were treated with respect and dignity. In this regard, I submit that the findings in my study seemed to suggest that formulating counselling policy guidelines that direct the practice of adolescents' rites and rituals of passage across many communities needs serious consideration and prompt implementation.

While corroborating the results from this study, Kamau (2013) reiterated that psychological variables such as self-esteem and psychological distress have diverse effects on adolescents' development into adulthood in various social contexts. The current findings concur with the available literature (Alexopoulos, 2021; Merten, 2005). Evidence has it that completing the ritual process successfully demonstrates that the adolescent has matured, can persevere, is fearless, and is courageous to face life's challenges and increases their social values. It is well known in the literature that psychosocial well-being is one of the most powerful features generated by initiation rites of passage. Rites of passage have long been used as a way for adolescents to learn to cope with challenges encountered throughout life changes (Kamau, 2013; Natsuaki et al., 2011).

Participants stated that important skills and virtues were acquired through the teachings and the training the initiates were taken through. In particular, through the initiation process, individuals were privileged to acquire training in traditional dance and songs, cooking, housekeeping and marital conflict resolution. In consonance with this, previous literature has shown that initiates are taught very useful skills, such as performing household chores, singing, dancing and playing local musical instruments (Alcorta, 2023; Alford, 2013). Initiation rites for adolescents are not just mere ceremonies. Rather, they offer simple training cycles to individuals on skills or abilities required to occupy a new status in society and offer privileges associated with adulthood (Nwadiokwu et al., 2016). Skills acquired from the initiation ceremony are demonstrated in personal growth, gaining control over what happens in a real-life situation, mastery in housekeeping and leading a purposeful life.

The quality of the environment created during the initiation rites provides adolescents with opportunities to participate in and imitate the learning process. These adolescents began to behave appropriately and connected themselves to the ritual leaders, with the young adolescents developing improved home-keeping skills and demonstrating a better understanding of how to play their roles as young adults. A healthy environment plays a significant role in creating a conducive learning environment that facilitates a speedy learning process among adolescents. The results in this current study crystallised the findings from earlier research, which found that creating the needed environment and particularly attention given to individuals enhanced the relationship between caregivers and their adolescent children. That served as a bedrock to the skills and personality development of the latter (Boud, 2012; Daniel et al., 2011; Setlhabi, 2014).

Preventing promiscuity was considered by participants as a further outcome of the initiation process. The underpinning reasons for instilling a good moral and behavioural adjustment were attributed to the dynamics of the ritualisation process. In line with this, Natsuaki et al. (2011) suggested a virginity test to examine one's eligibility, which served as a social strategy that encouraged adolescents to be morally upright or avoid premarital sex. The principles underlining adolescents' initiation rites prevented youngsters from living a promiscuous sexual life. Based on this principle,

parents and family members ensure their adolescent children are engaged in healthy relations by living a chaste life (Setlhabi, 2014).

Furthermore, the outcome of the initiation processes was evident through the lifestyle of the youngsters and the long-term psychological impact on the individual. This included the impact on their confidence level, academic performance, educational career and mental well-being. These ideas were reiterated by previous scholars, including Kapungwe (2003), Kearin (2013) and Kutufam (2021). Secondly, the nature and demands of the ceremony, as stated by participants, helped in minimising the spread of certain sexually transmitted infections, such as HIV and AIDS, as adolescents were urged to stay away from sexual activities. Accordingly, I argue that the initiation rites and rituals narrated in the current study encouraged adolescents to live healthy lives and develop self-disciplined behaviour.

Participants in the study contend that funds were raised during the initiation process for the purpose of helping the individual to start an apprenticeship programme, trade, or support the cost of education. Similarly, Alcorta (2023) explains that despite modernisation, and the influence of other foreign religious practices on the people of Ghana during the colonial days, adolescents were keen to participate in the initiation because of the financial reward attached to the ceremony. The findings from this study corroborate those by Abbey et al. (2021), who claimed that community leaders use this process to appeal to their members to support the youths financially. They further contended that the effect of the appeal for funds is an enhanced economic rating of these adolescents, making them monetarily capable of reaching out for their dream vocation. In this regard, they tend to use the money generated as start-up capital to change their impoverished family background. Owing to this, parents and other family members encourage their adolescents to show interest in the initiation ceremony, as it affects their socio-economic status.

From Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological system viewpoint, an adolescent grows amid a complex network of interactions influenced by various facets of the local community (Bronfenbrenner, 2008). He further argues that it is important to comprehend the various social, economic, cultural, and community-level aspects that impact adolescents' psychological, emotional, and social development both separately and collaboratively. Given the above, it can be concluded that adolescents' development

is influenced by everything around them during the ritualisation process, directly or indirectly, affecting their academic success, personal adjustment and mental well-being.

### 5.2.2.5 Summary of Theme 2

The participants' responses on the traditional rituals and rites of passage adolescents undergo in the Bosomtwe District of Ghana provide opportunities to develop holistic individuals that allow the adolescent to operate on equal levels. This implies that such a ceremony would provide a platform for initiates to develop positively, resulting in progressive educational, personal-social and vocational outcomes.

### 5.2.3 THEME 3: HOW ADOLESCENTS EXPERIENCE RITES AND RITUALS OF PASSAGE

The theme regarding how adolescents experience rites and rituals of passage produced two sub-themes, namely, positive experiences and negative experiences. Table 5.4 gives the overview of Theme 3, its sub-theme, the inclusion and exclusion criteria.

**Table 0.4: Overview of theme 1 and its sub-themes**

THEME 3	
How adolescents experience rites and rituals of passage	
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Sub-theme 3.1</b> Positive experiences <b>Categories:</b> 3.1.1 Eliminating cognitive dissonance 3.1.2 Producing joyful moments 3.1.3 Enlightenment</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Sub-theme 3.2</b> Negative experiences <b>Categories</b> 3.2.1 Psychological distress 3.2.2 Embarrassing and a form of ridicule 3.2.3 Rituals unacceptable to Christian faith and beliefs</p>
Inclusion criteria for sub-themes	Any data that illustrates how adolescents experience rites and rituals of passage
Exclusion criteria for sub-themes	Any data that does not illustrate how adolescents experience rites and rituals of passage.

The two sub-themes are discussed next.

### 5.2.3.1 Sub-theme 3.1: Positive Experiences

In this section, I present the data related to the positive experiences of adolescents as they undergo the traditional rites and rituals of passage. To develop the categories that support this sub-theme, I analysed data from the interviews, the focus group discussions and observations. The categories that emerged from this sub-theme include eliminating cognitive dissonance, producing joyful moments, and enlightenment.

#### **a. Eliminating cognitive dissonance**

During the interviews and the focus group discussions, most participants indicated that the adolescents would eliminate cognitive dissonance through the initiation process. The psychological tension imbalance of thoughts and beliefs that do not give adolescents the opportunities to take control of their thinking and decisions are cured by presenting relevant information items. In other words, adolescents would not have opposing situations that make them feel or have cognitive confusion. A teacher expressed her sentiments as follows:

*“Adolescents will experience a kind of gradual cognitive dissonance removal during the initiation ceremonies, which is likely to clear up confusion in their minds as they are learning new information to re-construct their thoughts” (SC1, AD2, P52 line 18-39).*

The teacher is suggesting that if the adolescent does not encounter a new set of valuable knowledge in the initiation process, they may face mental discomposure. Another teacher also had this to say:

*There are inconsistent thoughts, beliefs and attitudes these adolescents are embattled. It gradually fades away as the initiation rites and rituals are being performed. For instance, at the point where the girls are made to swallow the egg, they are told not to bite it, if they do, they will be chewing their future children. The adolescent's mind may undoubtedly harbour some level of scepticism or unbelief as a result of this type of encounter. After swallowing the egg, the uncertainty is resolved. (SC2, TR2, P68-69 line 43-63)*

This implies that when the rites and rituals conducted conflict with an adolescent's personal beliefs and values, they cause discomfort. The adolescent should consult the ritual leaders for advice on what the major elements of the events are. One of the parents expressed her opinion as follows:

*I think this initiation process sometimes brings easiness since the interaction between the adolescent and the adult is reciprocal, especially at the particular moment the rituals are being performed. Even when unpleasant, initiates are able to question, which reduces psychological strain. (SC3, PR1, P109 line 2-21)*

The above view implies adequate dialogue between the ritual leaders and the adolescents should occur before the ritual to dispel any erroneous presumptions or beliefs. In line with the above issue on the positive impacts of rites and rituals on identity development, one of the adolescents shared her experience:

*If there are disbeliefs or doubts in our minds regarding some of these practices we perceive as outdated, it is likely to create tension and conflict in our minds. This would result in psychological discomfort that can affect our participation. Dialogue is important in this regard. (SC2, AD2, P37 line 22-36)*

The adolescent is suggesting that ritual leaders should use approaches that enable them to develop divergent thinking. The interactive approaches seemed to help the ritual leaders control and eliminate the confusion in the adolescent mind, which might hinder their ability to concentrate on the ritual acts. Emerging from the above responses is the fact that the positive experiences of initiates brought on by the rites and rituals alleviate cognitive dissonance. Life experiences and negative events that could result in depressive outcomes before the initiation stage of the rite become suppressed as the initiates conceptualise and internalise key values of initiation in their own way, which is less devastating and could reduce the effect of cognitive dissonance. This is likely because the information is straightforward and may stop the adolescent from having erroneous beliefs and ideas.

### ***b. Producing joyful moments***

The study revealed that adolescents experience joyful moments as they undergo bragoro rites and rituals. The anticipation produced in their life by events in the rituals can lift the adolescents' enthusiasm for the initiation activities. Most participants agreed that the special attention, treatment and colourful events from rites and rituals create memorable moments in the initiation process. One of the adolescents had this to say:

*There are several interesting moments in the rites of passage. First and foremost, the mother and the whole town were delighted to learn that I had experienced my first menstruation. After presenting me to the queen mother, the physical and spiritual checks were carried out to determine my eligibility before a date was fixed for the ritualisation. To climax the initiation, my finger and toenails were cut, and I was dressed in a pure white cloth festooned with beads and expensive pieces of jewellery. This turned out to be a great source of ecstasy not only for me and my parents but for the whole village. (SC1, AD 4, P39 line 9-43)*

The above means that all community members share the glorified moments, and they actively participate in safeguarding the ritualisation. In line with the above view, a parent expressed his views as follows:

*The name of the initiation process, “Bragoro” speaks for itself. The terminology is composed of two Akan words. That is, “bra” (life) and “goro” (dance). The term, therefore, signifies a life dance. To me, it is a fun fair and you do not even need to force or threaten anyone to partake. The whole process makes us happy. (SC2, PR3, P66-67 line 13-35)*

The above quotation implies that the interpretation given by the nuclear family and entire community to bragoro rites stimulates adolescent interest to participate in the initiation process. A social studies teacher expressed his sentiments as follows:

*Initiates are eager to see how the community members will welcome them on the final day of the rituals. The girl who is now a woman performs the thanksgiving ritual by touring the entire neighbourhood with a few of her family members to express her gratitude to everyone. It is*

*amazing to see the type of applause they receive. (SC1, TR1, P70 line 19-28)*

The above quote suggests that adolescents are more likely to participate in the initiation processes after seeing the advantages of the event. When responding to the same issue on the joyful moments within the initiation rites, an adolescent narrated her experiences as follows:

*I was happy with the way I was treated. An elderly woman carried me at the back to the riverside for purification or spiritual cleansing. At this particular moment, I felt like a queen. I had a regal feeling at this specific time. The fact that I had to sit on the stool three times also astounded me. They referred to it as an enstoolment rite. (SC2, AD3, P33 line 2-23)*

From the above experiences, the onset of the rites can cause excitement, happiness, and joy depending on how adolescents understand and appreciate the rites. As the rite reaches its final stage, ceremonies and durbars can be organised where the adolescent performs various forms of dance to signify their successful passage of the rites. The implication of the above is that the ceremonial actions and the care initiates receive stimulate them. The initiation ceremony would excite the adolescent if the ritual leaders made the procedures exciting and painless.

### **c. Enlightenment**

Findings from the study established that initiation rites that involve transmitting information and skills training can enlighten adolescents. In this sense, the adolescents' empowerment is relative to the quality of education received from the ritual leaders. This was confirmed by an adolescent who narrated her experiences as follows:

*During the initiation, one elderly woman taught us. I believe the majority of my colleagues will never forget the wisdom she shared. The ritualistic process has taught us about the community's ideals and how to uphold them most deeply. It impacts knowledge of our culture and a sense of obligation toward ritualistic practices. (SC1, AD3, P12-13 line 35-57)*

Given the above, adolescents desire to learn when ritual leaders share their ideas and experiences with them. Another adolescent boy added during the focus group discussion:

*“The symbolic acts in rituals and the stories narrated by the elderly ones enlighten us to be able to express our opinions, values, and appreciate our cultural heritage” (SC2, AD4, P95 line 10-17).*

Adolescents are not motivated to learn unless they are fully active through storytelling, discussion and other child-centred approaches that allow them to study the concepts on their own. When responding to the same question of enlightenment during the individual interview session, a parent expressed her views as follows:

*It can also serve as the medium through which the adolescents are oriented on the do’s and don’ts of the community so they can be able to observe. The chief priest who wants to stay with you, as is claimed among our people, will reveal to you what is forbidden to him. (SC3, PR3, P79 line 30-41).*

When adolescents are taught what is prohibited or detested in the community, they get enlightened and are better equipped to live up to society's standards. The Religious and Moral Education teacher supports that introducing the initiates to the taboos can help them live in harmony with all persons in the community and avoid sanctions. The teacher explained that:

*The ritual leaders are well-versed in the prayers, words, activities and traditions of the community. The task of leading the proceedings of the rites and rituals is bestowed on these men and women. They are able to make the initiates concentrate, generate interest and get empowered. (SC1, TR3, P40-41 line 40-51)*

From the above, the initiation empowers adolescents’ identities and more respected social standing in their communities. Fulfilling gender roles is seen as positive by both initiates and their communities, and this contributes to young men feeling more assertive and better prepared to take on leadership positions, while young girls feel empowered by the sexuality lessons. It can be deduced that adolescents feel

empowered when given the chance to learn about communal norms, values, and taboos. In this way, the adolescents avoid punishment and take pleasure in the tranquillity and calmness of their neighbourhood.

### **5.2.3.2 Sub-theme 3.2: Negative experiences**

In this section, I present the data related to the negative experiences of adolescents as they undergo the traditional rites and rituals of passage. To develop the categories that support this sub-theme, I analysed data from the interviews, the focus group discussions and observations. The categories produced from this sub-theme include psychological distress, embarrassment and ridicule, and rituals unacceptable to Christian and Muslim beliefs.

#### **a. Psychological distress**

Findings from the study revealed that the initiate is likely to experience emotional and psychological difficulties if the ritual leaders and their assistants cause them psychological pain, do not get along with them, do not speak to them honestly and warmly, and do not treat them with dignity. During a focus group discussion, one of the adolescents described his experiences as follows:

*I underwent circumcision to be ushered into manhood. I had to put up with some uncomfortable circumstances when the ceremony of circumcision was performed. This action caused me great pain. Consequently, you should not expect me to advise someone to participate if I went through such a traumatic experience. (SC1, AD2, P10 line 17-32)*

The implication from the foregoing is that the adolescent boy can only be deemed a man after undergoing this painful ritualisation process. The psychological trauma may cause the person to have a bad attitude toward the initiation rite as a whole. Another adolescent had this experience to share:

*Due to what I went through, I felt stressed. I was unable to complain, though. In our situation, we were forced to sit on a stool with our breasts exposed during the enstoolment rites. People were invited to come and watch us by paying money. This practice made us feel uncomfortable*

*and ashamed, and we wished it had not happened to us. (SC4, AD3, P24 line 57-77)*

In view of the above, it is necessary to eliminate aspects of initiation and nubile ceremonies that do not give adolescents favourable conditions. One of the teachers during the individual interviews shared her views as follows:

*Adolescents would not feel free to act in a circumstance where they have to showcase their breasts during the segment of the ceremony devoted to the enstoolment rites. Even though it is extremely difficult, parents can now haggle with the queen mother and kinsmen. If they concur, you are required to pay a fee; if not, you must put up with it. (SC1, AD1, PR 115 line 32-54)*

The aforementioned comment demonstrates the need for community leaders to comprehend these adolescents' condition and pay attention to any ritual they feel diminishes their human dignity. There should be forums where adolescents, their parents, and local officials may air their concerns. In line with the above issue, a teacher had this experience to share:

*I have seen a number of initiations and nobility rites where adolescents were subjected to traditions that caused psychological challenges to them. For instance, the initiate is required to touch two children during the grand durbar. It is believed that if she can touch both a boy and a girl, she will give birth to offspring of both sexes. It is also assumed that she will give birth to only girls if the two children she touches are both females. In this particular case, the girl touched only females. As a result of her disappointment at not being able to touch the children she wanted, she got worried. (SC3, TR1, P44 line 15-31)*

If adolescents experience such frustration and disappointment, they are likely to develop psychosocial challenges. A parent expressed her views as follows:

*“If certain aspects of the rites and rituals impose negative experiences, adolescents would not feel comfortable and maybe mentally unstable” (SC1, PR1, P82 line 1-9).*

The above quotation implies that adolescents have significant psychological difficulties, particularly because of the weird customs that make them uncomfortable. There is psychological distress when there are no opportunities to discuss issues that impact the adolescent.

***b. Embarrassment and ridicule***

Most participants described some of the unpleasant events that occurred during the rites and rituals as embarrassing and a form of ridicule. It was determined that adolescents who underwent weird rites as part of the initiation process were likely to avoid exposure because they believed it had degraded their sense of human dignity. One of the adolescents narrated her experiences as follows:

*I was taken to the riverside for a spiritual bath while being carried. I had to stripe myself naked by removing everything I was wearing in front of these elderly people. I had little option, although it was not simple. This situation was the real cause of my embarrassment and discomfort. (SC4, AD4, P31 line 42-58)*

The suggestion is that the adolescent feels humiliated since being exposed naked as part of the initiation causes a disabling circumstance. A social studies teacher expressed his sentiments as follows:

*The girl who has had her first menstruation is brought before the queen mother, and it is up to her kinsmen to determine whether or not she qualifies. The first is a spiritual examination, and the second is a physical examination to determine whether the female is pregnant or has ever engaged in sexual activity. Since this event is reserved exclusively for virgins, any girl who fails this exam will not be allowed to participate. Those who fail the virginity test face public ridicule after being revealed to have led an immoral life. (SC2, TR3, P117-118 line 9-38)*

The ritual leaders might lessen the humiliation or embarrassment by altering some of these outmoded ritualisation activities. Teachers and parents agreed that some of the rituals' unpleasantness demotivates adolescents and decreases their desire to take part in initiation rites. Adolescents reported that some youngsters attempt to leave the

community to avoid being forced to participate in the initiation procedure because of the embarrassing experience.

I provide an excerpt from my research journal highlighting the effects of some of the adolescents' frustration.

*On a specific day, I showed up at one of the sampled schools during a break. I saw some classmates making fun of a specific female student. The youngster who was being mocked seemed pretty uncomfortable as tears streamed down her face. Some of the students told me she failed the virginity test and was unclean when I questioned them about why they were torturing her. Although the incident occurred roughly two years ago, the involved student lamented the fact that her peers continued to bring it up frequently. (Researcher, research journal notes)*

### **c. Rituals unacceptable to Christian faith and beliefs**

Findings from the study indicated that adolescents who took part in the initiation had to go through ceremonies that were against their Christian convictions. In their responses, the adolescents, teachers, and parent participants agreed that these rites and rituals include activities like ancestral worship and libation pouring, among others. The majority of initiates came into contact with activities that were inconsistent with their religious ideals, which made it challenging for them to maintain a stable mind. One of the adolescent boys narrated his experiences as follows:

*Premium is placed on the circumcision ritual they do for us. The blood that is shed during circumcision forges a link between the contemporary community and the ancestors. Before circumcision, the person is viewed as an outsider, and via the blood, he forms a fresh covenant with the ancestor's spirits. This rite was in opposition to my Christian principles. (SC4, AD1, P14 line 25-46)*

It is crucial to note that adolescents who do not have a flexible mindset typically face more psychological, emotional, and social difficulties. The majority of parents and educators agreed that rites that run counter to the initiates' conversion to Christianity generally result in antisocial behaviour. One of the adolescent girls in an interview narrated as follows:

*My parents and I have been devout Christians from the day we were born. But when I came of age, I was required to go through this ritualisation as part of my people's customs and traditions. Contrary to what I had anticipated, cultural practices associated with idol worshipping, such as Black Stools, the pouring of libations, and special sculptural items became an important facet of the ritualisation. Such acts are against my Christian belief. At one point, I became tense and wanted to quit the initiation process. (SC2, AD1, P80 line 12-40)*

This suggests that including traditional worship does not always result in the compliance that the ritual leaders expected, but rather causes religious conflict and behavioural difficulties. This could mean that rather than using force or external control, which could result in the adolescents acting aggressively and unruly, the ritual leaders and community elders should change the rituals to fit modern practices. An integrated science teacher had this to say:

*Adolescents may feel cut off from or estranged from their Christian faith if they experience primitive and antiquated rituals during the initiation ritualisation. These adolescents are more likely to engage in non-compliant behaviour if they feel alienated by their new beliefs. (SC1, TR3, P 41 line 20-33)*

The above quotation implies that adolescents who struggle to control their behaviour during ritualisation are more likely to retreat. It appears that when ritual leaders utilise fear to subdue the youth, they produce more psychological damage because the initiates struggle to participate in some of the ritual behaviours. In support of the aforementioned concern, one of the parents stated during the individual interview sessions that:

*These days some youngsters and their parents are hesitant to participate in bragoro ceremonies since Christianity has swept through our communities. Some of the rites, they claim, go against their Christian beliefs. If a parent does not want their ward to participate in initiation, they must present eggs and pay a fee to be exempt from the entire process. Some parents may flee to neighbouring communities with their*

*wards if there is resistance from the elders. (SC3, PR3, P10-11 line 29-52)*

The parent seems to suggest that unacceptable Christian practices promote rebellious behaviour because parents and their wards would attempt to resist such an imposition. Community leaders are thus expected to become familiar with the rapidly changing natural environments, fast-paced changes, and rapid cultural changes on a global scale.

