

Research Report

Krobo girls and Dipo puberty rites of passage in the eastern region of Ghana

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Abstract - Globalization, which seems to have broken all socio-cultural, and economic barriers, and the growing rate of societal awareness has no doubt challenged many African cultural rites such as female genital mutilation. Despite the fact that Dipo, a Krobo cultural puberty rite, has been criticised by many people, especially on the basis of its treatment of young girls, the Krobo have managed to sustain it due to its centrality to their culture as the ceremony is instituted to promote personal hygiene, home management, and morality. This paper, therefore, examines 35 girls between the ages of 12 to 20 comprising 21 initiates and 14 non-initiates from Odumase-Krobo in the Eastern Region of Ghana. The participants were engaged in one-on-one and focused group discussions. Using both primary and secondary data, which is augmented with a qualitative research methodology, this paper examines the perception of girls passing through the Dipo puberty rite. The study reveals two main findings; the belief that Dipo is traditionally ungodly and true Christians must not participate in such activities and the belief that Dipo is a cultural puberty rite of passage that is binding upon the Krobo. It is established that the observance of the Dipo rite in this modern era has attracted a number of criticisms based on the way and manner the rite is conducted, especially from the Christians in Ghana, which causes serious psychological distress among Krobo girls.

Keywords: Dipo, rite, Ghana, puberty.

Introduction

Among the Krobo people of Ghana, the Dipo is a traditional puberty rite of passage for girls, marking their transition from childhood to womanhood. The ceremony typically takes place once a year, usually in the months of March and April. During the Dipo ceremony, girls are secluded from the community for several weeks and undergo a series of rituals and teachings. These rituals include purification ceremonies, during which the girls are bathed in special herbs and receive special blessings from the priestess (Abbey 2016). The girls also receive instruction on adult responsibilities and etiquette, including how to be good wives and mothers.

One of the most distinctive aspects of the Dipo ceremony is the girls' wearing of beads and cloth called 'dip-yo' (Adinku 2016; Osei *et al.* 2021). These are specially designed for the occasion and are meant to symbolize the girls' newfound status as women. The beads and cloth are also believed to have spiritual significance and are thought to offer protection to the girls. At the end of the seclusion period, there is a public ceremony in which the girls dance and display their newly acquired skills and knowledge. This ceremony is a source of pride and celebration for the entire community, and it marks the girls' formal entry into adulthood (Anarfi & Owusu 2011; Kissi-Abrokwah *et al.* 2021).

In most African societies today, social, political, and economic changes have broken down different cultural practices and rapid social change is posing different challenges to meanings of events among the youth (Tetteh 2006; Kariuki *et al.* 2014). These factors include urbanization, educational opportunities, access to global media, and social mobility. Social change has also influenced the youth's participation in traditional initiation (Monyenye 2004).

With regards to social change from the past to the present, life on Shai Hills where the Krobo first settled to the present Krobo-Odumase in the Eastern Region of Ghana was orderly and popular in relation to their culture. Dipo rites of passage, which for time immemorial were believed to be instituted by elders in the community under the stewardship of one priestess called Nana Kloweki still remain crucial and ever-changing for the Krobo. The stages of Dipo rites were defined by elders of the time and violation of the

rite was very detrimental to community members. Until now, a number of the stages of Dipo rites were modified whereas other stages were maintained to reflect ideas relating to the belief system and practices, which have been passed on from one generation to the other (Adjaye 1999; Salm and Falola 2002; Steegstra 2005; Abbey 2016; Abbey *et al.* 2021).