Initiation rites require young people to partake in certain activities and ceremonies which are against their Christian beliefs. This puts their Christian faith and beliefs at risk, as it is much more challenging for them to perform these activities contrary to their faith and beliefs. Those adolescents indicated that they experienced discomfort with some of the rituals based on their Christian beliefs at one of the sampled schools. Such persons had their names appearing more frequently in the Wednesday school worship roster, which was a Christian worship. Most of them also confirmed that their parents were either elders or pastors of churches. They showed a strong dedication to the Christian faith.

### **5.2.3.3 Discussions of Findings of Theme 3**

This theme focused on exploring how adolescents experience traditional rituals and rites of passage, particularly participants' understanding and reflections on what adolescents go through during the entire period of initiation. This study's teachers, parents and adolescent participants indicated a fair perception of the initiation processes. Most participants perceived these encounters as a mixed reaction, and this perception involved both negative and positive experiences.

#### **5.2.3.3.1 Sub-theme Positive Experiences**

Participants agree that adolescents who go through traditional initiation rites exhibit positive encounters by eliminating cognitive dissonance. With most participants, this was at their topmost list regarding the positive experience they acquired during the ritualisation process. Participants indicated that during the ritualisation process, initiates are presented with a set of balanced information which helps to eliminate psychological tension and imbalance of thoughts and beliefs that equips them with the opportunities to take control of their thinking and life choices. In support of the current

finding, Abbey (2016), whose study focused on psychosocial correlates of rites of passage among the Krobo youth in Ghana, confirms that traditional rituals and rites of passage create a platform for community leaders to provide members meaningful information and compassionate interventions that assist in improving adolescents' way of thinking and quality of life.

According to Scheer et al. (2007), the events which mark adolescents' initiation rites are deeply linked to intrapsychic processes, thereby making them able to develop a form of self-development map. These new developments make adolescents discard their old identities and reconstruct their thoughts to give them a new identity. In this regard, the new information presented to the initiate during the ritualisation process symbolises maturity and clears doubts or other forms of uncertainty surrounding adult roles which might have existed in the youngster's mind. Through such ritual activities, the adolescents' brains develop as they acquire an improved mental process to understand, analyse and clear all forms of confusion in their minds.

#### **i) Producing joyful moments**

Participants also highlighted the joyful moments during the initiation rites as one of the positive experiences adolescents undergo. They indicated that adolescents who were taken through the initiation rites received unusual attention and treatment from the ritual leaders. Similar results are found in other studies (Kangwa, 2011; Mutale, 2017; Pemba et al., 2012; Siweya et al., 2018). This situation affects the psychosocial well-being and mental health of the adolescent. Participants further indicated that the colourful events from rites and rituals brought some unforgettable and joyous experiences in the adolescent's life. In line with this finding, studies by Skinner et al. (2013) indicate that adolescents undergoing their rites and rituals are privileged to have exciting moments like dressing in beautiful clothing, beads, expensive pieces of jewellery, singing and special traditional dances.

Adolescents being surrounded by respectable elderly people, family members, friends and well-wishers, particularly during the ground durbar, leaves unforgettable moments in the lives of these youngsters. They become delighted and more confident as they receive cheers and congratulatory messages (Siweya et al., 2018). An increase in confidence level leads to a positive self-image. Adolescents who may go through the rites of passage are approached with joy and exultation as they are finally "out-doored"

by the whole gathering; this further intensifies their enthusiasm and personal well-being. In light of this, Ogbogu and Odife (2019) maintain it impacts adolescents' progress and well-being.

## **ii) Enlightenment**

Participants in this study were again of the view that a positive experience encountered during this ritualisation process has brought a high level of enlightenment and certainty in the lives of adolescents. The participants indicated that due to the initiation rites, adolescents were empowered with information, values and skills through the quality of training they had. They indicated that the ritualistic process taught initiates about the community's ideals and how to uphold them in high esteem. The participants felt the form of tutelage, such as the impartation of knowledge of our culture and a sense of obligation toward ritualistic practices, brought a new experience because this was a new symbolic experience with adolescents who were made to appreciate their cultural heritage.

In support of this finding, Boateng and Agyeman (2018) indicated that rites of passage, which have spread around the world, have a training and selection phase to transmit and preserve the best interests and values of the culture in which adolescents find themselves. Adolescent experiences during initiation rites, according to Alexopoulos (2021), were mostly positive, and the new encounter brings about uncertainty. Rites of passage typically encompass various disciplines, such as folklorists, mythologists, and anthropologists, making adolescents form their own identities based on their culture.

Traditional rituals and rites organised under the auspices of community leaders are vital for adolescents because, in the absence of these rites, they attempt to create their own rites of passage by engaging in risky behaviours such as violence, substance abuse, gangs, bullying, and other delinquency behaviours. In this regard, rites of passage play an important role in handing down social and religious beliefs, cultural values and the necessity to balance oneself and society's expectations (De-Whyte, 2018; Teferra & Shibre, 2012).

### **5.2.3.3.2 Sub-theme Negative Experiences**

This theme focused on how adolescents experience traditional rituals and rites of passage, with particular reference to the negative experiences adolescents encounter as they undergo this initiation ceremony. It is well known in the literature that rites of passage are structured social activities that separate adolescents from their prior identities, carry them through a time of transition to a new identity, and integrate them into a new function (Pemba et al., 2012; Siweya et al., 2018). Adolescents' rites of passage are not just social activities but also entail sacred moments of transcendence (Scheer et al., 2007). Participants in this study highlighted psychological distress, embarrassment and a form of ridicule as some negative experiences they had during the initiation rites. They emphasised that some rites and rituals are unacceptable to Christian and Muslim beliefs, and these have become the main negative experiences adolescents encounter during the traditional rituals and rites of passage.

Participants noted that some initiates experienced a negative impact that was associated with psychological distress. They narrated that the initiates are likely to experience emotional and psychological difficulties if the ritual leaders and their assistants do not get along with them, do not speak to them honestly and warmly, and do not treat them with dignity, thereby causing psychological pain to them. In line with the literature, as stated in Chapter Two, Dalbudak et al. (2013) found that before and after initiation rites, adolescents may suffer depressed symptoms as a result of their life experiences and unfavourable events like ritual bathing and breast showcasing, among others. A study by Yarney et al. (2015), confirms the findings of the current study. They reported that adolescents had a host of concerns, including psychological, emotional, and physiological pains that were linked to certain sociocultural factors encountered during the customary rituals and rites of the initiation ceremony.

Accordingly, Ge and Natsuaki (2009) argue that anxiety and depression result from initiates not being adequately prepared to face the pressures associated with the rites of passage. As illustrated in Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological systems theory, the implication is that psychological well-being or mental stability cannot be achieved alone. For adolescents to be well- and functioning successfully during the ritualisation process, they require psychological and physical support at multiple systems from the separation stage to the time of incorporation. Though psychosocial well-being is one

major element associated with rites of passage, it has been found that during the transition period, individuals feel discomfort when participating in specific rituals (Abbey et al., 2021). As such, ritual leaders and family members should prepare the minds of the initiates by telling them what to anticipate at every given process of the initiation.

Most participants indicated that situations where initiates experienced certain negative events, caused embarrassment and a form of ridicule. Unpleasant situations like exposure to some sensitive body parts are seen as unacceptable since they degrade the adolescents' sense of human dignity. In accordance with the findings of the current study, Padmanabhanunni and Fennie (2017) found that there were certain unpleasant events initiates had to undergo. For instance, girls who undergo initiation rites are washed by their aunts and grandmothers, also referred to as sexual instructors. In this sense, these youngsters felt a bit uncomfortable, causing them some form of embarrassment since they had to go naked before the elderly ones.

Interestingly, while some participants linked the rites of passage to the positive impact on individual adolescents by looking at the events that make them function effectively and in a normal way, other participants emphasised that it brought about some negative impacts from the way some of the practices ridiculed their personalities. Other studies confirm this finding that the type of dressing where initiates, especially girls, are made to uncover their breasts, thighs, and abdomen served as a source of ridicule (Abbey & Nasidi, 2023; Wood, 2010; Wozniak & Allen, 2012). Also, in line with the participants' description, Emefa and Selase (2014) agree that some initiates have criticised some of the stages of the rites. They asserted that it was mockery in this modern era because photographs of their exposed bodies were used for souvenirs. Consequently, some of the adolescent girls who could not withstand the embarrassment of men looking at their naked bodies fled from the community. In this sense, Emefa and Selase (2014) advocate that initiates should be allowed to cover certain sensitive parts of their bodies, such as the breast, with a piece of cotton cloth to cater for the standards of modern society.

Participants in this study emphasised that some practices during the initiation were against their Christian convictions. They highlighted the ancestral worship, and libation pouring, among others, as part of the ritualisation process and claimed they were

inconsistent with their religious values. They further indicated that such activities made it difficult to maintain a stable mind, resulting in religious conflict and behavioural challenges. Similarly, Kangwa (2011) reported that the Roman Catholic and Protestant missionaries in Zambia viewed female initiation rites as pagan and immoral, and for this reason, placed a ban on its participation by their female members.

However, in line with the participants' views, Poku (2022) suggested that adolescent initiation rites should be included in Christian programmes and sacraments. He further argues that such rites are important in an individual's life and may empower them in the context of HIV and AIDS prevention. One participant in this study described a situation where ritual leaders had to induce fear into the initiates to compel them to submit. This action could produce more psychological damage to the youngsters, which impacted their lives in a very bad way. Such a negative feeling, in the view of Abbey et al. (2021), could lead to a poor mental status, psychological dislocation or dysfunction such as anxiety, depression, stress and low self-esteem.

Participants also emphasised the importance of teamwork between the community's traditional leaders and other religious leaders. They indicated the need for community leaders to comprehend the religious background of the adolescents and collaborate with such people to modify aspects of rituals they felt were against their doctrines. A healthy collaboration promotes teamwork and allows various interest groups to share and support one another. In support of these findings, studies by Kangwa (2011) and Abbey (2016) argue that the relationships characterised by mutual respect between traditional authorities, religious authorities and other key stakeholders are essential to designing policies to improve adolescents' well-being.

Concurrent with Bronfenbrenner's theory, an adolescent's microsystems (family) directly relate to its mesosystems (ritual leaders) in ritualisation. A functioning family unit where parents are actively involved in their wards' upbringing, where adolescents are made to adhere to rules, regulations and boundaries, fosters a critical quality of the relations between the interacting systems. Where there is no interaction among the microsystems (family), the adolescent and the ritual leaders, various factors come between these interactions and negatively affect the initiate. For example, adolescents from poor socio-economic backgrounds may experience a shortage of money (exosystems), which influences the adolescents' microsystems (training). The home

condition is another determinant that keeps adolescents away from initiation rites if parents or relatives do not have money to purchase the needed items for their wards. It is clear that there is a strong interaction among the systems (microsystems, mesosystems and exosystems) that adversely affects an adolescent's participation in the initiation processes.

#### **5.2.3.4 Summary of Theme 3**

The participant responses above regarding how adolescents experience rites and rituals of passage provide psychological explanations of why some community members continue to hold cultural rites in high regard while others condemn the practice. Their experiences amply demonstrate how bragoro rites are seen by adolescents, parents and teachers in relation to various psychological effects. The adolescent's mental well-being, social life, and emotional development are negatively impacted by such humiliating rituals that cause psychological pain.

#### ***5.2.4 Theme 4: Rites and Rituals of Passage and Adolescent Psychosocial Identity Development***

In this section, I provide data related to rites and rituals of passage and adolescent psychosocial identity development. As indicated earlier, the psychosocial conception of identity formation is linked with the rituals that occur throughout the rites of passage ceremony. To me, these identities are attained when a person feels and encounters obstacles relating to a sense of comfort with oneself from the past, present, and future while incorporating a type of identity that is accepted by the community at each stage of life. In various ways, I highlight and discuss the social and psychological constructs impacting the psychosocial identity development of adolescents. These emerged substantially. Table 5.5 gives the overview of Theme 4, its sub-themes, the inclusion and exclusion criteria.

**Table 0.5: Overview of Theme 4 and its sub-themes**

<b>THEME 4</b> <b>Rites and rituals of passage and adolescent psychosocial identity development</b>	
Sub-theme 4.1 Psychological impact <b>Categories</b> 4.1.1 Developing self-esteem 4.1.2 Personal maturation	Sub-theme 4.2 Social Impact <b>Categories</b> 4.1.1 Cultural identity 4.1.2 Providing means of socialisation
Inclusion criteria for sub-themes	All information relevant to rites and rituals of passage and adolescent psychosocial identity development
Exclusion criteria for sub-themes	All information not relevant to rites and rituals of passage and adolescent psychosocial identity development

**5.2.4.1 Sub-theme 4.1: Psychological Impact**

In this section, I report on the psychological constructs emanating from rites and passage rituals. Arising from this sub-theme, the following categories emerged from the data analysis: developing self-esteem, personal maturation, and developing a positive self-image.

**a. Developing self-esteem**

The study established that bragoro rites and rituals and adolescents' self-esteem were strongly linked. The majority of participants reported that adolescents who underwent the initiation process showed increased self-esteem, which affected the development of their psychosocial identities. Adolescents who took part in the focus group discussions agreed that bragoro rites and rituals affected their sense of self. One of the adolescents narrated her experiences as follows:

*I can say that the opportunity I had to take part in the initiation process enhanced my sense of self and self-worth. I was timid and seem insecure in front of my peers and the elderly were eliminated by this type of public exposure. The negative self-image changed and I started to view myself as capable and knowledgeable. (SC4, AD1, P15 line 16-37)*

It is significant to note that improved self-esteem can help adolescents feel more confident and deserving of themselves, both essential for emotional well-being. Through the way they dance, move, sit, and face the crowd at the durbar grounds, it

seems as though adolescents going through rites of passage are trying to defend their authority and amour-propre. During the one-on-one interviews, one of the teachers provided the following response to the same question regarding the impact of rites of passage on the development of adolescents' psychosocial identities:

*Adolescents' self-esteem grows as a result of the interactions and learning they have during the initiation activities. Adolescents must, therefore, carry out the rites and ceremonies with assertiveness and confidence, acting without showing any signs of shame, uneasiness, or fear of rebuke from the ritual leaders. Adolescents who are taught such positive attitudes have higher self-esteem. (SC1, P3, P114 line 47- 65)*

This comment suggests that an adolescent can have a high sense of self-worth if ritual leaders compliment them politely and offer helpful criticism of their initiatives. A parent expressed her sentiments as follows:

*The adolescents participating in these bragoro rites are young people who require encouragement and support to improve their self-esteem. During the training process, if the elders yell at them or will not listen to their concerns, they will eventually adopt a negative attitude toward the ceremony and lose confidence. (SC1, PR1, P50 line 18-29)*

The students should feel empowered to take charge of their learning through active involvement in the initiation ceremonies and rituals. Additionally, this would support the adolescent's development of a healthy sense of self-worth. Teachers believed that mutual respect and cooperation yielded positive self-esteem in adolescents. One of the integrated science teachers had this to say:

*Adolescents who appear upset about how they are handled or treated as a result of the antiquated behaviours they are engaging in risk losing their self-esteem. Community leaders should work to instil optimism and motivate young people to think favourably of the situation and themselves in order to raise their self-esteem in such situations. (SC2, TR2, P51 line 26-51)*

It is crucial for self-esteem growth and social adjustment for both physical and psychological changes to occur during adolescence. Likewise, rites of passage programmes are seen to have promoted a positive self-image and self-esteem by clearly defining roles, duties, and expectations. If adolescents are given the chance to harness their thoughts, beliefs and show satisfaction with oneself in the initiation process, they grow in confidence and develop their self-esteem. In other words, if the adolescents complete the entire initiation process successfully and in dignity, they feel treasured.

### ***b. Personal maturation***

Data from the focus group discussions, interviews, and reflective journals showed that the rites and rituals of passage encouraged personal development, which favoured the development of adolescents' psychosocial identities. Most study participants agreed that there is a connection between bragoro rites and adolescents' readiness to do tasks requiring maturity. One of the adolescents explained why she believed that initiation rites and rituals affected adolescents' maturational level. The adolescent narrated her experiences as follows:

*I became aware that, immediately following the initiation procedures, my style of thinking and action had changed. I spoke and dressed maturely when I went to the market, school or church. I believed that for people to continue to treat me with respect and give me attention, I need to continue to behave like an adult. (SC2, AD4, P27 line 34-55)*

Given the above findings, the community should acknowledge that these adolescents are evolving and working toward full functionality. In other words, the support adolescents receive to develop their mental and motor abilities during the initiation phase will determine whether or not they are ready for adult life. A teacher suggested:

*During the initiation process, adolescents need to be guided and assisted to enhance their intellectual capacities and functioning skills. Adolescents need to develop their critical thinking skills so they can offer useful suggestions, practical solutions, and persuasive arguments. They will be prepared to execute tasks as adults once their mental ability and skills have improved. (SC3, TR3, P41 line 2-20)*

To increase the adolescents' maturity, community leaders and parents should foster a nurturing and supportive learning environment that caters to their needs, interests, and goals during the initiation phase. A parent also added:

*The tasks and activities assigned to them are meant to develop adolescents' strength and maturity. In order to help them mature, they learn adult roles including how to manage households, resolve marital issues, parenting, and vocational skills like manufacturing baskets, needlework and many others. (SC3, PR, P83 line 7-19)*

Maturity is promoted by learning to carry out adult responsibilities and obligations. Skills acquisition is impacted by constructing an enabling learning environment marked by unrestrictive practices. During the focus group discussion, an adolescent had this to say:

*“We were told at the initiation that having emotional control was a sign of adulthood. We needed to learn how to keep our emotional equilibrium, lower our stress levels, and deal with life's hassles and responsibilities” (SC3, AD1, P43 line 12-24).*

A teacher added:

*“Lack of self-control and excessive emotional response to problems are in no way signs of maturity. This is why initiators are taught how to control their temper, listen more and speak less, accept criticism, and not avoid taking on personal obligations” (SC3, TR2, P66 line 14-29)*

Given the above, it may be deduced that an adolescent's maturity level can be determined by their capacity to control their anger, constructively receive critiques, and accept responsibility. This outcome arises from a setting where adolescents learn to deal with setbacks and exhibit signs of mental maturity. Therefore, parents and community leaders must foster learning environments that enable adolescents to take responsibility for their behaviour and share authority over the learning environment. They would gradually get more mature as a result of these environments.

#### **5.2.4.2 Sub-theme 4.1: Social Impact**

In this section, I report on the social impact that emanates from the rites and rituals of passage of adolescents. The following categories emerged from the analysis of the data arising from this theme: cultural identity, providing means of socialisation, and affecting the sense of belonging in adolescents.

##### **a. Cultural identity**

The study found that sacred emblems, like traditional foods, clothing, pottery, and songs used in initiation rituals, can aid in defining an adolescent's cultural identity. All participants agreed that these rituals and symbols can contribute to developing one's cultural identity. In support of this view, one of the adolescents had this to say:

*From my own point of view, Identity transformations are a part of initiation activities. The wide variety of rituals that make up rites of passage promotes the best development of cultural identity in adolescents entering adulthood. All of the clothing and jewellery we wear, as well as the traditional foods like "apapransa and etoo," serve as symbols of our cultural identity. We develop a special identity as a result of our interest in traditional customs. (SC1, AD2, P15 line 5-28)*

This implies that community leaders should use tactics, such as a community-based approach system that encourages and preserves cultural heritage through inclusive engagement. During the individual interviews, a parent also had this to say:

*I believe that community leaders should plan their interventions within the rites of passage so that historical and cultural knowledge, intellectual prowess, and social abilities become crucial components of the procedure to positively affect the ethnic identity of adolescents. Thus, the initiation ceremony serves as the cornerstone of traditional values consistent with Ghanaian culture. Such indigenous customs uphold moral standards in the local communities and support traditional values. (SC2, PR4, P113-114 line 31-65)*

The adolescents involved in this process are given the chance to learn as much as they can about the customs and history of their ancestors. The adolescent's cultural identity would develop as a result. They are more likely to acquire strong feelings of

love, patriotism, and devotion for their community if they feel they have control over and ownership of their cultural heritage. The teachers also believed that initiation ceremony practices enhance the adolescents' cultural identity. One of the teachers had this to say:

*Bragoro rites should be used by leaders to pass on the community's long-standing traditions. Leaders must continuously instil society's ideals through the transmission of customs passed down from generation to generation. It is undeniable that adolescents who are encouraged to partake in bragoro rites are more likely to form a distinct cultural identity.*  
(SC3, TR4, P73-74 line 3-33)

The above view implies that there should be a deliberate attempt to introduce and familiarise adolescents with customary practices. A parent also expressed a similar view on cultural identification, an integral component of the psychosocial identity development of the adolescent. The parent expressed his view as follows:

*"Identity transformations are constituted in bragoro rites. The rich array of rites and rituals that is embedded in the initiation ceremonies leads to optimal cultural identity development"* (SC1, PR1, P81-82 line 48-57).

According to the comments, cultural identity formation is one of the crucial elements and safeguards for young people's growth. Both the macrosystem and the sociocultural environment are thought to have an impact on how a person develops their cultural identity. Most positive and negative consequences are related to one's cultural milieu, which often affects stress resistance. As a result, in most Ghanaian cultures, social and economic factors govern the teenage phase for both sexes. Additionally, Ghanaian traditions surrounding puberty impart conventional views of adulthood to young individuals.

#### ***b. Providing means of socialisation***

Rite of passage is believed to link persons to their community as a means of socialisation. The study demonstrated that initiation rites are social events and symbolic actions that impact the social lives of adolescents' characteristics. It can help to improve adolescent inter-relationships in the community. Most participants revealed that good interpersonal relationships appeared to enhance the psychosocial identity

development of the adolescent. In support of the above view, one of the parents had this to say:

*Adolescent Social development can be enhanced through bragoro rites. Initiates are encouraged to exhibit good behaviours such as being sociable, tolerant, respectful, empathic, patient and kind in building good relationships with their peers and family members. (SC4, PR4, P40-41 line 21-46)*

Likewise, the adolescents shared the same sentiments with the parents that rites of passage enhanced initiates' social identity development. During a focus group discussion, one of the adolescents had this to say:

*We were all housed in the same compound throughout our initiation, and some of us even slept in the same room. We had to eat together because our meals were provided in the same bowl. We so shared meals, sleep, and many other activities which promoted oneness. (SC1, AD3, P122 line 57-71)*

Another adolescent added that:

*In reality, that was the perfect opportunity to pick up how to live harmoniously with our peers. At the end of the process, those of us who were shy and found it challenging to communicate with our peers had a remedy. We establish strong bonds with one another, and the majority of us who took the initiative the last time still have a strong network. (SC2, AD1, P124 line 2-23)*

This suggests that background and experiences gained via the initiation process are crucial components in enhancing adolescents' social lives. This is because adolescents process what they learn differently depending on what they bring to the initiation. In this regard, community leaders who oversee the procedure and consider individual variances in their treatment are likely to have positive interactions with adolescents. A parent expressed her sentiments as follows:

*“Parents and community leaders who care about adolescents’ participation in the bragoro process, encourage them and monitor their progress at each level of the initiation. They are more likely to have positive relationships with these children” (SC4, PR1, P90 line 1-13).*

The parents also believed that to win over the adolescents, ritual leaders who presided over the initiation process needed to demonstrate traits like a democratic attitude, friendliness, patience, a sense of humour, competence, fairness and empathy. In an interview session, a social studies teacher pointed out that:

*To me, personal attributes and qualities of ritual Leaders can help greatly improve the social skills of the adolescent. For example, adolescents would want to associate themselves with community leaders who are friendly, fair in their treatment and democratic in their decision-making. (SC4, TR3, P46 line 33-50)*

The teachers' view suggests that the leaders' personal qualities are crucial in forging deep bonds with adolescents, which ultimately impact the formation of their social identity.

#### **5.2.4.3 Discussions of Findings of Theme 4**

This theme focused on participants’ reflections on traditional rituals and rites of passage and their impact on adolescents’ psychosocial identity development. Most adolescents, parents and teacher participants in this study highlighted the psychological and social impacts the initiation processes brought to the youngsters. They indicated the plight faced by adolescents at this stage of identity formation.

##### **5.2.4.3.1 Psychological Impact**

This sub-theme focused on the psychological impact of rites of passage on adolescents from the perspective of the study participants. Categories produced included developing self-esteem and personal maturation.

##### **i) Developing self-esteem**

Participants indicated that adolescents who experienced the initiation ritualisation process boosted their self-esteem and confidence, positively impacting their psychosocial identity development. In their study, Gatti et al. (2014) confirm that

adolescent rituals and rites of passage among African Americans helped raise the self-image and self-esteem of the individual. In this regard, improved self-esteem can help adolescents feel more confident and focused in life. Johnson (2018) supported this finding that rites of passage are an important part of human identity development because of their potential to create an experiential map of self-concept. This form of initiation tends to be more self-directed and, therefore, a more sustainable approach to support the adolescents' psychosocial identity formation.

According to the participants' reflections, in most cases, after undergoing the initiation rites, the negative self-image that characterised most youngsters had changed, and such persons felt empowered as they saw themselves as knowledgeable and capable of handling their personal life problems. In support of this finding, Groff (2010) and Alford (2013) indicate that despite its nature of focusing on traditional worship, it is seen as a pivot upon which the holistic development of the adolescent revolves. The interviews with teachers, parents and adolescents on the psychological impact of rites of passage illustrated the reality faced by many adolescents, with some participants stating that initiates' self-esteem grew due to the interactions and training they had during the initiation activities. In line with this, some researchers emphasise the value of establishing a healthy relationship between ritual leaders and initiates to promote a harmonious working environment and positive growth among adolescents (Mapindani, 2018; Markstrom, 2011). In this sense, improved self-esteem is essential for personal well-being and, for that matter, the psychosocial development of the adolescent.

## **ii) Personal maturation**

Teachers in this study linked adolescents' rituals and rites of passage to personal maturation. They seem to suggest initiation rites impacted positively on adolescents' maturational level, affecting their psychosocial identity development. They indicated the significance of the traditional process of ushering adolescents into adulthood, which positively triggers their readiness to perform adult roles. In support of this finding, Aghwan and Mac-Regenstein (2019) posit that when individuals are guided to shape their values, thoughts and behaviours, they are more likely to experience a sense of personal and social control, as well as a sense of maturity in how they do things.

Most participants in this study highlighted the need for adolescents to master the roles and responsibilities associated with adulthood through learning. They indicated that initiation rites play a significant function by assisting adolescents to be equipped with skills, tools and techniques to cope with life challenges at home, school and work environments. Wozniak and Allen (2012) found that initiation rites give adolescents a positive outlook on life and make them more resilient and optimistic when faced with any physical, psychological, or emotional challenge. From the literature reviewed, Pittman and Kerpelman (2013) concur with this study's finding and note that the individual who goes through the rite of passage gains a definite place in the lineage as a mature person and an elder of the tribe or group.

Most of the participants expressed common sentiments on the role that should be played by community leaders and parents on issues relating to the maturation and well-being of adolescents in relation to rites of passage. They all agreed ritual leaders and parents needed to provide adolescents with a nurturing and supportive learning environment at the training phase of initiation to ensure they mature into adults fast. This same view is expressed by Schroeder et al. (2022) that traditional training provided during rites of passage, in a sense, supported adolescents to learn with the whole of their being to become mentally fit for future tasks. In this regard, the youngsters get the opportunity to acquire a wealth of practical skills, attitude and knowledge, mentoring, and oral instruction from the ritual leaders during the training.

In concurrence with the major assumption in Nsamenang's theory of social ontogenesis, Nsamenang contends that community members engage in social and cultural life during their ontogeny. Various ontogenetic routes and intellects are encompassed in the socio-ecological contexts and cultural systems in which adolescents are nurtured (Nsamenang, 2006). As a result, the adolescent is set up to promote shared accountability and a socially responsible personality within the family structure and the insular community. Accordingly, the development of these adolescents' experience is with respect to a change brought about by their involvement in cultural activities.

#### **5.2.4.3.2 Social Impact**

This sub-theme focused on the social impact of rites of passage of adolescents, from the perspective of study participants. Categories produced included establishing cultural identity and proving means of socialization.

##### **i. Establishing cultural identity**

Most participants agreed on the promotion of socio-cultural identity among the people as a mark of adolescents' rituals and rites of passage. They felt sacred traditional emblems like traditional foods, clothing, pottery, and songs used to initiate the adolescents made supporting their socio-cultural identity development easier. The findings from this study corroborate those by Van de Bongardt et al. (2016) who claimed that cultural interpretation of the rites of passage for adolescents created a social identity formation, which could affect them either negatively or positively. They further contended that the effect could be attributed to the transferred and reinforced societal community values which influence and guide the group behaviour. In this regard, community leaders use these teachings and traditional symbols during the initiation to impact adolescents' psychosocial identity development.

The findings of this study corroborate the findings made by Wozniak and Allen (2012), who claimed that initiation rites during which most community members converge provide adolescents with a place to learn, practise and rehearse skills such as self-presentation and self-disclosure. The implication is that initiation rites offer adolescents a new dimension of social models to examine and learn from others. In addition, by participating in the ritualisation process, adolescents practise social skills in a less threatening or uncomfortable manner under the tutelage of experienced community elders (Wood, 2010). The findings from this study highlight Bandura's social learning tenet that behaviour comes from observing, imitating and modelling (Salusky, 2021; Steegstra, 2005). In this view, rites of passage are adopted to enhance the social skills of adolescents, which consequently affect their personal well-being and adjustment needs.

##### **ii. Providing means of socialisation**

The study revealed that rites of passage could be used as a means of socialisation, in effect improving adolescents' social identity development. The views of the participants resonate with the findings by Van de Bongardt et al. (2016) and Schroeder

et al. (2022), who indicate that rites and rituals of passage could be used to enhance the social skills of initiates, especially those who look timid. Likewise, Best et al. (2016) stated that in the initiation process, adolescents could take advantage of the new era of learning to mingle with their co-initiates. In other words, the avenue created could somehow be used to help initiates build friendships, networks and support for themselves. This view of enhancing adolescents' social identity through the socialisation process during initiation rites and rituals is further espoused by Johnson (2018).

This study's findings are consistent with those of other researchers (Best et al., 2016; Mapindani, 2018; Markstrom, 2011), who believe that initiation rites may be used to help adolescents' social identity development. In this sense, social connections are a central feature of the normative developmental progression of adolescence to adulthood (Kearin, 2013; Wozniak & Allen, 2012). Signs of depression, loneliness and anxiety may set in on the adolescent if the co-initiates and rituals do not provide the needed emotional and social support (Blumenkrantz & Goldstein, 2010). In line with the psychosocial theory, positive connections address anxiety, loneliness, and depression (Ciuluvica et al., 2010; Gatti et al., 2014). Other scholars (Mapindani, 2018; Markstrom & Iborra, 2003) also attested to the findings of this study that initiation rites are a valuable source of socialising people and a platform for training adolescents.

According to the human bio-ecological systems model, adolescents' traditional settings, made of their cultural belief systems, values, and expectations, shape their identity. Bronfenbrenner (2008) argued that the macrosystem is a powerful force that shapes how adolescents respond to any given situation or circumstance. This system offers the assistance required to fortify connections within an environment that fosters one's growth and development (Donald et al., 2010). The micro and mesosystems' assistance for adolescents determines how much weight the macrosystem gives to their requirements (Chinyoka, 2013; Luthar, 2006). The interaction between co-initiates at the place of confinement and other subsystems (peer groups) reinforces the learning that has already occurred.

Cole et al. (2009) reiterate that peers play an important part in the development of adolescents. The most important socialising agents are peer groups, and when adolescents interact with their peers, they develop the capacity to interact with other

subsystems. As the adolescent learns behaviours and attitudes inside this system, the traditional institution is also seen as a socialising agency. Personal or shared goals and values of the community impact the system as a whole because an adolescent's drive to succeed affects how other community members develop.

#### **5.2.4.4 Summary of the Chapter**

In this chapter of my study, I presented an overview of the findings and discussed how they connect to the existing literature and theoretical/conceptual frameworks. The themes, sub-themes, and categories that surfaced during the process of thematic analysis of the raw data were presented. Direct quotes from the focus groups and interviews, as well as excerpts from my reflective journal and data from the document analysis, were used to strengthen the discussion of the themes, sub-themes, and categories.

The participants demonstrated their understanding of how adolescents experience psychosocial identity development associated with undergoing traditional rites of passage. During my discussions, I sought to determine whether my current findings were consistent, contradictory or addressed the gaps in the existing body of knowledge as presented in chapters two and three. I also established a link from the outcome of my study to the conceptual framework. This ensured that it supported the data instead of emerging only from the concepts gathered from the literature review established.

In the next chapter, I summarise the findings, draw inferences, answer the research questions, and make recommendations for future study, training, and practice.

## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **6.1 Introduction**

In chapter five, I presented and discussed the study's findings after analysing and interpreting the data generated from the focus group discussions, individual interview sessions, and field notes. I deliberated on the findings given the existing literature and the conceptual framework to understand adolescents' psychosocial identity development in relation to their traditional rituals and rites of passage in the Bosomtwe District of Ghana.

In this chapter, I conclude the study by summarising the responses to the sub-research questions and then reiterating the main research question, developed in chapter one to serve as a direction for the study. After that, I revisit the conceptual framework underpinning the current study and discuss the possible silences in the data. Then, I highlight the limitations and challenges encountered during my study. Additionally, I discuss the potential contributions of the study to future research, training, and practice in educational psychology. I conclude this chapter by offering suggestions for further study, practice, education, and policy-making.

#### **6.2 Overview of the Study**

The study aimed to determine how adolescents experience psychosocial identity development as they undergo their rituals and rites of passage. In doing so, I explored participants' diverse views on traditional rituals and rites of passage implications on adolescent psychosocial identity and positive well-being development. Despite the evidence of various kinds of research conducted on adolescents' traditional rituals and rites of passage in Ghana, I have yet to find studies in Ghana that examined how adolescents' initiation rites are likely to impact their psychosocial distinctiveness and identity development. This study was conducted with a focus on adolescents in the Bosomtwe District of Ghana. The scarcity of literature on the identified research problem gave impetus to this study. Given this context, the study was required as empirical evidence to boost understanding of the traditional rituals and rites performed for adolescents and to explore their potential value on their psychosocial identity development.

I expanded on the literature that was discussed and advanced the important ideas discovered by reviewing related literature. I reviewed the literature in accordance with the themes that emerged through a survey of sources, including academic journals, educational psychology, and primary social materials. The underlying conceptual framework developed in Chapter Three was greatly influenced by the tenets of Bandura's social learning theory, Erikson's psychosocial development theory, Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological systems theory, and Nsamenang's theory of social ontogenesis.

I discussed the research paradigm (interpretivism) and the qualitative approach employed in this study. I also discussed the motives for employing a phenomenology case study design. In addition, I determined the suitability of the instruments (Interview and focus group discussion guides) by pilot testing before their use. Moreover, I elaborated on the non-probabilistic (purposive) method used to sample the participants for the one-on-one interviews and focus groups. I also described my strategy for resolving my challenges as well.

Thereafter, I presented and discussed the results obtained from the study. The four themes that emerged from the thematic analysis of the data were: (1) Adolescents' psychological, emotional, and social experiences in their identity development; (2) Traditional rituals and rites of passage adolescents undergo; (3) How adolescents experience rites and rituals of passage, and (4) Rites and rituals of passage and adolescent psychosocial identity development. The study's rigour and credibility were assured through member-checking. The participants had access to the transcribed data and could use it to clarify, confirm, or object to the recorded information (see Section 4.1.3.2.1). I created an audit trail in my field notes to ensure the process's authenticity.

Then, I explicated the analysis of joint results with the literature. I provided examples of connections between the data and the literature and the contradictions and omissions that emerged from them. The study's significance in bridging knowledge gaps on adolescent psychosocial identity development in relation to their traditional rituals and rites of passage was highlighted by the data's differences, divergences, and silences.

### **6.3 Findings According to the Research Questions**

This study aimed to explore, comprehend, and ascertain how adolescents' traditional rituals and rites of passage influence their psychosocial identity development. Furthermore, the study undertook to understand how adolescents experience the rites of passage and how this knowledge could be used to develop new counselling guidelines. In Chapter One, I outlined the research questions and objectives that guided this study. In this section, I address the research questions posed in chapter one. In this way, I addressed the primary research question.

#### **6.3.1 Secondary Research Question 1 (*literature study*):**

Secondary Research Question 1 was: What are Western and African viewpoints on the psychological, social, and emotional identity formation of adolescents?

The findings from the literature established that adolescents' psychological, social, and emotional identity construction processes vary across two cultural contexts, the Western and African perspectives. In this study, it appeared that both Western and African perspectives emphasise the importance of social identity construction in adolescents' development, but they differ in how much emphasis is placed on individuality versus community. Adolescents in both contexts go through a process of social identity exploration and development, but the specific processes and priorities vary.

Given this, the study found that adolescents' social identity formation processes in the West strongly emphasised individualism and personal identity. To put it in another way, adolescents may choose to connect with social groups consistent with their values and ideas within the Western environment, where social identity creation is frequently tightly tied to self-identification. Adolescents are encouraged in this setting to explore and try out different social relationships and groups to find a place where they have a sense of identity and belonging that satisfies their social requirements (Adamsons & Pasley, 2013; Valkenburg & Peter, 2011). Additionally, peer pressure to live up to group standards and expectations may be experienced by adolescents, which may have an impact on how they develop their social identities.

When it comes to the African perspective, the study found that adolescents' social identity construction processes focus on communal and collective identity. Adolescents in this context are expected to maintain strong connections with their

family and community, and their social identity is often defined by their social roles and responsibilities within these groups. In other words, adolescents are encouraged to develop a sense of belonging and participate in group activities and events reinforcing their communal identity. This expectation implies that social identity construction is often closely linked to cultural identity in the African context, and adolescents are expected to associate with social groups that align with their cultural values and traditions.

The study also established that the processes of adolescents' psychological identity construction differ from Western and African viewpoints. Psychological identity was found to be the capacity of adolescents to be conscious within, recognise, and truly evaluate events (Friedman et al., 2010; Henn et al., 2016). From the Western perspective, it includes one's capacity for awareness and self-reflection from a Western perspective (Collier & Morgan, 2008). As a result, adolescents had improved problem-solving abilities and mental processes for understanding and analysing problems, which can be explained by changes in their cognitive processes that enable them to think abstractly and conduct rigorous mental analysis processes.

On the other hand, understanding, using, and interpreting proverbs, riddles, and puzzles are processes in the psychological identity construction of adolescents within the Indigenous African culture. It is generally accepted that adolescents who excel in proverbs, puzzles, and riddles have superior knowledge, reasoning, and critical thinking abilities. These mental activities are used to evaluate an African's intelligence and cognitive development since they call for quick thinking and decision-making, contributing significantly to one's psychological identity development. Therefore, those involved in adolescent development, including parents and teachers in the Bosomtwe District, could employ these conventional methods while using cutting-edge techniques to encourage fast thinking, problem-solving, and decision-making in adolescents.

The study found that there are disparities between Western and African perspectives concerning the processes involved in the emotional identity construction of adolescents. According to the study's findings, adolescents' emotional identities entail developing their capacity to perceive, evaluate, and control their responses to circumstances. It was evident from the study findings that adolescents' emotional

experiences influence their mental health, career aspirations, and sense of personal accomplishment, all of which impact their quality of life. Adolescents' emotional experiences appear to provide them with the tools and strategies they need to deal with challenging circumstances and traumatic experiences.