Dipo rites of passage were generally accepted by the Krobo, but it became a major obstacle to the acceptance of a new faith, teachings, and ideas which were largely introduced by the Christian missionaries and through the imposition of the British colonial administration (Teyegaga 1985). Over the years, Dipo became a means of socialization, cultural identification, and personal maturation, which could not be replaced fully by Christian education. Through purposive sampling of 35 girls between the ages of 12 to 20 comprising 21 initiates and 14 non-initiates recruited from Odumase-Krobo in the Eastern Region of Ghana, this paper, therefore, examines the perceptions of Krobo girls who participated in Dipo rites for a period of three (3) days about their cultural values, its significance, and attitudes to Dipo with much focus on the psychological implication. The criteria used in sampling the girls are (1) they must be Krobo (2) the age category and (3) willingness to participate by both initiates and non-initiates. It also examined the sexual behaviour of Krobo girls, which may be related to various effects of Dipo. This is because; the retention of Dipo has aroused the interest of many individuals who studied it from the anthropological point of view despite various attempts to eradicate it.

In order to gain much insight into the current perception of Dipo rites, this study also raised some important questions regarding the conduct of the rites viz.: What has been the perception and experiences of Christian girls who have undergone Dipo? Has the current period of training fully reflected the essence of Dipo in society today? It should also be noted that there is the need to ascertain their perception on Dipo rites and what is actually sustaining it in the Krobo community among the contemporary growing adolescents.

This study is relevant and would benefit all Ga-Adangme people such as the Shai, Krobo, Ningo, and Prampram communities, opinion leaders of cultural rites, as well as initiates and non-initiates about Dipo rites. It would inform, influence and direct Krobo in general about the relationship that exists between current practices and the perception

regarding different concepts that Dipo is believed to address personal hygiene, promiscuity, and teenage pregnancy.

The qualitative data employed thematic analysis to identify, analyse and interpret various aspects of the research objectives. The qualitative data focused on two main objectives. The first objective considered girls' general perception of Dipo rites in the community. Under this objective four main themes emerged. These include the source of income, early and late initiation period, love life, and traditional rites. These themes reflect a mixed perception among initiates and non-initiates as the stated objective was expressed in both positive and negative statements. The second objective of this paper assessed the influence of Dipo rites on girls' sexual behaviours and choices in sexual-related issues. Two themes that emerged from the narratives include good morals and the lesson from the Dipo rites. Views of initiates and non-initiates concerning different issues regarding sexual activities resulted in these two dissenting opinions.

The choice of the Eastern Region for this study, however, was informed by the fact that the Krobo people whose rites of passage are the focus of this paper primarily reside there. Besides, the region is known for its rich cultural heritage and many traditional practices and customs, including the Dipo rites. Above all, the Shai hills located in the Eastern Region where the Dipo is held served as the embodiments of the historical and cultural significance of the Krobo people.

Theoretical Framework

Transition-Rite Theory inspired by [Gennep \(2011\)](#) has explained the essence of female initiation ceremonies that announce a woman's social maturity as essential. The term, rite of passage was first coined by the Dutch-German-French ethnographer and folklorist, Arnold van Gennep, to describe a three-part structure that he observed in various cultural rituals that marked a person's transition from one social status to another ([Gennep 2011](#)). According to Gennep, this three-part structure of the rites of passage is; (1) the phase of separation from a previous world (2) the exposure (3) the experience executed during the transitional phase, as well as incorporation into the new world. These stages were also described as the pre-liminal, liminal, and post-liminal stages ([Gennep 2011](#)).

According to [Genep \(2011\)](#), the first phase of most initiation rites is marked by the withdrawal of people from their current status to another in a particular social structure. Activities during the first stage include different food taboos, social segregation, and avoidance of sexual activities. The transition phase (second phase) is the period during which one prepares to enter the final phase. The second phase was described as the threshold of different rites of passage. The transitional stage is a period accompanied by testing and education. Practical lessons involve the avoidance of specific meals, sexual and behavioural reversals. These activities help growing girls acquire a new status in society. The third phase was described by [Genep \(2011\)](#) as a period of incorporation, which is typically signified with outdoor adventure programmes. These programmes include religious ceremonies, dancing, receiving of gifts, and community participation, which are more focused on individuals who have completed the rites.

As Genep, [Teyegaga \(1985\)](#) also observes that Dipo transitional rites were classified into three main stages. The stages seek to explain key ideas for which Dipo was originally performed by Nana Kloweki. These include social, religious, and outdoor aspects ([Teyegaga 1985](#)).