From a Western perspective, adolescents' emotional identity construction may be likened to their ability to develop their emotional stability, self-control, and empathy for others. Adolescents would develop their ability to think positively, act in ways that fulfil their own expectations, and reduce their exposure to risky behaviour as a result of such experiences (Jeyarani, 2022; Sirgy, 2018). However, African perspectives on adolescents' emotional identity building were found to be inappropriate adolescent behaviours or behaviours that were a symptom of flaws in their social environments because the family could not control emotions. Adolescents' unchecked aggression in the majority of African societies shows a lack of social maturity and parental guidance, which prevents parents from regulating their wards' emotions (Sharma, 2012).

### **6.3.2 Secondary Research Question 2:**

Secondary Research Question 2 was: What traditional rituals and rites of passage do adolescents in Ghana undergo?

The study intended to ascertain from the participants what they thought about the traditional rituals and rites adolescents in the Bosomtwe District of Ghana undergo and the procedures involved. Adolescents in Ghana, like those in many other cultures, were found to frequently participate in traditional rituals and rites of passage to symbolise their move from infancy to maturity. These customs differ among Ghana's various ethnic groupings. Boys and girls of the appropriate age from the Bosomtwe District of Ghana selected for this study were taken through "bragoro". According to the study's findings, adolescents were believed to be purified of childhood impurities and given a head start on adult duties by participating in traditional rites.

Another crucial finding from this study was that adolescents' desire to demonstrate their maturity motivated them to participate in this initiation. The study found that the initiates undergo a variety of tests, purification baths, as well as physical and mental challenges during the performance of the traditional rituals and rites. In line with participants view, it is clear that this to be a method of purging adolescents of childhood impurities and preparing them for adult responsibilities (Akweongo et al., 2021;

Nwadiokwu et al., 2016; Suttner, 2014). Additionally, participants believe that “bragoro” is the most appropriate ceremony since it contributes significantly to the nation's cultural and social fabric, helps prepare these children for adulthood, and improves individual well-being.

Likewise, it emerged that the ceremonies entail the adolescents spending time in seclusion or isolation learning traditional skills (including farming, weaving, and hunting) and their roles and obligations as young people. Findings suggest that the various rites and rituals are intended to ease adolescents' transition from childhood to adulthood and prepare them for their upcoming roles and duties in the community (Abbey & Nasidi, 2023; Berg & Denison, 2013). Participants believed that denying young people the opportunity to participate in initiation rites hinders their ability to grow. To encourage positive, healthy development in society, community leaders and parents must use new, contemporary strategies that allow adolescents to participate in these rites and rituals and expose them to critical thinking. This study found that most adolescent girls enjoy receiving gifts, donning jewellery, performing traditional dances, and learning about adulthood, including lessons on morality, hygiene, and marital relationships. As a result, it may be assumed that their well-being and psychosocial identity development are strongly associated with these activities.

### **6.3.3 Secondary Research Question 3:**

Secondary Research Question 3 was: How do adolescents experience the traditional rituals and rites of passage in the study?

The participants in this study shared diverse opinions on traditional rituals and rites of passage that adolescents in Ghana's Bosomtwe District undergo. The results on the opinions of the participants regarding the rites of passage and ritual experiences of adolescents appeared to reflect both positive and negative experiences. Abbey and Nasidi (2023) described in their study that, rites of passage and traditional rituals for adolescents produced periods where some adolescents may find them to be thrilling and empowering while others may feel uneasy or afraid. Additionally, it became clear that ritualisation was the key way that initiates learned social skills like forming and sustaining friendships while mingling with their fellow initiates and interacting with the ritual leaders. Positive emotions and improved identity formation are related to positive

connections (Markstrom, 2011). Thus, it is likely that taking part in the initiation process promotes relationship building and provides social and emotional support.

The findings show that these experiences are crucial for adolescents' adjustment to adulthood. According to the adolescent participants in this study, some adolescents may find these rituals to be very important and empowering, giving them a feeling of community and a distinct sense of purpose and identity, which aid in the development of affirmative social skills. During the ritualisation phase, they could participate in exercises and practical learning opportunities (Abbey & Nasidi, 2023). As a result, participating in these rituals and rites might give adolescents the chance to absorb significant cultural or spiritual values and traditions that are regarded as necessary for adulthood (Agnarson et al., 2015; Lewinger & Russell, 2019). The findings of the study suggest that good experiences are crucial for adolescents' development.

The participants in this study emphasised the importance of traditional rituals and rites of passage experiences in removing cognitive dissonance. Adolescents are sensitised during the ritualisation procedures because it will help them to reassemble their ideas when they learn new information by removing any uncertainty from their minds. It seems that this experience lessens the psychological strain, the imbalance of views, and the lack of opportunity for adolescents to accept responsibility for their own actions. This type of positive traditional ritual and rite of passage experience promotes adolescent self-sufficiency and implies that young people enjoy a hands-on culture.

Conversely, it was found that uncomfortable encounters could cause adolescents to have bad experiences. Participants in the study stated that there may be instances where traditional rituals and rites of passage put pressure on adolescents to comply with cultural or societal norms that go against their religious views or beliefs. Some ancient rites of passage and rituals are incompatible with Christian ideals in the eyes of the adolescent participants. They asserted that certain ritualisation processes, such as the virginal test, egg swallowing, and spiritual purification, may be challenging or even traumatic because they include experiencing emotional or physical pain. They contended that the majority of these activities run against the adolescent's personal values or views. Furthermore, they thought that such procedures entailed actions that presented spiritual or emotional difficulties, such as confronting one's anxieties or one's own limitations.

The study established that some of the negative incidents that took place during the initiation process were embarrassing and served as a basis for mocking. Teachers see weird rites or antiquated customs as practices which undermine the dignity of adolescents. This suggests that some ritual actions could lower self-esteem, as suggested by a teacher, and it demonstrates how adolescents experience humiliation when their vulnerable body parts, such as the breasts of adolescent girls are exposed in the course of initiation. Based on the findings of this study, I concluded that incorporating guidance and counselling programmes in the ritualisation process is required for adolescents. The social studies teacher participants advocated for community leaders to be taken through guidance and counselling workshops and seminars to help them better appreciate the need to abolish negative practices associated with the ritualisation process. Attention should be paid to unethical and dehumanising practices to make the initiation process inclusive to everyone.

#### **6.3.4 Secondary Research Question 4:**

Secondary Research Question 4 was: How do traditional rituals and rites of passage influence an adolescent's psychosocial identity development?

The findings of this study suggest that traditional rituals and rites of passage for adolescents include a distinctive sort of identity that is accepted by the community and incorporates a variety of values, views, languages, and customs. Adolescents go through a variety of experiences on their traditional rituals and rites of passage that are crucial to their mental, emotional, physical, linguistic, and social health. Similar findings in Botswana (Setlhabi, 2014) and in other countries were recorded by Hobson et al. (2018) and Rivers (2005). The integration and transformation of adolescents' beliefs, perceptions, and ideas as a result of traditional rituals and rites of passage affect the development of their psychosocial identities. Participants assessed adolescents' psychosocial development in terms of psychological and social facets of life as well as the formation of a stable self, all of which are influenced by traditional rituals and rites of passage.

It was established in this study that traditional rites of passage and rituals had an impact on adolescents' psychological development. According to the study's findings, adolescents psychologically develop a sense of high self-esteem, which impacts their sense of self as they actively participate in the initiation process. Positive feedback

from close relationships enhances adolescents' self-concept, confidence, and self-esteem, which helps them form a positive psychosocial identity (Kaldor & De Waal, 2020). In other words, the initiation process boosts adolescents' traits that lead to a sense of identity affirmation, such as attention, working and long-term memory, and processing integrating events and memories.

Another finding was that traditional rituals and rites of passage positively impacted adolescents' preparedness to undertake tasks as a result of maturity. Adolescent participants in the study acknowledged that after going through the initiation processes, their way of thinking and acting had altered, which is crucial for adolescents' development. The findings of this study confirmed that the initiation phase improves adolescents' readiness for adult life by increasing the level of maturation they reach as they develop their mental and motor skills. Relationships with families, ritual leaders, and co-initiates are associated with greater adolescent mental health and successful environmental adaptation (Abbey et al., 2021; Natsuaki et al., 2011). When adolescents acquire managerial skills, marital conflict resolution, parenting, and job-related abilities during initiation, they develop a sense of mental toughness and readiness to assume adult roles.

As exposed in this study, the participants unanimously agreed that adolescents' traditional rituals and rites of passage impact social development. The adolescent participants in this study revealed that these rituals and symbols contributed to developing adolescents' cultural identities through the sacred emblems they employed during initiation ceremonies, such as traditional food, costumes, pottery, and music. This implies that the rituals involved in initiation rites include a range of practices that encourage young people transitioning into adulthood to develop their sense of cultural identity. Additionally, parents share their opinions on how the inclusive engagement of the initiation ceremonies promoted and conserved cultural heritage. An essential step in positively influencing adolescents' ethnic identities is allowing them to be closely connected to their traditional practices. The results of this study confirmed that native or customary practices, including traditional rituals and rites of passage for adolescents, sustain moral standards in the community and aid in preserving a positive cultural legacy.

It emerged that the various facets of adolescents' traditional rituals and rites of passage serve as a socialisation tool by connecting them to their society. According to this study, developing adolescents' social skills impacts their interpersonal interactions with other community members. In other words, it offers adolescents the ideal chance to learn how to get along with others in their age group and inspires a desire to expand their social circles. The initiates learn how to create strong relationships with people and exhibit good character as a result of personal qualities such as a democratic attitude, friendliness, patience, a good sense of humour, competence, fairness, and empathy of ritual leaders that are modelled during the ritualisation process. Therefore, traditional rituals and rites of passage enhance the social identity development of initiates.

#### **6.3.5 Secondary Research Question 5:**

Research Question 5 was: What knowledge about adolescents' psychosocial identity development and their associated rites of passage can inform counselling guidelines for adolescents in the Bosomtwe District of Ghana?

Adolescence is a critical period for developing psychosocial identity, and rites of passage play a significant role in this process. Counselling guidelines for adolescents in the Bosomtwe District of Ghana can be informed by the knowledge discussed below.

The study results indicated that understanding adolescents' and their families' cultural beliefs and values is important when developing counselling guidelines for adolescents in the Bosomtwe District of Ghana. It was discovered that cultural values and beliefs impact how adolescents build their psychosocial identities. To provide effective assistance, Buku and Edoh-Torgah (2020) contend that guidance counsellors must recognise and comprehend the cultural milieu in which adolescents live.

Likewise, I also deduced from the study's findings that understanding family dynamics is essential for guiding the formulation of counselling guidelines for adolescents in the Bosomtwe District of Ghana. Studies by Turner (2012) and Siweya et al. (2018) confirm that the development of adolescents' psychosocial identities during the execution of rites of passage is significantly influenced by their connections with their

families. Following this opinion, it can be argued that guidance counsellors should be knowledgeable about family dynamics and involve families, especially the parents, in the counselling process. Based on the study's results, it is clear that the level of care and support provided by family members is one of the aspects determining the initiation process's effectiveness. The parent-child relationship appears to impact the way adolescents think and make decisions; therefore, family dynamics are important in this process (Pemba et al., 2012).

Another factor that contributes to the quality of counselling guidelines formulation appears to be the personal characteristics of the adolescents, parents, and ritual leaders. It was confirmed that adolescent personalities influence how they engage with one another and how well those interactions turn out. I discovered that adolescents who acted pro-socially while participating in traditional rituals and rites of passage appeared to have happy relationships. In this way, parents and ritual leaders who exhibited patience, care, respect, honesty, and competence built positive bonds with the initiates.

On the other hand, those adolescents who displayed antisocial behaviours experienced complex relationships with their parents or ritual leaders. Based on the findings, I posit that the pro-social behaviour of adolescents promotes the development of an enabling learning environment that provides opportunities for unrestricted interactions between the co-initiates, parents, and ritual leaders and, therefore, should form part of the basis of forming counselling guidelines.

The study also revealed that understanding adolescents' educational and career goals can be an important element that appears to lead to the creation of counselling guidelines for adolescents in the Bosomtwe District of Ghana. The results showed that the formulation of suitable counselling guidelines can be facilitated by educational and vocational goals, which are understood with reference to the relationship between the amount of schooling the adolescent wishes to pursue and the type of employment desired.

Moreover, the study found that while developing counselling guidelines for adolescents in the Bosomtwe District of Ghana, understanding sexuality, mental health, and hygiene was crucial to consider. The participants disclosed that

adolescents in the Bosomtwe District may experience issues with their mental health and personal hygiene, which could involve using contraception and avoiding STIs. In light of this, a counselling policy that emphasises health needs supports these youngsters' well-being and personal growth. I found that guidance counsellors who fostered welcoming environments where the students felt relaxed and were encouraged to express their opinions on premarital, contraceptive, and childbearing concerns have well-developed personalities. The study's findings make it clear that guidance counsellors should be enlightened about these concerns and offer appropriate guidance and referrals as part of the counselling approach.

In addition, the study indicated the need to consider cognitive dissonance information while formulating counselling guidelines for adolescents in the Bosomtwe District of Ghana. It became apparent that the development of counselling guidelines requires taking into account the psychological strain, unbalanced thoughts, and beliefs frequently observed in adolescents. In this regard, knowledge of conflicting circumstances that cause adolescents to feel or think in categorical terms might aid in the development of suitable counselling guidelines.

The study also showed that the development of counselling guidelines for adolescents in the Bosomtwe District of Ghana required the consideration of their socioeconomic backgrounds. The results revealed that adolescents seemed to have developed a positive identity when their parents could offer the resources required for the traditional rituals and rites of passage. On the other side, it was shown that parents who were unable to afford to provide their children with the needs and other resources necessary for the ritualisation process appeared to have a poorer sense of self, which had a detrimental effect on the development of their psychosocial identities. It can be argued that counsellors should consider the financial situation of the adolescent clients they work with and offer the needed proper support. This knowledge should, therefore, form part of the counselling guidelines.

In summary, counselling guidelines for adolescents in the Bosomtwe District of Ghana should be thorough and should consider a variety of factors that may affect the development of their psychosocial identities. To properly guide and support adolescents in the Bosomtwe District of Ghana, counsellors must consider the cultural context, family dynamics, gender roles, rites of passage, peer relationships, cognitive

dissonance, socio-economic background, and health concerns. They must also be aware of the specific challenges these adolescents face.

#### **6.4 Conclusions in terms of the Primary Research Question**

In this section, I attempt to provide answers to the primary research question stated in Chapter 1: How do adolescents experience their psychosocial identity development associated with their undergoing traditional rituals and rites of passage?

In this study, I discovered that adolescents typically experience their psychological identity development while they participate in traditional rituals and rites of passage in ways that may be described as varied and diversified. The way it exposed adolescents to cultural values and conventions was an advantageous experience. Other authors (Pemba et al., 2012; Siweya et al., 2018) also highlight the impact of traditional rituals and rites of passage on adolescents, especially it varied effect on their psychological identity development. One the reasons was that these traditional rituals and rites of passage exposed adolescents to unique cultural values and customs. In this way, exposure can aid in developing a broader worldview in adolescents and may inspire them to explore their identities and beliefs.

The main research question also found that these traditional rituals and rites of passage frequently included particular actions or behaviours that were intended to represent the change and convey social norms and cultural values. Studies show that initiation rites enables the adolescent to fit well into society as they learn significant values of the society (Boateng & Agyeman, 2018; Crentsil, 2015). Participating in these rites of passage and rituals seemed a significant experience that aided adolescents in developing a feeling of self and community within their culture. Adolescents may discover more about their cultural background, beliefs, and values through these events, which could improve their sense of self in general.

Additionally, it came to light that these adolescents in the Bosomtwe District experienced increased self-awareness and improved social skills due to participating in traditional rituals and rites of passage. According to Natsuaki et al. (2011) adolescents improved their awareness of themselves and their identities by participating in traditional rituals and rites of passage. These rituals may inspire adolescent reflection on personal values, convictions, and objectives, which can

enhance their sense of self in general. For instance, the ceremonies require cooperation with others, adherence to social norms and expectations, and effective communication, which can help people develop crucial social skills and self-awareness. According to the participants, the occasion was great and aimed at meeting the needs of these young people.

The revelation that not all adolescents may have positive experiences with traditional rituals and rites of passage suggests that, in some instances, these ceremonies in the Bosomtwe District may serve to reinforce harmful gender norms, exclusionary practices, or other forms of discrimination, which can have a detrimental effect on adolescent psychosocial identity. It is known that adolescents may encounter conflicts between their individual values and ideas and the cultural norms conveyed through initiation rites (Veresova & Mala, 2012). Participants reported that adolescents might feel pressured to adhere to cultural expectations and norms during traditional rituals and rites of passage. They disclosed that these ceremonies could occasionally contain harmful practices. This pressure can be very difficult for individuals who may not feel at ease with these expectations or hold other values or views.

It also emerged that many adolescents had traumatic experiences due to traditional rituals and rites of passage. Participants noted that traditional rites of passage and rituals could occasionally contain upsetting or harmful practices, such as exposing breasts during the time of their enstoolment. According to the participants, these events could have a long-lasting unfavourable effect on how adolescents establish their psychosocial identities. The adolescent could feel as though their dignity as a person has been violated as a result of these unpleasant events. This is a source of great concern to adolescents and their parents.

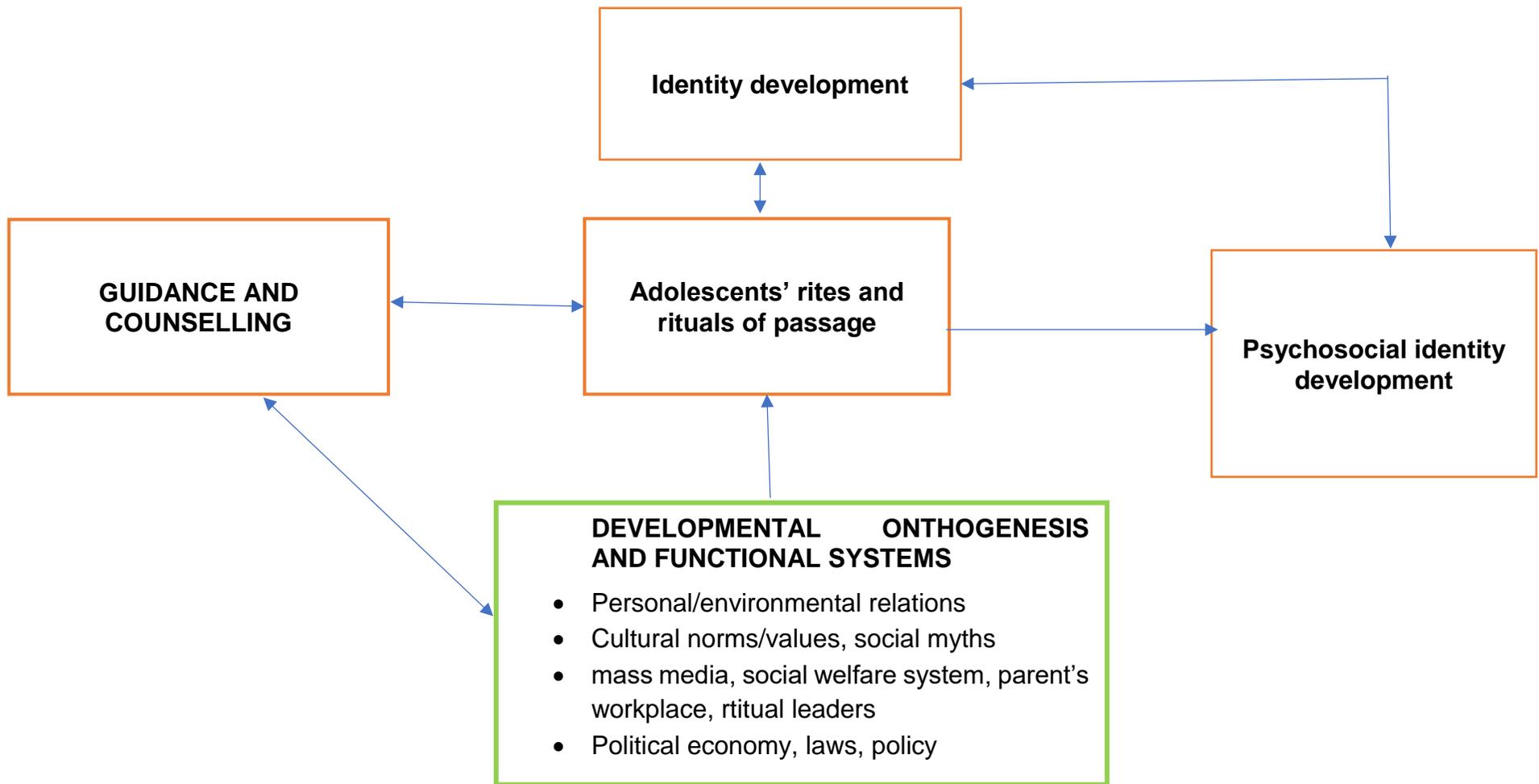
#### ***6.4.1 Revisiting the Conceptual Framework***

A conceptual framework was created in Chapter Three to aid in comprehending and interpreting the study's findings, given the complexity of the interrelationships between the adolescent and the other systems they are connected to and how that influences their psychosocial identity development. Awareness of one's cultural values is incorporated as a path for identity formation and well-being at the various systemic levels in the adolescents' lives within the framework. The model states that

adolescents become aware of their cultural values, which serves as the baseline for deciding whether to participate in the initiation process.