[Froggatt \(1997\)](#) reported that the phases as proposed by Genep would be prominent depending on the type of life event. For example, the separation phase would be notable during bereavement whereas the transitional phase, during new parenting, and finally the incorporation phase, is during the early marriage. Genep's order was believed to reduce harmful effects on the individual and on social stability and order. However, according to [Turner \(1982\)](#), the acquisition of social identity during the transitional phase was described as unclear and ambiguous as people found themselves outside the normal social values and systems. These people are believed to share and communicate with other initiates, which comes with its own structure (anti-structural).

The concept of anti-structure indicates that human beings gain a form of understanding of their humanity and spirituality through interaction with others. Thus, humans provide continuity and the spiritual aspect affirms the significance of discontinuity. Genep's Theory is, therefore, adopted in this study to explain the stages the Krobo girls pass through the Dipo rites with particular references to their personal experiences, as well as the impact of such rites on their lives.

Methodology

Fourteen (14) initiates as well as fourteen (14) non-initiates were conveniently selected to participate in the focused group discussion. A different set of seven (7) Dipo initiates were interviewed individually. This one-on-one interview process was to give the girls an opportunity to share their private and personal experiences that some may be unwilling to share in a group. These two methods used for the qualitative data collection were to give girls an equal opportunity to the initiates so as to express themselves and to cater for individual differences with regard to much flexibility in sharing information. In all, 35 Krobo girls participated in the qualitative study, which include twenty-one (21) initiates and fourteen (14) non-initiates.

Girls between the ages of twelve (12) to twenty (20) years who were relatively educated and may be thinking separately from a majority of the populace were conveniently selected from different secondary institutions at Odumase-Krobo. The major secondary institutions include Odumase Presbyterian Junior High School and Akro Senior Secondary/ Technical School. The study started with a focused group discussion (1st phase) followed by a one-on-one interview (2nd phase). In each of these phases, participants were introduced to the subject matter, aim, objectives, as well as their expected contributions to the study. During this process, rapport was created and participants did not feel intimidated by the researchers' presence.

During the first phase (focused group discussion), four (4) focused groups were formed, which consist of two different group of initiates and two (2) different groups of non-initiates. Each group had 7 participants. A question guide was used to tease out two major ideas in relation to the objectives. The second phase was a follow up individual interview with seven (7) other participants from each category of initiates.

Views about Dipo

Dipo rites are performed for majority of Krobo girls at puberty stage. Whereas most initiates expressed much joy to have undergone the rites due to various reasons, others have expressed criticisms about some of the stages of the rites. Some initiates evaluated some of

the stages of Dipo rites as embarrassing and a form of ridicule in modern times because they were forced to undergo the ceremony. Some initiates reported different psychological challenges as photographs of their exposed body were used for souvenirs. Few other initiates left the community because the men have seen their naked bodies (Emefa & Selase 2014). According to Boakye (2010), a girl was initiated without knowing any reasons except to make her a Krobo woman.

A school of thought outlines the importance of Dipo. For instance, Salm and Falola (2002) opine that the Dipo is quite beneficial to the people. These according to them include the propagation of a lineage, status, family organization, and future lineage relationship. Others believe that Dipo serves as a traditional means of preventing promiscuity in the area (Schroeder & Danquah 2000).

The current state of society, however, has influenced the perception of individuals who believe that religion is most crucial, as well as formal education without traditions, which were transferred from one generation to another (Teyegaga 1985). Irrespective of these facts, can the belief system pose any psychological challenge among growing girls regarding their perception of traditions (Dipo) within a specific period of time? Is there a need to pay close attention to the belief systems of girls in a scientific way?

Academic disciplines have emphasized different influences of psychological variables in different social contexts on adolescent development into adulthood. Psychologists, for instance, emphasize different phenomena, their meanings (cognitive outcomes), and associated behavioural implication(s). Rites of passage have usually been studied from the perspective of other disciplines such as folklorists, mythologists, and anthropologists, which mostly contribute to our understanding of the history of life transitions (Scheer *et al.* 2007). For example, Genep (2011) explains the essence of female initiation ceremonies that announce a woman's social maturity as essential.