The model, however, appears to focus more on individualised activities that could motivate the individual to submit to the initiation processes. However, the current study's findings suggest that adolescents' identity development as associated with traditional rituals and rites of passage should be pursued in multiple dimensions. This is because the context of adolescents' environment is crucial, and families' socio-economic background, religious belief, and personality traits of parents and ritual leaders are influential in this process. From an African developmental othogenesis standpoint, this situation must improve adolescent-parent and adolescent ritual-leaders' relationships by creating a conducive environment, a healthy communication process and also instituting guidance and counselling services within the initiation rites. In this sense, community leaders, parents, guidance counsellors and adolescents need to work together.

The conceptual framework is reviewed in this study to incorporate a communal and integrated approach to adolescents' psychosocial identity development from an African developmental othogenesis perspective. Using a holistic approach in developmental psychology where community leaders and parents are positively engaged, as Taylor et al. (2010) recommended, generates a sense of cooperation, confidence, optimism, and interest in adolescents, which in turn creates personal identities among adolescents. According to Seligman et al. (2009), these components help to achieve successful psychosocial identity development as adolescents undergo the traditional rituals and rites of passage. In figure 6.1, I re-visit the conceptual framework.



**Figure 6.1: Conceptual framework re-visited**

## **6.5 Potential Contributions of the Study**

In this section, I present the potential contributions of my study. The study attempted to fill the research gaps I noted and discussed in Chapter 1 and add to the body of knowledge. The following were the contributions that the research study sought to make:

This study provides comprehensive insights and detailed descriptions of how adolescents' psychosocial identities develop as they undergo traditional rituals and rites of passage. So, in my opinion, it contributes to the body of research addressing how adolescents' social experiences within a cultural context shape and influence their lives. I found a dearth of research on the cultural effects on adolescents while reviewing the literature because it appears that most studies generally only covered social impacts. Therefore, my study might fill this potential vacuum in the body of knowledge.

Furthermore, the results of this study have raised the possibility that family and cultural influences have a significant role in adolescents' social experiences. It appears that the key socialisation agents, such as family and community leaders, work together to exert a combined impact that the peer group may be unable to overcome. Thus, this study may help spread awareness of culture's important role in shaping adolescent social experiences. This discovery is crucial for future research on the effects and social interactions that only adolescents experience.

Benning (2020) urged future researchers to create innovative frameworks for examining adolescent identity development concerns because these youthful individuals are viewed as complex people with intricate issues. As a result, this study is unique in Ghana since it creates a thorough conceptual framework to explain how traditional rituals and rites of passage affect adolescents' development of their psychosocial identities. This study used concepts from psychosocial identity development, psychological factors, emotional factors, social factors, traditional rituals and rites of passage and bio-ecological systems to understand better how adolescents' psychosocial identity development occurs in the Bosomtwe District of Ghana's traditional setting. Bandura (1989) contends that learning occurs when people watch, imitate, and emulate the behaviour of others. This argument put forward

by Bandura is relevant to identity development, particularly in adolescents who need to learn ideas that will influence the direction of their lives.

This research study is also the first attempt in Ghana to explore adolescents' psychosocial identity development in relation to their initiation rites. The important contribution made here marks the start of a body of literature in this area that other scholars can use. The study adds to our understanding of the types of knowledge stakeholders in education and health can utilise to create counselling guidelines that will benefit all other areas of adolescents' lives. Although educators and counsellors view working with adolescents as extremely important, a study by Amponsah (2018) found that neither group understood how adolescents' psychosocial identity formation and the accompanying rites of passage evolved.

## **6.6 Challenges and Potential Limitations of the Study**

Limitations of this study relate to the level of transferability, the response of participating teachers, parents, and adolescents, and my role as a researcher.

### **6.6.1 *Transferability of the Study***

This study focused on adolescents, parents, and teachers' views and experiences concerning adolescents' psychosocial identity development in relation to their traditional rituals and rites of passage. It aimed at gaining insight into how adolescents experience psychosocial identity formation in a specific context. Thus, the limitations to the transferability of this study relate to its qualitative nature and sampling strategy. As a qualitative phenomenological study, a small sample of 12 junior high school teachers, 12 parents, and 24 adolescents were employed from four different junior high schools within the district. As the findings were from these participating adolescents', parents' and teachers' opinions, inferences cannot be drawn from it or generalised and applied to other adolescents in different geographic locations because of the sampling size of this study (Di Fabio & Maree, 2012).

However, the intention of this study design I employed was not to generalise the findings but rather to aim for transferability. Hence, the transferability aspect was addressed by providing thick descriptions of research study delimitations, participants, data generation methods and research findings, thereby ascertaining that the ultimate study methods could be applied to other similar contexts and situations in Ghana and

beyond. In light of this, the findings may be transferred to a parallel framework based on in-depth descriptions and experience of this study, which is associated with interpretivism research.

### **6.6.2 Response of Participants**

The District Education Directorate, school head teachers, and Parent Association (P.A.) executives from selected schools functioned as doorkeepers to the participating adolescents, teachers, and parents as they were the ones who assisted in setting up interviews with these participants. This could have led to a possible Hawthorne effect in the sense that some participants would have felt compelled and worked harder, thus changing their behaviour due to the attention they were receiving from these leaders and the researcher (Cherry et al., 2020).

Although it was assumed that the participants would answer the interview questions truthfully, they might be unwilling to reveal their true feelings about their experiences with adolescents' initiation rites because they did not wish to seem intolerant. Moreover, the participants could have responded to the questions in the semi-structured interview as they believed I wanted them to respond. To overcome this limitation, I attempted to establish rapport with each participant and encouraged openness by promising them complete confidentiality and not to discuss their responses with the gatekeeper or any other colleagues at their schools. In this regard, I also urged them to respond honestly.

### **6.6.3 Role as a Researcher**

Despite being a researcher in this study, I am also a teacher trainer and an opinion leader in the study area. Thus, it was important to distinguish between these various roles and being a researcher. I established a research partnership with the various groups of participants when they shared their experiences. Since it was important to be aware of my own subjective opinions and avoid affecting the participants' opinions, I interviewed and observed them without any intervention or manipulation within their school settings (Cohen et al., 2011).

In addition, the study was further limited by my personal involvement, which my expectations may have influenced – more so because the nature of my profession and role in the community makes me privy to some information. This could have influenced

the data collection and the responses of participants, more especially during the probing process. For these reasons, I used the research journal during the probing process, regularly scheduled meetings, and corresponded with my supervisor for guidance.

## **6.7 Recommendations**

In this section, I make submissions for future research, counselling practice and educational psychologists, training, and policy based on the results of my study.

### **6.7.1 Recommendations for Future Research**

Based on the findings and gaps in the study on adolescent psychosocial identity development associated with traditional rituals and rites of passage in the Bosomtwe District of Ghana, the following research recommendations for future research studies are made:

- Considering the paucity of literature on rites of passage and traditional rituals among adolescents and their effects on adolescent psychosocial identity and well-being, a more thorough examination of such influences could benefit all stakeholders involved.
- This study was conducted in the Bosomtwe District in Ghana. I, therefore, advocate for additional study that includes comparative studies. Comparative studies should be carried out to comprehend the distinctive features of traditional practices in the Bosomtwe District of Ghana and how they differ from those in other regions of Africa. These studies can look at the similarities and contrasts between traditional practices in various African locations and how they affect the formation of adolescent psychosocial identities.
- This study was carried out with a qualitative approach. As a result, I suggest that future research projects of this kind be conducted using a mixed-method approach. Mixed methods studies should be carried out to obtain a more thorough understanding of how traditional practices affect adolescent psychosocial identity formation. These studies can include both qualitative and quantitative data collection techniques to provide a more comprehensive overview of the experiences and perspectives of adolescents and their families.
- I also recommend that further research employs Longitudinal Studies. It is suggested that longitudinal research be carried out to comprehend the long-

term effects of traditional practices on adolescent psychosocial identity development. These studies may monitor the development of adolescents over time and look at how traditional practices have shaped their sense of self and how that has affected their career aspirations.

### **6.7.2 Recommendations for Counselling Practice and Educational Psychologist**

The following recommendations for future counseling practice and educational psychologists are made:

- The study recommends a collaborative approach when providing counselling services to adolescents. The suggestion stems from the discovery that all parties involved in adolescent upbringing should profit from instruction on the intricacies of traditional rites of passage and how to help adolescents form good identities. Therefore, it is advised that guidance counsellors collaborate with other professionals, community members, and their leaders to ensure the success of counselling services. This can involve collaboration from traditional leaders, health experts, and educators to create extensive adolescent support networks.
- Training is required for guidance counsellors to deepen their knowledge and understanding of Culturally Sensitive Counselling. It is recommended that counsellors who work with adolescents have training in culturally responsive counselling techniques. Guidance Counsellors should be able to include traditional practices in their counselling sessions and be aware of how important they are for the development of adolescents.
- Additionally, it is suggested that the focus of adolescent counselling be on helping them develop their coping mechanisms and resilience. The study discovered resilience and coping mechanisms are essential for teenagers' optimal psychosocial development. Adolescent counsellors in the Bosomtwe District should consequently concentrate on increasing these abilities. This can involve assisting adolescents in recognising their assets and strengths as well as in creating coping mechanisms for difficult situations.
- Furthermore, guidance and counselling services relating to adolescent psychosocial development should emphasise family and community. It is suggested that guidance and counselling services should strongly emphasise

the value of family and community support to assist the identity development of adolescents in the Bosomtwe District. To find ways for traditional practices to be incorporated into adolescents' daily lives and how they might be used to foster positive psychosocial development, guidance counsellors should work with adolescents and their families.

### **6.7.3 Recommendations for Training**

Findings from this study indicate that participants agree that initiation rites affect adolescents' development and that while they go through these ritualisation processes, adolescents become worried about concerns relating to their well-being. There are some recommendations for training purposes in dealing with challenges connected to adolescents' psychosocial identity development.

- I recommend providing regular training on identity development and well-being to all parties involved in the lives of adolescents, notably teachers, ritual leaders, and parents. This suggestion is premised on the idea that if these potential stakeholders are better prepared throughout their training, they would be better ready to handle matters pertaining to adolescent psychosocial identity.
- It is further recommended that the Centre for National Culture and Ghana Education Service work together to implement a project to train teachers through a professional learning community to support and handle issues that threaten adolescent wellbeing. For example, workshops be organised on gender, equality, and social inclusion. All teachers must be equipped with skills to assist adolescents in navigating through issues related to personal well-being and career development. Teachers, parents, and other community members who have received training in this area will be better able to foster community resilience and assist adolescents with difficulties in their identity development.

### **6.7.4 Recommendations for Policy**

The following are recommendations for developing policies in all areas pertaining to the adolescent psychosocial development of identities concerning their traditional rituals and rites of passage:

- The Ministries of Health, Education, Chieftaincy, and Religious Affairs are being encouraged to include traditional practices when formulating national policy

frameworks for adolescent development in Ghana. I make this proposal in response to the findings that there are no guidelines for the psychological development of teenagers that include traditional practices. Therefore, the National Adolescent Health Policy and other pertinent policy papers should include traditional practices. Policymakers and implementers in health and education should collaborate to accomplish this.

- The study suggests creating policies and structures to encourage the integration of traditional practices in formal schooling to empower youth and community practice. Therefore, it is recommended that traditional practices be incorporated into formal education in Ghana, particularly at the primary and secondary educational levels, for policymakers to ensure they are not lost or marginalised. This can be accomplished by incorporating traditional practices into the curriculum and using them to impart morals and practical skills.
- Findings from the study suggest that all school stakeholders work together with conventional authorities to empower adolescents and classroom instructors. It is suggested that the Ghanaian government work with traditional authorities and pertinent school stakeholders (teachers, management, and adolescent students) to promote and oversee the application of traditional practices to ensure the sustainability of these practices.
- Additionally, policymakers might support efforts to promote inclusion and culture diversity. The Ghanaian government should encourage and fund the promotion and maintenance of traditional practices to do this, especially in rural and neglected regions. The advice aligns with the study's conclusion that societies' deeply-loved cultural values must be preserved.
- The government needs to promote research and analysis related to traditional practices. It is recommended that the Ghanaian government and other donors offer assistance in the form of money and other resources for research and assessment of traditional adolescent development practices to guarantee the ongoing relevance and effectiveness of these practices.

## **6.8 Concluding Remarks**

The main aim of this study was to explore how adolescents in the Bosomtwe District of Ghana experience their psychological identity development in relation to participating in traditional rituals and rites of passage. Through this study, I gained a

thorough grasp of the experiences and difficulties these young individuals go through as they try to develop their own identities. The conceptual framework which formed the foundation of this study was based on the theories of Erikson's psychosocial identity theory, Van Gennep's Ritual Process model, Nsamenang's theory of social ontogenesis, Bandura's social learning theory and Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological system theory. These frameworks aided in conceptualising the formation of psychosocial identities and were also relevant to adolescent well-being and its enhancement. It also reviewed the literature on how adolescents create their psychological, social, and emotional identities from both Western and African viewpoints.

The findings of this study support the idea that traditional rituals and rites of passage may provide adolescents with more profound advantages that affect how they view themselves, their communities, and the wider world. A crucial stage in adolescents' development is expanding their social networks and circle of acquaintances through common interests, educational opportunities, and interactions with others. Interaction with others provides opportunities to grow in respect, tolerance, and conversation regarding individualised and cultural concerns.

The study suggests that to promote healthy adolescent identity development, parents, educators, and adolescents must comprehend and be aware of the advantages and disadvantages of conventional rituals and rites of passage. By eliminating harmful traditional practices from initiation rites for adolescents, we protect them from witnessing physical signs of exclusion and traumatic events. Thus, continual, deliberate attention to several aspects of traditional rites is necessary to understand present adolescents' experiences. This study provides a suitable conceptual framework to direct stakeholder participation using traditional passages and rituals to develop adolescents' psychosocial identities and wellness.

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# APPENDICES

## 7.1 APPENDIX A: ETHICS APPROVAL FROM UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA



### UNISA COLLEGE OF EDUCATION ETHICS REVIEW COMMITTEE

Date: 2021/10/13

Ref: **2021/10/13/67128661/27/AM**

Dear Mr KN Ofori

Name: Mr KN Ofori

Student No.: 67128661

**Decision:** Ethics Approval from  
2021/10/13 to 2026/10/13

**Researcher(s):** Name: Mr KN Ofori  
E-mail address: 67128661@mylife.unisa.ac.za  
Telephone: +233244576529

**Supervisor(s):** Name: Prof K Mohangi  
E-mail address: mohank@unisa.ac.za  
Telephone: 0837791771

**Title of research:**

**ADOLESCENT PSYCHOSOCIAL IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATED WITH  
TRADITIONAL RITES OF PASSAGE IN THE BOSOMTWE DISTRICT OF GHANA**

**Qualification:** PhD in Psychology

Thank you for the application for research ethics clearance by the UNISA College of Education Ethics Review Committee for the above mentioned research. Ethics approval is granted for the period 2021/10/13 to 2026/10/13.

*The **medium risk** application was reviewed by the Ethics Review Committee on 2021/10/13 in compliance with the UNISA Policy on Research Ethics and the Standard Operating Procedure on Research Ethics Risk Assessment.*

The proposed research may now commence with the provisions that:

1. The researcher will ensure that the research project adheres to the relevant guidelines set out in the Unisa Covid-19 position statement on research ethics attached.
2. The researcher(s) will ensure that the research project adheres to the values and principles expressed in the UNISA Policy on Research Ethics.



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3. Any adverse circumstance arising in the undertaking of the research project that is relevant to the ethicality of the study should be communicated in writing to the UNISA College of Education Ethics Review Committee.
4. The researcher(s) will conduct the study according to the methods and procedures set out in the approved application.
5. Any changes that can affect the study-related risks for the research participants, particularly in terms of assurances made with regards to the protection of participants' privacy and the confidentiality of the data, should be reported to the Committee in writing.
6. The researcher will ensure that the research project adheres to any applicable national legislation, professional codes of conduct, institutional guidelines and scientific standards relevant to the specific field of study. Adherence to the following South African legislation is important, if applicable: Protection of Personal Information Act, no 4 of 2013; Children's act no 38 of 2005 and the National Health Act, no 61 of 2003.
7. Only de-identified research data may be used for secondary research purposes in future on condition that the research objectives are similar to those of the original research. Secondary use of identifiable human research data requires additional ethics clearance.
8. No field work activities may continue after the expiry date **2026/10/13**. Submission of a completed research ethics progress report will constitute an application for renewal of Ethics Research Committee approval.

*Note:*

*The reference number **2021/10/13/67128661/27/AM** should be clearly indicated on all forms of communication with the intended research participants, as well as with the Committee.*

Kind regards,



**Prof AT Motlhabane**  
**CHAIRPERSON: CEDU RERC**  
motlhat@unisa.ac.za



**Prof PM Sebate**  
**EXECUTIVE DEAN**  
Sebatpm@unisa.ac.za



University of South Africa  
Preller Street, Muckleneuk Ridge, City of Tshwane  
PO Box 392 UNISA 0003 South Africa  
Telephone: +27 12 429 3111 Facsimile: +27 12 429 4150  
www.unisa.ac.za

**7.2 APPENDIX B: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT THE RESEARCH GHANA  
EDUCATION SERVICE, BOSOMTWE DISTRICT**

**GHANA EDUCATION SERVICE**

BOSOMTWE

*In case of reply the  
Number and date of this  
Letter should be quoted*

Our Ref: GES/ASH/BD/EP.14/VOL.3/4



DISTRICT EDUCATION OFFICE  
P. O. BOX 6  
KUNTANASE  
ASHANTI-GHANA

Your Ref:

DATE: 1ST NOVEMBER, 2021

KENNEDY NYESEH OFORI  
WESLEY COLLEGE OF EDUCATION  
P.O.BOX 1927  
KUMASI.

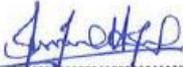
**INTRODUCTION LETTER**

I refer to your letter dated 25th October, 2021 and wish to inform you that permission has been granted.

This is to enable Mr. Kennedy Nyeseh Ofori embark on his research on the topic Adolescent Psychosocial Identity Development Associated with Traditional Rites of Passage in the Bosomtwe District.

Headteachers/Masters are kindly requested to give him the necessary support.

Counting on your usual cooperation.

  
.....  
**PRINCE C. AGYEMANG-DUAH (MR.)**  
**DISTRICT DIRECTOR**

**7.3 APPENDIX C: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT THE RESEARCH, [REDACTED]  
D/A JUNIOR, HIGH SCHOOL**

**GHANA EDUCATION SERVICE  
BOSOMTWE DISTRICT**

[REDACTED]  
4<sup>th</sup> November, 2021

Kennedy Nyeseh Ofori  
Wesley College of Education  
P. O. Box 1927  
Kumasi, Ghana

**RE: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT  
[REDACTED] JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL (JHS)**

With reference to your letter dated 2<sup>nd</sup> November, 2021 on the above stated subject, permission is granted for you to carry out your research in this school. You are hereby to adhere to the following:

- That teaching and learning activities are not disrupted during the period of the study.
- That participants adhere to the COVID 19 safety protocols.

You are kindly reminded that breaching any of the stated conditions may result in withdrawing the permission granted.

Thank you and I wish you success in the research activity.

*Ryeseh*  
HEADTEACHER  
[REDACTED]  
DATE 24-11-2021

Headteacher,  
[REDACTED]

**7.4 APPENDIX D: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT THE RESEARCH, [REDACTED]  
JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL**

**GHANA EDUCATION SERVICE  
BOSOMTWE DISTRICT**

[REDACTED]

5<sup>th</sup> November, 2021

Kennedy Nyesch Ofori  
Wesley College of Education  
P. O. Box 1927  
Kumasi, Ghana

**RE: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT  
[REDACTED] HIGH SCHOOL**

Reference is made to your application to conduct research in our school on the title:

• **“Adolescent Psychosocial Identity Development Associated with Traditional Rites  
of Passage in the Bosomtwe District of Ghana”**

•  
Permission is granted for you to carry out your research in this school. You should however take note of the following conditions;

That teaching and learning activities are not disrupted during the period of the study.  
That all covid 19 protocols are respected.

You are kindly reminded that breaching any of the stated conditions may result in withdrawing the permission granted.

Thank you and I wish you success in the research activity.

[REDACTED]

HEADTEACHER: [Signature]  
DATE: 11/2/2021

Headteacher

[REDACTED]

**7.5 APPENDIX E: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT THE RESEARCH, [REDACTED]  
JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL**

**GHANA EDUCATION SERVICE  
BOSOMTWE DISTRICT**

[REDACTED]  
6<sup>th</sup> December, 2021

Kennedy Nyeseh Ofori  
Wesley College of Education  
P. O. Box 1927  
Kumasi, Ghana

**RE: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT  
[REDACTED] A JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL (JHS)**

With reference to your letter dated 2<sup>nd</sup> November, 2021 on the above stated subject, permission is granted for you to carry out your research in this school. You are hereby to adhere to the following:

- That teaching and learning activities are not disrupted during the period of the study.
- That participants adhere to the COVID 19 safety protocols.

You are kindly reminded that breaching any of the stated conditions may result in withdrawing the permission granted.

Thank you and I wish you success in the research activity.

[REDACTED]  
*Tuafornice*  
Headteacher,  
[REDACTED]

**7.6 APPENDIX F: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT THE RESEARCH, [REDACTED]  
JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL**

GHANA EDUCATION SERVICE  
BOSOMTWE DISTRICT

[REDACTED]

11<sup>th</sup> November, 2021

Kennedy Nyesh Ofori  
Wesley College of Education  
P. O. Box 1927  
Kumasi, Ghana

RE: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT  
[REDACTED] JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

Reference is made to your application to conduct research in our school on the title:

- "Adolescent Psychosocial Identity Development Associated with Traditional Rites of Passage in the Bosomtwe District of Ghana"
- 

Permission is granted for you to carry out your research in this school. You should however take note of the following conditions;

- That teaching and learning activities are not disrupted during the period of the study.
- That all covid 19 protocols are respected.

You are kindly reminded that breaching any of the stated conditions may result in withdrawing the permission granted.

Thank you and I wish you success in the research

[REDACTED]

Headteacher

[REDACTED]

7.7 APPENDIX G: FINAL TURNITIN RESULTS

## Adolescent psychosocial identity development associated with traditional rituals and rites of passage in the Bosomtwe District of Ghana

### ORIGINALITY REPORT

**24%**

SIMILARITY INDEX

**19%**

INTERNET SOURCES

**13%**

PUBLICATIONS

**8%**

STUDENT PAPERS

### PRIMARY SOURCES

<b>1</b>	<b>uir.unisa.ac.za</b> Internet Source	<b>8%</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>hdl.handle.net</b> Internet Source	<b>3%</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>ugspace.ug.edu.gh</b> Internet Source	<b>1%</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>repository.up.ac.za</b> Internet Source	<b>&lt;1%</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>Submitted to University of South Africa</b> Student Paper	<b>&lt;1%</b>
<b>6</b>	<b>esaro.unfpa.org</b> Internet Source	<b>&lt;1%</b>
<b>7</b>	<b>etda.libraries.psu.edu</b> Internet Source	<b>&lt;1%</b>
<b>8</b>	<b>ebin.pub</b> Internet Source	<b>&lt;1%</b>

Exclude matches

Off

## 7.8 APPENDIX H: LANGUAGE EDITING CERTIFICATE



Member South African Translators' Institute  
www.language-services.online

22 November 2023

**TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN**

The thesis "Adolescent psychosocial identity development associated with traditional rituals and rites of passage in the Bosomtwe District of Ghana" by Kennedy Nyeseh Ofori has been proofread and edited for language by me.

I verify that the manuscript is ready for publication or public viewing regarding language and has been formatted per the prescribed style.

Please note that no view is expressed regarding the document's technical contents or changes made after the date of this letter.

Kind regards

Anna M de Wet

SATI-MEMBER-1003422

BA (English, Afrikaans, Latin) (Cum Laude), University of Pretoria.  
BA Hons ((Latin) (Cum Laude), University of Pretoria.  
BA Hons (Psychology), University of Pretoria.

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## **7. 9 APPENDIX I: LETTER REQUESTING PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH: GHANA EDUCATION SERVICE, BOSOMTWE DISTRICT**

**Title: Adolescent Psychosocial Identity Development Associated with Traditional Rites of Passage in the Bosomtwe District of Ghana**

Date:

The District Director  
Ghana Education Service  
P. O. Box 19  
Kuntanase-Ashanti  
+233 322024344

Dear Sir/Madam,

**Re: Request for permission to conduct research at KP1, KP2, KP3 and MP4 Junior High Schools**

I, Kennedy Nyeseh Ofori am doing research under the supervision of Professor K Mohangi, a professor, in the Department of Department of Psychology of Education towards a PhD at the University of South Africa. We are inviting you to participate in a study entitled Adolescent Psychosocial Identity Development Associated with Traditional Rites of Passage in the Bosomtwe District of Ghana.

Your District has been selected because of its proximity to the researcher and it will be easier for the researcher to interview the adolescents, parents and teachers within their natural settings. The researcher also believes that there are participants in the schools with experience and knowledge of adolescent psychosocial identity development.

The study will entail individual face-to-face interviews with 12 parents and 12 teachers. Focus group discussions (FGD) will also be conducted for 28 adolescents (in separate groups). The interviews and FGD will be conducted after school to avoid interference with school instructional time. Each interview will take approximately 45-60 minutes and the interviews will be audio recorded with consent and assent of the participants, as well as consent from the parents/caregivers.

This study is expected to collect important information that could expand the understanding of critical psychosocial and emotional challenges associated with rites of passage, as they appeared to have influential power over adolescents' personal development and learning. The findings of this study will shed light on adolescent

experiences during rites of passage, allowing local governments, policymakers, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Health, and all other stakeholders involved in adolescent health services to strengthen education and preventive counselling programmes in order to mitigate adolescent challenges and promote healthy identity development during this time.

The study poses no foreseeable risk to its participants. However, should participants feel any emotional discomfort during or after the interview of FGD, arrangement have been made for them to be able to speak to a professional counselling psychologist. There will be no reimbursement or any incentives for participation in the research. Participants will be given a nose mask as part of the covid 19 safety precautions and physical distance will be observed during the interviews and FGD. Participants will also have access to flowing water (supplied in a veronica bucket), soap and tissue paper, as well as hand sanitizer.

When I have completed my study, I shall return to the schools for group meetings to provide feedback about the findings of my study and a bound copy of the full research report. I will share counselling guidelines with teachers and parents to help with curbing the psychosocial challenges among adolescents. I will also conduct a workshop with the adolescents and give them guidance as to dealing with challenges on their psychosocial identity development.

Yours sincerely,



Kennedy Nyeseh Ofori  
(Tutor, Wesley College of Education, Kumasi)

Tel: +233244576529

---

Prof K Mohangi  
Supervisor  
UNISA  
+27 12 3376169  
mohank@unisa.ac.za

## **7. 10 APPENDIX J: LETTER REQUESTING PERMISSION FROM THE SCHOOLS**

**Title: Adolescent Psychosocial Identity Development Associated with Traditional Rites of Passage in the Bosomtwe District of Ghana**

Date:

The Head teacher  
KP1 Junior High School  
P. O. Box 19  
Worakese-Ashanti  
+233 322024344

Dear Sir/Madam,

### **Re: Request for permission to conduct research at KP1 Junior High Schools**

I, Kennedy Nyeseh Ofori am doing research under the supervision of Professor K Mohangi, a professor, in the Department of Department of Psychology of Education towards a PhD at the University of South Africa. We are inviting you to participate in a study entitled “Adolescent Psychosocial Identity Development Associated with Traditional Rites of Passage in the Bosomtwe District of Ghana”.

Your school has been selected because of its proximity to the researcher and it will be easier for the researcher to interview the adolescents, parents and teachers within their natural settings. The researcher also believes that there are participants in the schools with experience and knowledge on adolescent psychosocial identity development.

The study will entail individual face-to-face interviews with 12 parents and 12 teachers. Focus group discussions (FGD) will also be conducted for 28 adolescents (in separate groups). The interviews and FGD will be conducted after school to avoid interference with school instructional time. Each interview will take approximately 45-60 minutes and the interviews will be audio recorded with consent and assent of the participants, as well as consent from the parents/caregivers.

This study is expected to collect important information that could expand the understanding of critical psychosocial and emotional challenges associated with rites of passage, as they appeared to have influential power over adolescents’ personal development and learning. The findings of this study will shed light on adolescent experiences during rites of passage, allowing local governments, policymakers, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Health, and all other stakeholders involved in

adolescent health services to strengthen education and preventive counselling programmes in order to mitigate adolescent challenges and promote healthy identity development during this time.

The study poses no foreseeable risk to its participants. However, should participants feel any emotional discomfort during or after the interview, arrangement have been made for them to be able to speak to a professional counselling psychologist. There will be no reimbursement or any incentives for participation in the research.

Participants will be given a nose mask as part of the covid 19 safety precautions and physical distance will be observed during the interviews and FGD. Participants will also have access to flowing water (supplied in a veronica bucket), soap and tissue paper, as well as hand sanitizer.

When I am finished with my study, I shall return to the school for a short meeting about some of the helpful and interesting ideas presented to me and also to provide the school with a bound copy of the full research report. I will share counselling guidelines with teachers and parents to help with curbing the psychosocial challenges among adolescents. I will also conduct a workshop with the adolescents and give them guidance as to dealing with challenges on their psychosocial identity development.

Yours sincerely,



Kennedy Nyeseh Ofori  
(Tutor, Wesley College of Education, Kumasi)

Tel: +233244576529

---

Prof K Mohangi  
Supervisor  
UNISA  
+2712 3376169  
mohank@unisa.ac.za

## **7.11 APPENDIX K: LETTER OF INFORMED CONSENT: TEACHERS, PARENTS OR GUARDIANS PARTICIPANTS**

Date: .....

Title: **Adolescent Psychosocial Identity Development Associated with Traditional Rites of Passage in the Bosomtwe District of Ghana**

**Dear Prospective Participant,**

My name is Kennedy Nyeseh Ofori and I am doing research under the supervision of Professor K Mohangi, a professor in the Department of Psychology of Education towards a PhD at the University of South Africa. We are inviting you to participate in a study entitled adolescent psychosocial identity development associated with traditional rites of passage in the Bosomtwe District of Ghana.

This study is expected to collect important information that could expand the understanding of critical psychosocial and emotional challenges associated with rites of passage, as they appeared to have influential power over adolescents' personal development and learning. The findings of this study will shed light on adolescent experiences during rites of passage, allowing local governments, policymakers, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Health, and all other stakeholders involved in adolescent health services to strengthen education and preventive counselling programmes in order to mitigate adolescent challenges and promote healthy identity development during this time.

You are invited because of your experience in working with adolescents and the knowledge you can impact. The researcher believes that your experiences and perceptions of adolescent psychosocial identity associated with rites of passage would not only assist tremendously in answering the research questions in this study, but also to aid in establishing counselling guidelines to parents and teachers in assisting adolescents on psychosocial issues.

I obtained your contact details from the head teacher of your school. A total of 24 participants from KP1, KP2, KP3 and KP4 Junior High Schools will participate in the individual interviews. The study involves audio taped semi-structured interviews. You will be requested to answer open-ended questions in the interview. The questions will focus on your perceptions and experiences of adolescent psychosocial identity associated with rites of passage. The interview will take approximately 45 minutes and will be conducted after school to avoid loss of school instructional time.

Participating in this study is voluntary and you are under no obligation to consent to participation. If you do decide to take part, you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a written consent form. You are free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason.

You will receive no direct benefit from participating in the study, however, the possible benefits of this study are inter alia to heighten awareness of adolescents' psychosocial identity, to extend the knowledge base related to rites of passage, to identify central themes that explain why psychosocial challenges happens so often, and to improve practice by giving counselling guidelines to teachers and parents for the possible curbing of the problem and in assisting adolescents.

Participation of your child in the study will involve focus group discussions with an estimated length of 60 minutes. There will be no immediate and direct benefits for your child or you but your participation is likely to help me to explore their psychosocial identity development associated with traditional rites of passage. The study poses no foreseeable risk to its participants. However, should you feel any emotional discomfort during or after the interview, arrangement have been made for you to be able to speak to a professional counselling psychologist, Mr. David Amoako, for counselling.

Your child will be given a nose mask as part of the covid 19 safety precautions and physical distance will be observed during the interviews and FGD. Participants will also have access to flowing water (supplied in a veronica bucket), soap, and tissue paper, as well as hand sanitizer.

Participants' name will not be recorded anywhere and no one will be able to connect you to the answers you give. Your answers will be given a code number or a pseudonym and you will be referred to in this way in the data, any publications, or other research reporting methods such as conference proceedings submitted for publication, but individual participants will not be identifiable in such publications.

Your answers may be reviewed by people responsible for making sure that the research is done properly, including the research assistant who will only assist in translation where necessary and my supervisor, Professor K Mohangi. You will sign a confidentiality agreement form in this regard. Otherwise, records that identify you will be available only to the researcher

Hard copies of your answers will be stored by the researcher for a period of five years in a locked filing cabinet in my office for future research or academic purposes; electronic information will be stored on a password protected computer. Future use of the stored data will be subject to further Research Ethics Review and approval if applicable. After a period of 5 five years hard copies will be shredded and electronic copies will be permanently deleted from the hard drive of the computer through the use of a relevant software programme.

You will not receive payment or any incentives for participating in this study. There are also no anticipated costs that you will incur for participating. Although you will not receive any type of payment for participating in this study, talking through one's situation may have therapeutic benefits.

This study has received written approval from the Research Ethics Review Committee of the College of Education, Unisa. A copy of the approval letter can be obtained from the researcher if you so wish. When I am finished with my study, I shall return to your school for a short meeting about some of the helpful and interesting ideas you presented to me. I shall invite you to come for the meeting. If you would like to be informed of the final research findings, please contact Kennedy Nyeseh Ofori on +233244576529 or email 67128661@mylife.unisa.ac.za. The findings are accessible for a period of five years.

Should you have concerns about the way in which the research has been conducted, you may contact Professor K Mohangi (mohank@unisa.ac.za)

Thank you for taking time to read this information sheet and for participating in this study.

Thank you.



Kennedy Nyeseh Ofori

**CONSENT/ASSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY (Return slip)**

I, \_\_\_\_\_ (participant name), confirm that the person asking my consent to take part in this research has told me about the nature, procedure, potential benefits and anticipated inconvenience of participation.

I have read (or had explained to me) and understood the study as explained in the information sheet.

I have had sufficient opportunity to ask questions and am prepared to participate in the study.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without penalty (if applicable).

I am aware that the findings of this study will be processed into a research report, journal publications and/or conference proceedings, but that my participation will be kept confidential unless otherwise specified.

I agree to the recording of the interview.

I have received a signed copy of the informed consent agreement.

Participant Name & Surname (please print) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Researcher's Name:

Kennedy Nyeseh Ofori



Researcher's signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## **7.12 APPENDIX L: LETTER OF INFORMED CONSENT: PARENTS OR GUARDIANS OF ADOLESCENT PARTICIPANTS**

**Dear Parent/Guardian,**

Your child/ward is invited to participate in a study entitled:

### **Adolescent Psychosocial Identity Development Associated with Traditional Rites of Passage in the Bosomtwe District of Ghana.**

I am undertaking this study as part of my doctoral research at the University of South Africa. The purpose of the study is to collect important information that could expand the understanding of critical psychosocial and emotional challenges associated with rites of passage, as they appeared to have influential power over adolescents' personal development and learning. The possible benefits of the study are to allow participants to shed light on adolescent experiences during rites of passage, and to ensure improvement by local governments, policymakers, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Health, and all other stakeholders involved in adolescent health services to strengthen education and preventive counselling programmes in order to mitigate adolescent challenges and promote healthy identity development during this time. I am asking permission to include your child in this study because of the experience of your child which is believed to be key to this study. I expect to have 28 other children participating in the study.

If you allow your child to participate, I shall request him/her to Take part in a group interview with an estimated length of 60 minutes. The study involves audio taped semi-structured interviews. Your child will be requested to answer open-ended questions in the focus group discussion. The questions will focus on his/her perceptions and experiences of psychosocial identity associated with rites of passage.

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and can be identified with your child will remain confidential and will only be disclosed with your permission. His/her responses will not be linked to his/her name or your name or the school's name in any written or verbal report based on this study. Such a report will be used for research purposes only.

There are no foreseeable risks to your child by participating in the study, however, if your child feels any emotional discomfort during or after the focus group discussion, arrangement have been made for him/her to be able to speak to a professional counselling psychologist, for counselling. Your child will receive no direct benefit from participating in the study; however, the possible benefits to education are to heighten awareness of adolescents' psychosocial identity, to extend the knowledge base related to rites of passage, to identify central themes that explain why psychosocial challenges happens so often and to improve practice by giving counselling guidelines to teachers and parents for the possible curbing of the problem and in assisting

adolescents. Neither your child nor you will receive any type of payment for participating in this study.

Your child's participation in this study is voluntary. Your child may decline to participate or to withdraw from participation at any time. Withdrawal or refusal to participate will not affect him/her in any way. Similarly, you can agree to allow your child to be in the study now and change your mind later without any penalty.

The study will take place after regular school activities with the prior approval of the school and your child's teacher. Participants will be given a nose mask as part of the covid 19 safety precautions and physical distance will be observed during the interviews and FGD. Participants will also have access to flowing water (supplied in a veronica bucket), soap, and tissue paper, as well as hand sanitizer.

In addition to your permission, your child must agree to participate in the study and you and your child will also be asked to sign the assent form which accompanies this letter. If your child does not wish to participate in the study, he or she will not be included and there will be no penalty. The information gathered from the study and your child's participation in the study will be stored securely on a password locked computer in my locked office for five years after the study. Thereafter, records will be erased.

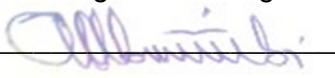
There will be no reimbursement or any incentives for participation in the research. In other words, your child will not receive payment or any incentives for participating in this study. There are also no anticipated costs that you or your child will incur for participating. Although your child will not receive any type of payment for participating in this study, talking through one's situation may have therapeutic benefits.

If you have questions about this study, please ask me or my study supervisor, Prof K. Mohangi (mohank@unisa.ac.za), Department of Psychology of Education, College of Education, University of South Africa. My contact number is +233244576529 and my e-mail is 67128661@mylife.unisa.ac.za. The e-mail of my supervisor is mohank@unisa.ac.za. Permission for the study has already been given by Bosomtwe District Director of Education and the Research Ethics Committee of the College of Education, UNISA.

You are making a decision about allowing your child to participate in this study. Your signature below indicates that you have read the information provided above and have decided to allow him or her to participate in the study. You may keep a copy of this letter.

Name of child:

Sincerely

_____	_____	_____
Parent/guardian's name (print)	Parent/guardian's signature:	Date:
_____		_____
Researcher's name (print)	Researcher's signature	Date:

## **7.13 APPENDIX M: LETTER OF INFORMED ASSENT FROM ADOLESCENT PARTICIPANTS**

**Title: Adolescent Psychosocial Identity Development Associated with Traditional Rites of Passage in the Bosomtwe District of Ghana**

Dear participant,

Date

---

I am doing a study on Adolescent Psychosocial Identity Development Associated with Traditional Rites of Passage in the Bosomtwe District of Ghana as part of my studies at the University of South Africa. Your Headteacher has given me permission to do this study in your school. I would like to invite you to be a very special part of my study. I am doing this study so that I can understand traditional rites of passage for adolescents and how it may influence your identity development. Furthermore, the study hopes to find ways that your teachers, counsellors and parents can use to better understand your development. This may help you and many other adolescents of your age in different schools.

This letter is to explain to you, what I would like you to do. There may be some words you do not know in this letter. You may ask me or any other adult to explain any of these words that you do not know or understand. You may take a copy of this letter home to think about my invitation and talk to your parents about this before you decide if you want to be in this study. I would like to ask you in a focus group (a group seven participants). The discussion in the focus group will take no longer than one hour.