Findings

Source of Income

According to some initiates and most non-initiates used for the study, Dipo was seen as a source of income for the organizers of the rites, which mostly include the elderly women in the community. The idea was expressed in statements such as:

“One can avoid certain aspects of Dipo by paying a token to the elderly women.” (Initiate; 17 years- S.H.S)

“My mother paid some amount of money and I was excluded from particular aspects which my mother didn't want them to do for me” (Initiate; 12 years - J.H.S)

“Dipo is just a means for the old women to get money. I don't think my parents have enough money to give to fetish women” (Non-initiate; 13 years – JHS).

Early and Late Initiation Period

Through the discussion, participants expressed two dissenting views in relation to the age of initiation. While twelve (12) initiates prefer to undergo Dipo rites at puberty so that they can learn very important concepts that will be useful in the future, seven (7) non-initiates were of the view that children should not be allowed to participate and two (2) non-initiates were indifferent about the age. However, the rest did not have specific views on the subject matter. Some of the views expressed are as follows.

“It is good to go through Dipo early because I have seen some young girls who were pregnant at an early age. In order to relieve their family from curse and disgrace, they will be free from any form of guilt if they get pregnant without going through the rite. However, I was very young but I have a sister who was about to complete Junior High School. My parents decided that I should join her so that we all undergo the rite at the same time.” (Initiate; 16 years- J.H.S).

“I was very young when I was initiated so I cannot recall what I was taught at the time. In fact, I can't attest to the fact that I was taught either home management or personal hygiene, which was the key reason for which the rite has been instituted.” (Initiate; 14 years- S.H.S)

“... I will say that Krobo girls around the ages of 16 and above who have not undergone the rites are different because most of these people are afraid to partake in immoral acts before initiation.”(Non-initiate; 20 years- S.H.S)

“When I was undergoing Dipo rites I was fifteen (15) years at the time and was added to young people between the ages of three (3) to eight (8). I felt I was too old for the rite and this has been my feeling with regard to age. If Dipo is to teach us basic skills for marriage, then they should allow all of us to attain a certain age before we undergo the rite. Most of the times I feel very shy when certain rituals are performed and even if the ceremony is over. Sometimes I regret undergoing the rite” (Initiate; 18 years- J.H.S)

Love life

The love life among the girls (initiates and non-initiates) was explained in relation to either having a good marriage (having a man to formally ask your hand in marriage) or single parenting (having a child out of wedlock). Initiates also expressed their views concerning their anticipated future life. Fifteen (15) participants were happy to have undergone the Dipo rites in order to get good marriages and for their in-laws to accept them. However, six (6) participants reported inadequate education and training in relation to their readiness toward marriage during initiation. According to initiates, girls who participated in Dipo rites for three days indicated that many lessons were not acquired during the performance. This was attributed to the short time interval, especially when they compare previous experiences to the current state of initiation. Some of the views concerning marriage in relation to Dipo rites were expressed as follows:

“I am happy to undergo Dipo rites because I will be accepted by my husband and in-laws. During engagement ceremonies, men are asked if the woman has undergone Dipo. Sometimes, in-laws ask the man before any ceremony. This has created tension which I have witnessed in the community.” (Initiate; 14 years- S.H.S)

“Dipo is good in this society because men give respect to Krobo girls who have undergone the rites. I am happy for undergoing the rites because it makes me feel like a Krobo woman who is being prepared for good marriage. We were taught how we can take good care of ourselves during menstrual periods and our future homes.”(Initiate; 13 years- JHS)

“In my area, I have realized that people who have not undergone Dipo rites have bad marriages. They are either rejected by men who impregnated them or left alone to take care of their children. Sometimes, the man can be frustrated by his own family members for marrying a Krobo girl who had not undergone Dipo rites. Other times, you will see elderly women around 35 years who were brought from other places to perform the rites because they could not have children after several years of marriage. On the contrary, those who have undergone Dipo rites don't suffer these problems.” (Initiate; 18 years- S.H.S)