I will write a report on the study but I will not use your name in the report or say anything that will let other people know who you are. Participation is voluntary and you do not have to be part of this study if you do not want to take part. If you choose to be in the study, you may stop taking part at any time without penalty. You may tell me if you do not wish to answer any of my questions. No one will blame or criticise you. When I am finished with my study, I shall return to your school to give a short talk about some of the helpful and interesting things I found out in my study. I shall invite you to come and listen to my talk.

You will receive no direct benefit from participating in the study; however, the possible benefits to education are to heighten awareness of adolescents' psychosocial identity, to extend the knowledge base related to rites of passage, to identify central themes that explain why psychosocial challenges happens so often and to improve practice by giving guidelines to teachers and parents for the possible curbing of the problem and in assisting adolescents. You will not be reimbursed or receive any incentives for your participation in the research.

There are no foreseeable risks to you by participating in the study, however, if you feel any emotional discomfort during or after the focus group discussion, arrangements have been made for you to be able to speak to a professional counselling psychologist, for counselling. You will not be reimbursed or receive any incentives for your participation in the research.

Participants will be given a nose mask as part of the covid 19 safety precautions and physical distance will be observed during the interviews and FGD. Participants will also have access to flowing water (supplied in a veronica bucket), soap and tissue paper, as well as hand sanitizer.

If you decide to be part of my study, you will be asked to sign the form on the next page. If you have any other questions about this study, you can talk to me or you can have your parent or another adult contact me on +233244576529 and my e-mail is 67128661@mylife.unisa.ac.za Do not sign the form until you have all your questions answered and understand what I would like you to do.

Researcher: Kennedy Nyeseh Ofori Phone number: +233244576529

Do not sign the written assent form if you have any questions. Ask your questions first and ensure that someone answers those questions.

### WRITTEN ASSENT

I have read this letter which asks me to be part of a study at my school. I have understood the information about my study and I know what I will be asked to do. I am willing to be in the study.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Learner's name (print):                      Learner's signature:                      Date:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Witness's name (print)                      Witness's signature                      Date:

(The witness is over 18 years old and present when signed.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent/guardian's name (print)                      Parent/guardian's signature:                      Date:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Researcher's name (print)                      Researcher's signature:                      Date:

## FOCUS GROUP CONSENT/ASSENT AND CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT

I \_\_\_\_\_ grant consent/assent that the information I share during the focus group may be used by Kennedy Nyeseh Ofori for research purposes. I am aware that the group discussions will be digitally recorded and grant consent/assent for these recordings, provided that my privacy will be protected. I undertake not to divulge any information that is shared in the group discussions to any person outside the group in order to maintain confidentiality.

Participant's Name (Please print): \_\_\_\_\_

Participant Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Researcher's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Researcher's Signature:



Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## 7.14 APPENDIX N: INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR TEACHERS/PARENTS

### 1. Opening

#### A. Establishing rapport

Thank you for coming to this discussion. I am glad that you agree to assist with my research endeavours by sharing with me your perceptions on “adolescents’ psychosocial identity associated with traditional rites of passage”. You are kindly asked to be honest in giving your views.

#### B. Time line

The interview should take about forty-five minutes.

### 2. Body – Prompts

- Can you describe the rites of passage that adolescents undergo in this community?
- Can you explain how adolescents experience the rites of passage?
- What are the positive effects of the rites of passage?
- In your opinion what do you consider are some of the psychological, emotional and social challenges these adolescents encounter during this stage of their development? Explain in detail (probe)
- From your point of view as a teacher or a parent, how do rites of passage influence adolescent’s psychological and social identity development?
- In your opinion, how do these challenges affect adolescents’ personal and academic well-being?

### 3. Closing

I appreciate the time you have devoted to this interview. If you need to talk more about this issue, please feel free to get in touch with me.

THANK YOU VERY MUCH!

## 7.15 APPENDIX O: FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION SCHEDULE FOR ADOLESCENTS

Focus group discussions schedule for adolescents

Opening Prayer: From one of the participants

Establishing rapport

Thank you for coming to this discussion. I am Kennedy Nyeseh Ofori, a Tutor at the Education Department of Wesley College of Education, Kumasi-Ghana (WESCO). I am currently enrolled as a PhD student with the University of South Africa (UNISA). I am glad that you agree to assist with my research endeavours by sharing with me your perceptions on “adolescents’ psychosocial identity associated with traditional rites of passage”. You are kindly asked to be honest in giving your views. Your answers will be kept strictly confidential. You should not feel forced to say something that you are uncomfortable with. If you wish to withdraw from the research, you are free and you will not be penalised. If you do not understand anything, please ask for clarification.

Purpose

This focus group discussion seeks to elicit information from you pertaining adolescents’ psychosocial identity associated with traditional rites of passage. The information you provide will help to prevent these adolescent challenges and to formulate appropriate counselling guidelines.

Time line: Focus group discussions should take about one hour.

Examples of questions:

- What rites of passage are performed for you when you get to your adolescent age in this community? How do you feel about these rites?
- How did you practically experience these rites of passage?
- As an adolescent, what challenges did you encounter?
  - a. psychologically
  - b. Socially
  - c. Emotionally
- How can traditional rites of passage influence your identity development?
- How do these challenges affect your personal and academic well-being?

Closing

I appreciate the time you have devoted to this interview. If you need to talk more about this issue, please feel free to get in touch with me.

Thank you very much.

## 7. 16 APPENDIX P: SCREENSHOT TAKEN DURING PROCESS OF ATLAS.TI CODING

The screenshot displays the ATLAS.ti software interface during a coding session. The main window shows a document titled "D 2: transcript 3" with the following text:

1 Moderator: In your opinion, what is identity?  
 2 Ahomam: Am grateful for the question. In my view identity development is about forming strong sense of oneself. It simply refers to how an individual establishes how he/she is different from others, that is who you are. No two people are alike, we are all unique or different in many ways.  
 3 Obesika: In my view, identity simply refers to how an individual establishes how he/she is different from others. That is who you are. No two people are alike, we are all unique or different in many ways  
 4 Aboouso: for Adolescents, identity looks at a person who is well-equipped to face adulthood with certainty, confidence and sees himself as unique.  
 5 Moderator: Thank you. In your opinion what do you consider are some of the adolescents' psychological experiences?  
 6 Opesika: The psychological experience has to do with the mental or the cognitive processes the adolescent go through.  
 7 Ohoo: Psychologically, it involves how adolescents think and their self-consciousness. In this way, these young people develop a sense of self-awareness and reflect on their values. They just do not accept what they are told without question. You need to explain the reason for any action taken. They begin to discover who they are and become conscious of what is around them. Let me also add that when they fail to make progress in this regard, they become confused in their minds.  
 8 Moderator: talking about the mental or cognitive processes, could you please explain further  
 9 Opesika: What I mean to say is that it involves how adolescents think and their self-consciousness. At this stage of development, the individual thinks

The right-hand pane shows a list of codes and their application to the text. The codes include:

- Moderator
- Ahomam
- Psychosocial challenges: Identi...
- sense of oneself
- Emotions: Identity
- Emotions: Uniqueness
- Obesika
- different
- Aboouso
- Emotions: Certainty
- Emotions: Confidence
- Lifecycle: Adolescence
- Psychosocial challenges: Identi...
- identity
- Emotions: Psychological experi...
- Lifecycle: Adolescence
- Moderator
- cognitive
- Cognitive development: Self-a...
- Emotions: Confusion
- Emotions: Questioning
- Emotions: Reflection
- Ohoo
- Psychosocial challenges: Identi...
- self-consciousness
- conscious
- Moderator
- Cognitive development: Abstra...
- Cognitive development: Decisi...

The bottom of the screen shows the Windows taskbar with the search bar, taskbar icons, and system tray information including the date (22/10/2023) and time (4:08 pm).

## 7. 17 APPENDIX Q: SAMPLE OF FIELD NOTES

On a particular day when I went to one of the sampled schools to conduct an interview with a teacher, I was a student sitting lonely during break time. When I asked why she was alone and looked worried she indicated that her parents had indicated that she would be having her initiation rites the following year. Her worry was how she would have to show some parts of her body to the general public during the ritualisation process. (21<sup>st</sup> January, 2022)

On a specific day, I showed up at one of the sampled schools during a break. I saw some classmates making fun of a specific female student. The youngster who was being mocked seemed pretty uncomfortable as tears streamed down her face. Some of the students told me she failed the virginity test and was unclean when I questioned them about why they were torturing her. Although the incident occurred roughly two years ago, the involved student lamented the fact that her peers continued to bring it up frequently. (10<sup>th</sup> February, 2022)

On a certain day during a visit to one of the communities of my study, I found a young lady sitting in front of her house discussing with another lady the benefits she had derived from once participating in 'bragoro rites'. I approached them and expressed my interest in what they were discussing and pleaded if I could join the conversation, to which they readily agreed. In the course of the conversation, she showed me colourful pictures of her participating in the ceremony and brought out the sewing machine she got from the initiation. She indicated that her parents used the money she raised to start an apprenticeship as a seamstress. (21<sup>st</sup> February, 2022)

On a certain day when I arrived at the school, I found a form two student lady with beads around her arm. When I asked her why she wore those ornaments, she indicated that it made her look more like a beautiful African woman and that her love for such things grew after her initiation rites. (2<sup>nd</sup> March, 2022)

## **7.18 APPENDIX R: SAMPLE OF FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION TRANSCRIPT AND CODING**

### **FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION WITH ADOLESCENTS**

**MODERATOR: CHRISTIANA AMA KORANTENG**

**GROUP MEMBERS (Pseudo names):** Participants: 6 Ahomam, 7 Aboourso, 8 Opesika, 9 Obooho, 10 Abompe

**DATE OF FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION: 05/06/2022**

**START TIME OF INTERVIEW: 2: 15 pm**

**END TIME OF INTERVIEW: 3:20 mm**

**LOCATION OF FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION: ICT centre (Akokofe D/A JHS)**

**INTERVIEW TOPIC: Adolescent psychosocial identity development associated with traditional rites of passage in the Bosomtwe District of Ghana**

**Opening Prayer: From one of the adolescent participants**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Thank you all for coming to this discussion. The last time we met, I explained to you that we were to have a focus group discussion so that you could share your experiences and views on “adolescents’ psychosocial identity associated with traditional rites of passage”. You are kindly asked to be honest in giving your views. Your answers will be kept strictly confidential. You should not feel forced to say something that you are uncomfortable with. If you wish to withdraw from the research, you are free and you will not be penalized. If you do not understand anything, please ask for clarification.

Moderator: Could you please take turns to introduce yourselves by stating your name and form level.

MODERATOR: Thank you all for the introduction. Now that we have got to know each other, let us get down to the main discussion.

Line number	FULL TRANSCRIPT	RESEARCH QUESTIONS	CODES	THEME	SUB-THEME	CATEGORY	LINK TO LITERATURE and THEORY	
1	<b>Moderator:</b> In your opinion, what is identity?	What are adolescents psychological, emotional and social experiences in their identity development process?	Different	Understanding adolescents psychological, emotional and social experiences	Understanding identity development	identity	Johnson 2018; Groff 2010; Markstrom & Iborra 2003; Mapindani 2018; Markstrom 2011; Herbert 2005; Kangwa 2011; Ethier et al., 2006; Kerpelman, et al., 2013; Ekine, Samati & Walker 2013; Warria, 2018 Van de Bongardt et al., 2016;	
2	<b>Ahomam:</b> Am grateful for the question. In my view identity development is about forming strong sense of oneself. It simply refers to how an individual establishes how he/she is different from others, that is who you are.							
3	No two people are alike, we are all unique or different in many ways.							
4								
5								
6								
7								
8	<b>Obesika:</b> In my view, identity simply refers to how an individual establishes how he/she is different from others.		Unique					
9	That is who you are. No two people are alike, we are all unique or different in many ways							
10								
11			Certain					
12	<b>Aboouso:</b> for Adolescents, identity looks at a person who is well-equipped to face adulthood with certainty, confidence and sees himself as unique.							
13			Confident					
14								
15	<b>Moderator:</b> Thank you. In your opinion what do you consider are some of the adolescents' psychological experiences?							
16			Cognitive					
17								
18	<b>Opesika:</b> The psychological experience has to do with the mental or the cognitive processes the adolescent go through.							
19			The psychological					
20								
21	<b>Ohooho:</b> Psychologically, it involves how adolescents think and their self-consciousness. In this way, these young people develop a sense of self-awareness and reflect on their values. They just do not accept what they are told without question. You need to explain the reason							
22								
23								
24								
25								

26 27 28 29	for any action taken. They begin to discover who they are and become conscious of what is around them. Let me also add that when they fail to make progress in this regard, they become confused in their minds.		Think Self-conscious		experiences of adolescents	Psychological	
30 31	<b>Moderator:</b> talking about the mental or cognitive processes, could you please explain further		Discover				
32 33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40	<b>Opesika:</b> What I mean to say is that it involves how adolescents think and their self-consciousness. At this stage of development, the individual thinks in an abstract manner and becomes indecisive in their analysis of situations and life choices. By analysing and trying to find solutions to what confront them daily it goes a long way to improve their thinking capabilities and their behaviour in general. They become self-conscious and make rational decisions based on their intuition.		Mind Abstract Analyse Rational decision				
41 42 43	Ahomam: it pertains to one's reasoning powers. That is, one's ability to interpret riddles and use more problems when talking.						
44 45 46	<b>Moderator:</b> I appreciate your response. May I kindly ask you to shed light on the emotional experience adolescents go through?						
47 48 49 50 51 52 53 54	<b>Abompe:</b> From my own understanding, emotional experience has to do with the feelings of adolescents. You see the impact of the environment on them sometimes changes their reactions or feelings towards people. Adolescents seek autonomy at this point in their life. Any frustration or setback may provoke them to exhibit signs of anxiety or depression, increased irritability or anger, and a feeling of loneliness		Interpret Feelings reactions				
55 56 57	<b>Obooho:</b> Alright in my opinion, emotional experience has to do with feelings of adolescents. You see the impact of the environment on them sometimes makes them to		frustration				



<p>92 93 94 94 95 96 97 98 99 100 101</p>	<p><b>Aboouso:</b> With adolescents' social experience, they want to spend less time with their parents and may focus more on their peers. They develop a strong sense of relationship or attachment with people of their age bracket through socialization. They sometimes want to attach themselves to people within their family and outside especially those they see as role models. They usually join famous groups like the Girls and boys brigade, red cross society, drama and debating club, amnesty international, junior choir, etc. Through these groupings, they engage in boyfriend-girlfriend" relationships.</p>		Relationship			socializing	
<p>101 102 103 104</p>	<p><b>Moderator:</b> Thank you very much for the vivid explanations. Can we more on to the next issue. What rites of passage are performed for adolescents in this community?</p>						
<p>105 106 107 108 109 110 111 112 113 114</p>	<p><b>Ahomam:</b> Thank you for the question. Just like everywhere in Ghana, at Bosomtwe each child undergoes several rites and rituals from birth until death. Normally there is a grand naming ceremony to welcome a new born baby who is born in this community. Likewise, when the person reaches adolescence, we normally perform bragoro also known as puberty rites for them to show they have come of age. This tradition which was handed to us by our forefathers is done to officially usher them into adulthood.</p>	<p>What are the traditional rites of passage that adolescents undergo?</p>	Bragoro	Traditional rituals and rites of passage adolescents undergo	Adolescents' rites of passage at Boomtwe		
<p>115 116</p>	<p><b>Moderator:</b> Could you please describe to me how bragoro is performed in this community.</p>		Puberty				
<p>117 118 119 120 121 122 123 124</p>	<p><b>Opesika:</b> As I said earlier, bragoro rites is done to initiate the adolescent into adulthood. It happens when the child's body begins to show clear signs of changes that makes them appear matured or look like adults. For girls it is after they have experienced menstruation (menarche) or the flow of blood for the first time in their life. Quickly, the parents of the girl are obliged to inform the queen mother</p>		Usher				Skinner et al., (2013); Salm & Falola 2002; Owusu 2016; Akweongo et al., 2021; Kakyire 2009; Asare-Donkoh et al.,
			Tradition				

<p>125 of the community of this new change. It signals that their  126 daughter is now ready and qualified to be ushered into  127 adulthood. The queen mother and her kinsmen have a  128 duty to perform, that is to make checks. One is the  129 spiritual check, where they need to consult the gods and  130 ancestors to ascertain from them if the soul of the person  131 to be initiated conforms with the rituals and rites. This is  132 done to seek the approval of the gods in order to prevent  133 any form of disaster or calamity befalling on the child and  134 the community at large. The other is the physical check,  135 where they conduct a special test to find out if the girl is  136 pregnant or have ever engaged in sexual intercourse. The  137 girl who fails this test is excluded from this ceremony since  138 it is done exclusively for virgins. For the girl who passes  139 the test, a weeklong ceremony is fixed in consultation with  140 the parents to usher her. The family of the initiate will have  141 to prepare their wards for the occasion and buy some  142 items needed for the ceremony.  143</p>			<p>Mensuration  Flow of blood  Usher  Kinsmen  Physical check  Approval</p>		<p>The phases of adolescent rites of passage.</p>	<p>Separation</p>	<p>(2017); Boateng &amp; Agyeman, 2018; Alford 2013; Crentsil 2015; Kissi-Abrokwah et al., (2021);</p>
<p>144 The activities commence with spiritual cleaning in a river  145 or stream to drive away evil spirits. The initiate rides on  146 the back of an elderly woman to the river side and back  147 home. Libation is then poured by the traditional priest.  148 This is done with either palm-wine or schnapps to show  149 appreciation to the gods and ancestors for their protection  150 and guidance throughout the ceremony. Then she is  151 dressed in colourful traditional cloth known as kente, a  152 pair of native sandals called "ahenema", and breads put  152 around her neck, wrist and waist.</p>			<p>Weeklong activity  Prepare  Cleaning  Spiritual  Ancestors</p>			<p>Transition</p>	
<p>153 The final phase is climaxed with a durbar and several  154 activities that take place. These activities include  154 enstoolment where initiate is made to sit and stand on a  155 stool repeatedly for three times. There is merry making  156 afterwards. The crowned and all well-wishers gathered  157 eat, drink, sing traditional songs and dance. The initiate is  158 congratulated and presented with gifts by the parents,  159 friends, family members and community elders. These  160 days fund raising is included to mobilize money for the</p>			<p>Durbar</p>				



190 191 192	<b>Opesika:</b> The queen mother may accept depending on how you present the issue. Assuming everybody wants to avoid those rituals, it will not be easy to exempt you.		Pacify			
193 194 195 196	<b>Moderator:</b> Very interesting. Thank you, these details. In your narration you also claimed there are no grand ceremonies for boys. Could you please tell me what is done in their case?					
197 198 199 200 201 202 203 204 205 206 207 208	<b>Ahomam:</b> At bosomtwe more premium is placed on the girls. I do not do why but our elders may know best. For the adolescent boy community elders do not have any special ceremonies for them. They are confined in a room for advice by the elderly men in the family. The boy is presented with some tools for trading by the father or uncle. This signifies that the boy is permitted to fend for himself and also marry. The adolescent boy who has come of age is normally presented with some tools for trading or a cutlass or a gun by the father and sometimes the uncle which means he is of age, ready to fend for himself and even marry.		Premium			Preserving the best core values of a society
209 210	<b>Moderator:</b> Can you shed lights on how these adolescents experience the rites of passage?		Fend Presented			Raise seed capital to help them start a trade or vocation
211 212 213 214 215	<b>Abourso:</b> hmmm generally they experience it differently. I can say that these youngsters see these rites as a very important turning point in their lives. In fact is a mixed feeling, adolescents in this town sometimes experience these rites and rituals as either excitement or shock.	How are the rites of passage experienced by adolescents?	Tools			
216 217 218 219 220 221	<b>Abompe:</b> during the ritualisation process when I was confined, I was sad and felt lonely because I could not see most of my favourite friends I used to play with. Fortunately, I got some new friends who were also prepared to be passed through the same rites. We were assigned some elderly women who were very supportive,		Exciting shock	How adolescents experience rites and rituals of passage	Positive experiences	Eliminating cognitive dissonance