“...I feel that good marriage can be achieved through morality and good attitude irrespective of Dipo rites of passage.” (Non-initiate; 17 years- SH.S)

“My mother told me that, during their time, they were taught home management, personal hygiene, and how to take good care of their homes. In fact, we don't benefit from all these lessons these days because of the period of initiation.” (Initiate; 17 years- J.H.S)

Traditional Rites

Most non-initiates (12 out of 14 girls) in the focused group expressed their discontentment about the traditional nature of the rites in the community. However, very few initiates (6 girls) expressed their views on the same subject matter. To most Dipo initiates, it was seen as traditional because of several referrals made by organizers for initiates to see the “fetish woman” during some of the key stages of the rituals. Below are sample quotes.

“Dipo is generally good in modern times but the way it is done these days, I am not happy about it. My problem is with the fetish impression created these days. We are constantly referred to go to ‘fetish women’ for most rituals, which makes me believe that Dipo is a fetish. People virtually pay for major aspects of the rites for which they are spared and allowed not to partake. This makes Dipo in modern society questionable. Some of these things must be checked to avoid people from criticizing our culture.” (Initiate; 20 years- J.H.S)

“Dipo is not important because initially, I was told that it is a culture for the Krobo but now I have regretted undergoing the ceremony because it appears to be very fetish these days. I was initiated when I was very young but had I known and had the willpower to decide I wouldn’t have done it.” (Initiate; 18 years- S.H.S)

“I have not gone through the rites because every single stage of the right depicts some fetish activity. This includes libation, which is poured for the gods, sitting on a sacred stone and even the organizers of Dipo rites are fetish priestesses.” (Non-initiate; 16 years- J.H.S).

Morals

The girls (initiates and non-initiates) reported that morals have prevented them from engaging in immoral sexual behaviours. They explained that morals were inculcated through Christian values and parental guidance. Below are sample quotes.

“Morals and character are the key factors that influence issues relating to my sexual life. This is because, during initiation, an aspect of the Dipo rituals demands that a man should carry an initiate (mostly the presumed husband) after the test of pregnancy. Usually, any man can assist you and this man may not necessarily be your future husband. I was carried by a man who mostly refers to me as his wife. I just smile at this but never took it seriously. Most of my Dipo mates never joked about this opportunity. They visit these men irrespective of their age and marital status and within a shorter period, you will see them pregnant.” (Initiate; 20 years- S.H.S).

“Adolescent stage is a very challenging period in general. My church in stills in me good morals and my parents also ensure that I grow to be somebody in the future. Indeed, I want to become somebody in the future and so, I take good care of myself and avoid sexual

issues during this stage. I will say that having good morals are key when dealing with teenage sexual-related issues” (Non-initiate; 19 years- S.H.S)

Lessons from Dipo

Initiates also indicated that Dipo has served as a strong deterrent from engaging in sexual behaviours. This is because of the consequences they mostly face when engaging in sexual activities without going through the Dipo rites. For example, some initiates indicated that one can be rejected from the family and an extreme case will be banishment from the community. Below are some of the statements made by the respondents.

“Dipo plays a major role in sexual behavioural options because someone who has not undergone Dipo rites will be scared to have sex or engage in an immoral act. There are other few people who quickly get involved in sexual activity because they feel that, the completion of Dipo serves as a license to partake in sexual behaviours. This is a problem when young children below puberty age are allowed to participate in Dipo rites.” (Initiate; 14 years)

“I am scared to involve myself in sexual behaviours because I will be stuck on the stone, which initiates sit on during Dipo rites. This will bring disgrace to me and my family so I try my best to abstain from sexual behaviours. I will not be able to complete the rites and will be sacked from the community. I have seen someone who was treated that way.” (Initiate; 18 years- SHS)

“Dipo is believed to be a cultural rite, but because of the Christian faith and how Dipo is portrayed as “fetish” in society, I don’t think it is important with its lessons. I can see how important Dipo is to most Krobo, but for me, it is about the belief and the avoidance of future guilt. Hmmm, it’s something... I don’t know what to say again...” (Non-initiate; 20 years).