212 213	patient and often discussed key issues bordering on the rudiments of life and its challenges with us.		challenge				
214 215	<b>Moderator</b> : This is interesting. Could you please go on to explain how this shock or excitement occurs?						Abbey & Nasidi, 2023; Walker 2013; Neetu et al., 2017; Çivitci 2015;
216 217 218 219 220 221 222 223 224	<b>Ahomam</b> : You see in the case the girl is presented to the queen mother to test if she is a virgin or not, those who pass this virginity test becomes happy while those who fail have the shock of their life's and are stigmatized by the community members. Hence, those who go through these rites and rituals develop a unique sense of identity and self-confidence. They see themselves as different from others and makes them feel matured and begin to behave as adults.		Happy Self-confidence Matured				Turner 2012; Veresova, & Mala 2012; Ge & Natsuaki 2009; Yarney, Mba & Asampong 2015;
225 226 227	Opesika: is very exciting. The dancing and merry making along is enough to make you happy.you become the special one on that occation.						Padmanabhanunni and Fennie, 2017;
228 229	<b>Moderator</b> : Can you please tell me the positive effects of the rites of passage?					Enlightenment	Poku (2022);
230 231 232 233 234 235 236	<b>Abourso</b> : When I went through the rite of passage last year, I learnt a lot from my kinsmen. I was taken through the basic values of the society such as the need to be truthful, honest, hardworking and sincere in whatever I do. These are the principles that everyone in my community is expected to exhibit and you are not expected to deviate from them.		Values Honest hard work				Abbey et al. (2019).
237 238 239 240 241 242 243	<b>Opesika</b> : Truly, truly the ceremony brings a lot of benefits. Having completed the whole process, it brings honour and dignity to the initiate themselves, their family and community at large. Through the orientation and training received, they acquire new knowledge from the elderly about personal grooming and traditional values such as dressing, drumming, singing and dancing. Again, it		dignity grooming training				

<p>244 245 246 247 248</p>	<p>teaches them to be obedient to their parents and leave a chaste life. Through these rites, some adolescents are able to get capital to start a trade. The gifts (eg. Sewing machine, hair drier) and money they receive from parents, relatives and friends could be used as working capital.</p>		<p>money capital</p>			<p>Producing joyful moments</p>	
<p>249 250 251</p>	<p><b>Moderator:</b> Thank you for the response. You mentioned that it brought dignity to the adolescent. Could you please explain further?</p>		<p>worth</p>				
<p>252 253 254 255 256 257 258 259</p>	<p><b>Opesika:</b> Oh yes in terms of dignity, having chalked this milestone in one's life, the worth of the person increases. High respect and recognition are accorded this person. If he or she was to be a commodity on the market we can truly say the value or price have shot up. Also, psychologically the person begins to think and look matured as compared to the peers who have not gone through these rites and rituals.</p>		<p>recognition</p>				
<p>260 261</p>	<p><b>Moderator:</b> are there any negative experiences associated with rites of passage?</p>		<p>embattled</p>		<p>Negative experiences</p>		
<p>262 263 264 265 266 267 268 269 270 271</p>	<p><b>Ahomam:</b> There are inconsistent thoughts, beliefs and attitudes these adolescents are embattled. It gradually fades away as the initiation rites and rituals are being performed. For instance, at the point where the girls are made to swallow the egg, they are told not to bite it, if they do, they will be chewing their future children. The adolescent's mind may undoubtedly harbour some level of skepticism or unbelief as a result of this type of encounter. After swallowing the egg, the uncertainty is resolved.</p>		<p>skepticism</p> <p>uncertainty</p>			<p>Psychological distress</p>	
<p>271 272 273 27</p>	<p><b>Oboourso:</b> I was taken to the riverside for a spiritual bath while being carried. I needed to remove everything I was wearing. I had to stripe myself in front of these elderly people. I had little option, although it was not simple. This</p>		<p>stripe</p> <p>discomfort</p>				

275 276	situation was the real cause of my embarrassment and discomfort.						
277 278 279	<b>Moderator:</b> thank you for your response. Apart from this is there any other negative experience on the adolescent?		breast			Embarrassing and a form of ridicule	
280 281 282 283 284 285 286	<b>Ahomam:</b> Adolescent girls do not feel free in circumstances where they have to show case their breast during the segment of the ceremony devoted to the enstoolment rites. Even though it is extremely difficult, parents can now haggle with the queen mother and kinsmen. If they concur, you are required to pay a fee; if not, you must put up with it.		difficult  Christian believer			Rituals unacceptable to Christian faith and beliefs	
287 288 289 290 291	<b>Aboourso:</b> also, the river side bathing where you have to expose your naked body to the elderly women is quite uneasy one. You feel ashamed going naked before them. Then you will see them smearing your body with some substances you don't even know where they got from.		ashamed				
300 301	<b>Moderator:</b> it means parents can negotiate to pay money in order to be exempted from some of the processes?	How does rites of passage influence adolescents' psychosocial identity development?		Rites and rituals of passage and adolescent psychosocial identity development			
302 303 304 305	<b>Opesika:</b> sure, especially when one of parents may be a pastor or church elder. If the community leaders understand your situation as a strong Christian believer, they may exempt your ward.		Awareness  High value		Psychological impact		
306 307 308	<b>Moderator:</b> That is wonderful. Thank you for the response. Can we also look at how these rites and rituals influence psychological identity development?					Developing self-esteem	
309 310 301 302 303	<b>Obooho:</b> The process makes the initiate to recognise their self-worth and dignifies their personality. Again, adolescents at this period develop positive self-esteem and unique identity. I mean adolescents who experience puberty rite develop new ways of thinking, awareness and		grew  Self-esteem		Personal maturation		



338 339	traditions and customs. We develop a special identity as a result of our interest in traditional customs.						Schroeder et al., (2022).
340 341 342	<b>Moderator:</b> In your opinion what do you consider are some of the psychological challenges these adolescents encounter during this stage of development?					Psychological problems	
343 344 345 346 347 348 350 351 352 353 354 355 356 357 358	<b>Abourso:</b> There is a whole lot that goes on in the adolescents' mind and feelings. Psychologically adolescents will be contemplating on issues subject to their identity, self-esteem and autonomy. Other common psychological problems they face include; stress, depression, inferiority complex (dislike for their body image), eating problems, high appetite for sex and many others. These youngsters think much about their appearance, whom they are, what they wear and types of friends. Some of them think and behave in such ways that do not meet the approval of their parents and members of the society. Any attempt to put them on the line if not done skilfully often resulted into a conflict. In fact some of them are very rebellious because they think they are adults and their views or opinions should be respected as such.		Inferiority  Stress  Depression				
359 360 361 362 363 364 365 366	<b>Ahomam:</b> Due to what I went through, I felt stressed. I was unable to complain, though. A child is not expected to question the actions or opinions of the elders in my community. In our situation, we were forced to sit on a stool with our breasts exposed during the enstoolment rites. People were invited to come and watch us by paying money. This practice made us feel uncomfortable and ashamed, and we wished it had not happened to us.		Forced  Uncomfortable				
367 368	<b>Moderator:</b> Can we please look at the emotional challenges adolescents face.						
369 370 371	<b>Obooho:</b> emotional challenges of adolescents normally is the difficulties they face in adjusting to situations of anger and cases of provocation. At our age our parents		Provocation				

372 373 374 375 376	try to tell us when to sleep the type of friends who should visit us. Definitely our parents trying to chose these for us will result in conflict. We become emotionally troubled due to these directives from our parents. They need to understand that we are now adults.		adjusting				
377 378	<b>Aboourso:</b> to my find they often become temperamental at the least of provocation.						
379 380 381 382 389	<b>Abompe:</b> Alright. During adolescence, emotions may become stronger and more intense. Their mood may change more frequently or what we call mood swing. They may become irritated or angered with the least of provocations and may be joyous at certain times.		Mood swing				
390 391	<b>Moderator:</b> Thank you for the response. Can you throw more light on how they get easily provoked?						
392 393 394 395	<b>Abompe:</b> I mean they are very critical on issues at this stage. And would easily react emotionally or aggressively to those critical issues if they found unsatisfactory or inappropriate.		Aggressiveness Unsatisfactory			social challenges	
400 401 402	<b>Moderator:</b> The discussion is getting interesting. Can you also tell me about their social challenges adolescents face?						
403 404 405 406	<b>Obooho:</b> The common social problem they face are interpersonal issues. That is how to relate with others especially their peers and other significant family members.		Interpersonal				
407 408 409 410	<b>Ahomam:</b> most adolescents lack social skills. They can't communicate well with others. You see them fighting when they engage in group activities. Some all prefer to be isolated.		Social skills Communicate				

411 412	<b>Moderator:</b> Thank you. In your opinion, how do these challenges affect your well-being as an adolescent?						
413 414 415 416 417 418 419 420 421 422 423	<b>Abompe:</b> I must say that several positive and negative behaviours are established during adolescence. The complexity of issues that they have to deal with can turn into health problems that may persist throughout their adult life if no intervention is given. Unfortunately, the most disconnected adolescent who lack insurance and family support are often at the greatest risk for multiple and serious health challenges. Some may resort to take drugs, alcoholic beverages or engage in other promiscuous behaviours that puts their life at risk. This goes a long way to affect their personal well-being.		Health  Risk			Personal well-being	
424 425 426	<b>Obooho:</b> to add to this, these problems cause them to have poor network with friends and family members. They can't relate well with close ties.		poor				
427 428	<b>Moderator:</b> Interesting. Can you also tell me how these challenges affect your academic well-being:						
429 430 431 432 433 434	<b>Opesika:</b> These challenges often make me to find learning difficult. The challenges they face may lead them to lose interest in academic activities. They tend to absent themselves from school due to these difficulties and eventually end in truancy. This brings a decline in their academic successes.					Academic well-being	
435 436	<b>Abompe:</b> they also find it difficult to consult their peers if they do not understand a concept. Thereby affecting their academics.		Academic				
437 438 439 440	<b>Moderator:</b> At this point I would want to know if you have any further issues regarding adolescents' psychosocial identity associated with traditional rites of passage to share with me.						

441	<p><b>Aboourso:</b> the initiation ceremony has helped us a lot as you can see. It is my hope that more television station will come here to cover the events.</p> <p><b>Moderator:</b> This is the end of our discussion. Thank you for your cooperation.</p> <p><b>All:</b> You are always welcome</p>						
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**CLOSING**

**MODERATOR:** Thank you very much for sparing your time for this interview. If you feel like sharing more information, please be free to contact me. This is the end of our interview. Thank you very much.

## 7. 18 APPENDIX S: SAMPLE OF INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT AND CODING

### INTERVIEW WITH TEACHER

INTERVIEWER: KENNEDY NYESEH OFORI

INTERVIEWEE (Pseudo name): Afua

DATE OF INTERVIEW: 20/05/2022

START TIME OF INTERVIEW: 10:00 am

END TIME OF INTERVIEW: 10:45 am

LOCATION OF INTERVIEW: ICT centre (Warakose D/A JHS)

INTERVIEW TOPIC: **Adolescent psychosocial identity development** associated with **traditional rites** of passage in the **Bosomtwe District** of Ghana

Opening Prayer: interviewer

### INTRODUCTION

Thank you for coming to this discussion. At our last meeting, I explained to you that we were to meet so that you will talk to me about your perceptions on “adolescents’ psychosocial identity associated with traditional rites of passage”. You are kindly asked to be honest in giving your views. Your answers will be kept strictly confidential. You should not feel forced to say something that you are uncomfortable with. If you wish to withdraw from the research, you are free and you will not be penalized. If you do not understand anything, please ask for clarification.

For how long have you worked as a teacher?

- This is my 27<sup>th</sup> year as a teacher in Ghana Education Service.

Which post do you hold in this school?

- School Guidance and counselling coordinator

Line number	FULL TRANSCRIPT	RESEARCH QUESTIONS	CODES	THEME	SUB-THEME	CATEGORY	LINK TO LITERATURE and THEORY
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28	<p><b>Afua:</b> when we talk about identity we are talking about what makes one unique or different from their peers or other people. Therefore, if am to take them one by one,</p> <p>Psychologically it involves how they think and self-consciousness, emotionally how they behave or react towards others and socially it involves how they interact or socialize with people.</p> <p><b>Interviewer:</b> As you did say, let us take them one after the other. If I got you right, you said psychologically it involves how adolescents think and self-consciousness. May I kindly ask you to shed light on what you mean by this.</p> <p><b>P1:</b> Okay, okay! (<i>Pausing for a moment</i>) I mean to say that these young people <b>develop the sense of self-awareness</b> and <b>reflect on their values</b>. they begin to discover whom they are and <b>become conscious</b> of what is around them. Let me also add that when they fail to make progress in this regard, they become confused in their minds. Then, <b>depression, anxiety</b> sets in and their eating pattern changes. if care is not taken, they may <b>think of ending their life</b>.</p> <p><b>Interviewer:</b> Thank you for the response. Socially you talked about interactions. Can you also tell me about this social aspect of adolescent identity development?</p> <p><b>Afua:</b> oh ok, am referring to acquiring <b>interpersonal skills</b>. You see, in the quest to form their own identity they begin to <b>detach themselves</b> from their parents and rather <b>attach</b> themselves more to persons of the same age bracket or peers. These young people believe they are becoming adults and want to be <b>independent</b>. Their thinking is that their parents should not</p>	<p>What are adolescents psychological, emotional and social experiences in their identity development process?</p>	<p>Thinking</p> <p>Self-consciousness</p> <p>React</p> <p>Interact/ socialize</p> <p>Self-awareness</p> <p>Reflect on values</p> <p>Depression</p> <p>anxiety</p> <p>ending their lives</p> <p>Interpersonal skills</p> <p>Independent \detachment</p>	<p>Understanding adolescents psychological, emotional and social experiences</p>		<p>Psychological experience</p>	<p>Sharma 2012;</p> <p>Obeng 2012;</p> <p>Alsaker &amp; Kroker 2020;</p> <p>Barry et al., 2013;</p> <p>Rosenberg 2017;</p> <p>Valkenburg &amp; Peter 2011;</p> <p>Awortwi &amp; Awortwi 2014;</p> <p>Sirgy 2012;</p> <p>Collier &amp; Morgan 2008;</p> <p>Reder 2014</p>

<p>29 30 31 32 33 34 35  36 37 38 39  40 41 42 43 44 45 46  47 48</p>	<p>influence their decision and choices. They want to do things that seek more of the approval of their friends. Sometimes they want to wear the same types of clothing with their peers, same haircut and so on. But in all these, they sometimes land into trouble because of the over <b>reliance of their friend's</b> advice. Some learn how to steal, smoke, drink and engage in other social vices from these peer groups.</p> <p><b>Interviewer:</b> Wow! That's interesting. You also mentioned their reactions in relating to experiences in adolescents' emotional identity development. Can you please explain further what you mean by "how they react"?</p> <p><b>Afua:</b> oh yes, I am talking about how they <b>respond or confront issues</b>. As adolescents develop, they act and react differently. They are <b>sensitive</b> to what people say or do to them and may <b>react positively or negatively to their feelings</b>. They are uncomfortable with criticisms especially their parents. In this regard, when they develop <b>negative emotions or feelings</b> out of these circumstances, it makes them <b>angry and tensed</b>.</p> <p><b>Interviewer:</b> Thank you very much you have explained the issue in detail. Let us move on to the next item.</p>				<p>Respond to issues</p> <p>Feelings</p>	<p>Social experience</p> <p>Emotional experience</p>	
<p>49 50 51 52 53 54 55 56 57 58 59 60</p>	<p><b>Afua:</b> In our community here the rites of passage for the adolescent is called <b>bragoro</b>. Nowadays we celebrate it in a form of an <b>annual festival</b>.</p> <p><b>Interviewer:</b> Can you tell me how it is done in this community.</p> <p><b>Afua:</b> for girls after the first <b>menstruation</b>, her mother normally sends her to the queen mother who intend e<b>xamines</b> her. This is done to ensure that the girl is not pregnant. The girl is then <b>isolated and a day fixed</b> for the ceremony. The ceremony is normally held on Monday and Tuesday. After the announced date, relatives, friends and other community members assembly on the initiate compound and sing traditional songs. The initiate is carried on the back to the <b>river for spiritual cleansing</b>. After the bath she is covered with a cloth from her feet to the waist, leaving the top bare.</p>	<p>What are the traditional rites of passage that adolescents undergo?</p>		<p>Rites of passage</p>	<p>Bragoro</p> <p>Annual</p> <p>Menstruation</p> <p>Isolated</p> <p>A day fixed</p>		<p>Salm &amp; Falola 2002; Owusu 2016; Akweongo et al., 2021; Kakyire 2009; Boateng &amp; Agyeman, 2018; Alford 2013; Crenstil 2015;</p>

<p>61 62 63 64 65 66 67 68 69 70 71  72 73 74 75 76 77 78</p>	<p>After this a brass basin, known locally as “yaawa” is filled with water, with an egg and dry okro placed beside the girl.</p> <p>Libation is then poured by the traditional priest. This is done with either palm-wine or schnapps to thank the god and ancestors for their protection and for a successful ceremony. Then she is dressed in colourful kente cloth with a pair of “ahenema”, a native sandal. The whole community including visitors gather at the durbar grounds to celebrate the initiates with special singing, dancing and merry making.</p> <p><b>Interviewer:</b> Thank you for the narration. Could you please tell me what is done for the boys?</p> <p><b>Afua:</b> there are no grand ceremonies for the boys as it is done for the girls. The adolescent boy who has come of age is normally presented with some tools for trading or a cutlass or a gun by the father which means he is of age and ready to fend for himself.</p>				<p>Spiritual cleansing</p> <p>Thank gods</p> <p>Celebrate initiate</p>	<p>Traditional rites and rituals</p>	
<p>79 80  81 82 83 84 85 86 87 88 89 90 91 92 93</p>	<p><b>Interviewer:</b> can you shed lights on how these adolescents experience the rites of passage.</p> <p><b>Afua:</b> oh, in fact the initiates tend to be excited. They experience it as a one-time affair, which gives them an identity. They are proud of themselves after going through these rites. It also brings some sort of prestige to them and their parents. They feel a little older than their peers who are yet to go through this experience. However, during the process of initiation, for some of the girls they feel shy and sometimes embarrassed when it gets to the time they have to dress and display their breast to the gathering. I must admit that though some of the girls have to be threatened to partake in the rites and rituals, eventually they feel happy and excited because of the recognition and gifts they receive.</p>	<p>How are the rites of passage experienced by adolescents?</p>		<p>Experiences of adolescents</p>	<p>Excited</p> <p>Gives identity</p> <p>Prestige</p> <p>Embarrassed</p>	<p>Positive experience</p> <p>Negative experience</p>	<p>Siweya, Sodi &amp; Douglas 2018; Pemba 2012; Ekine Samati and Walker 2013; Neetu et al., 2017; Çivitci 2015; Turner 2012; Veresova, &amp; Mala 2012; Ge &amp; Natsuaki 2009; Yarney, Mba &amp; Asampong 2015; Padmanabhan unni &amp; Fennie, 2017</p>

<p>94 95 96 97 98 99 100 101 102 103 104 105 106 107 108</p>	<p><b>Interviewer</b> Can you please tell me how adolescents rites of passage influence their psychological identity development? <b>Interviewee:</b> Oh yes, after this rite are performed, the adolescent will want to be part or respected in any decision taken in the home as well as in the community. Hence, psychologically the adolescent <b>thinks that he</b> is now an adult and begin to behave <b>maturely</b> and want to gain recognition as an adult. Again, adolescents at this period develop <b>positive self-esteem and identity</b>. I mean adolescents who experience puberty rite <b>develop new ways of thinking</b> and sees themselves as deserving respect of others due to the training and education received. They develop high self-esteem, thus <b>place high value on their opinion</b>.</p>	<p>How does rites of passage influence adolescent's psychosocial identity development?</p>		<p>Rites of passage as an avenue for Psychosocial identity development</p>	<p>Think Behave maturely Develop self-esteem Place value on opinion</p>	<p>Psychological impact</p>	<p>Johnson 2018; Groff 2010; Markstrom &amp; Iborra 2003; Mapindani 2018; Markstrom 2011; Herbert 2005; Kangwa 2011; Ethier et al., 2006; Kerpelman, et al., 2013; Ekine, Samati &amp; Walker 2013; Warria, 2018 Van de Bongardt et al., 2016;</p>
<p>109 110 111 112 113 114 115 116 117 118 119</p>	<p><b>Interviewer:</b> Thank you for your response. Can you also tell me about how this rite influences their social identity development? <b>Afua:</b> On social identity period, the isolation period during the performance of the rites and rituals means the individual is moved out of the community where they acquire <b>new skills</b>, new ways of doing things and <b>interacting and relating</b> with peers and prospective spouse. When the individual is brought back into the community after the ceremony they have <b>developed a new personality and identity</b>. I can say that it actually leads to a significant <b>change of social status</b> in the society.</p>				<p>New skills Interacting Relating Develop new personality Change in social status</p>	<p>Social impact</p>	

**CLOSING**

**INTERVIEWER:** Thank you very much for sparing your time for this interview. If you feel like sharing more information, please be free to contact me. This is the end of our interview. Thank you very much.