Discussion

The qualitative study revealed that Dipo was used to generate income for most leaders of the rites. This income became the concept that was used to merge the gap and differences that existed in modern society to enable Dipo girls to complete each stage of the rites without any form of guilt. The theme (source of income) has resulted in higher participation of Dipo among Christians. Different activities of the Dipo rites were spared and payments were made in order to skip some traditional practices. Some ritual activities that were paid for include the shaving of heads and the purification processes, which involves the

cleansing of girls with the blood of animals. Most Christians were mostly seen paying for different activities so that their girls could be excluded from some stages of the rites.

Among the Christians, however, were people who believe that payment of money with the aim of skipping certain traditional rites was ungodly and that good Christians must desist from such practices. Other Christians were of the view that these payments will enhance “traditional practices”, which could lead to exploitation. Other findings indicate that among the Christians were people who participated in all the stages of the Dipo rites without paying money. Nevertheless, some Christians still believe that Dipo is the culture of the Krobo and must be celebrated as a unique legacy that was passed on from one generation to the other. This has resulted in stereotypical behaviours such as stigma among community members. Some Krobo evaluated themselves as true natives and others (those who have not undergone the rites) as strangers. Some Krobo Christians refer to other Krobo Christians as individuals who are ungodly because of their participation in Dipo rites. The category of Krobo Christians who paid money to skip some activities also looks down on those who participated in all the stages of the rites. This has been the state and perception of Dipo among Krobo girls in the Eastern Region of Ghana.

Early and late initiation periods have been a major challenge concerning Dipo for some time now. The arguments lie in the fact that young children (as young as 3 years) cannot be taught to cook, practice personal hygiene, and take care of a man. The qualitative study revealed that some initiates who went through the rites could not recall what they were taught during initiation. Young girls mostly enjoy the music and dance accompanied by the Dipo rites. Most participants who were initiated at a younger age grew up to see pictures of their Dipo rites without any lesson learned at the time. Indeed, such pictures only informed girls about their participation in the rites. Other participants who went through Dipo at a later age (as old as 20 years) went through different degrees of difficulties as some members of the community raised negative remarks about their costumes in modern times. Some members of the community felt that the unique identity of Dipo girls has led to the exposure of certain parts of the body. In a similar way, in situations where the number of younger initiates dominates, older participants feel too old to undergo the rites. However, the information and lessons of the rites were more useful for

older initiates than younger initiates. This has been a major challenge concerning the observance of Dipo to date.

The current perception of Dipo revealed that girls were taught basic home management and personal hygiene to guide their future life. The acceptance of new faith in the Krobo society (Christianity), however, has hindered Dipo traditional rites as most Christians are calling for its abrogation. Despite this agitation, most Christians still allow their girls to undergo the rites for various reasons. In all, Krobo girls believe that morals, which were inculcated through Christian religious practices and lessons from Dipo had influenced their sexual behaviours.

The study has also revealed a time lapse between old and current cultural demands. For instance, there has been a lapse in the activities and rituals of Dipo. When Dipo is instituted, ways of detecting pregnancy included careful observation of young girls (Schroeder and Danquah 2000; Corneille *et al.* 2005; Kearin 2013). Every activity at the time is meaningful and necessary in the Krobo society with the form of education, which was basically informal. The belief system is purely traditional without a new Christian faith. Society has evolved over the years and till now there has been a great change in ideologies and belief systems amidst fast-growing and advanced technological and scientific transformations. Indeed, a difference in interpretations and meanings of various activities such as knowledge, beliefs, arts, law, and customs is expected in societies today. The change in culture through intervention and discoveries is largely accompanied by a corresponding change of culture that depends on it.

The experiences of initiates begin with an initial stage of separation where they are kept at the Dipo house for training purposes to be good future mothers. At the end of the ceremony, initiates join members of the community with a new form of identity. The ritual paradigms Gennep (2011) argues, have explained different forms of identity as individuals mature to take up adult roles and responsibilities. The form of identity acquired is to keep individuals from different challenges concerning the subjective sense of comfort with the self from the past, present, and future. Dipo, therefore, serves as a means for Krobo girls to have a cognitive awareness of their gender and to learn the associated cultural gender norms.

The study equally revealed two schools of thought. The first school is dominated by religious views (Christianity) that Dipo is ungodly and true Christians must not participate in it. The second school of thought includes Christians who believe that Dipo is a rite of passage essential for all Krobo irrespective of their religious inclinations. Apparently, individuals who share ideas of the second school were seen as out-group members of the 'true' Christian community. These two schools of thought usually engage in different behavioural measures that could lead to psychological distress among members of the community. Behavioural measures are mostly based on criticisms, labels, weaknesses, and negative evaluations.

Though Dipo is seen by many people as important, many participants also expressed its relevance, especially in the contemporary period whereas others viewed it as irrelevant. Those who recognized Dipo as relevant expressed their displeasure about its current state in society. Even though Dipo is generally recognized by participants and well accepted as the culture in the Krobo community, participants expressed the need to strengthen its relevance in order not to deviate from the reasons why it was instituted. As reported by Schroeder and [Danquah \(2000\)](#), Dipo was a traditional means of ensuring personal hygiene, home management, and preventing promiscuity.

As indicated by [Blumenkrantz and Goldstein \(2010\)](#), meaningful rites can help initiates gain knowledge for professional development and to build personal awareness and resources. Indeed, there is a need for societies that have managed to sustain rites of passage to organise meaningful and educative rites to help young girls inculcate knowledge and skills. The hope of good marriage appears to be important to Krobo girls and is leading to the exploration of possible opportunities where they can learn effectively in modern society.

Non-initiates on the other hand expressed views based on religious grounds to render the rites irrelevant in today's society. This is because they believe that Christian values equally help them to acquire all kinds of knowledge for a successful life. In this case, Dipo is viewed as a ceremony full of traditional practices and mostly directed by traditional priests. Even though different factors can lead to a significant difference in self-esteem, Dipo, and morals could account for the insignificant difference in self-esteem among initiates and non-initiates.

For several years now, there has been a serious challenge regarding the age of initiation. This was indicated by many studies including [Teyegaga \(1985\)](#); [Steegstra \(2005\)](#); [Huber \(1963\)](#) just to mention a few. This is because girls as young as 3 years still undergo the rites. According to [Ruble](#) and [Brooks-Gunn \(1982\)](#), age is an important factor, which could result in heightened levels of emotional distress.

Conclusion

This paper examined the perceptions of Krobo girls who participated in Dipo rites of passage for a period of three (3) days about their cultural values, significance, and attitudes to it with much focus on the psychological implication. It also examined the sexual behaviour of Krobo girls, which may be related to various effects of the Dipo rites.

The paper found out that Christianity is a major challenge to Dipo rites for a very long period of time and this was confirmed by [Teyegaga \(1985\)](#) and [Steegstra \(2005\)](#). This has led to the emergence of two schools of thought; for and against the Dipo rites of passage. [Keating et al. \(2005\)](#), however, argue that there is a need to enhance cultural factors that can attract group members to participate in rites of passage.

It is also observed that morals and lessons of Dipo were the themes that emerged as factors that play a significant role in the sexual life of Krobo girls. Whereas some initiates and non-initiates believe that morals serve as the underlining factor for sexual behaviour, other initiates believe that Dipo has been very essential and has positively influenced their sexual behaviours. As reported in a study by [Osafo et al. \(2014\)](#), girls' sexual behaviour is a collaborative effort of communal socialization and morality with religious ethics. As the study revealed, however, other factors such as financial difficulties and irresponsible parenthood can push girls into sexual behaviour.

Despite the religious, health, and ethical criticisms directed towards the Dipo rites of passage among the Krobo in the Eastern Region of Ghana, the cultural rites stand the test of time. This according to [Affum \(2009\)](#) is directly attributed to the centrality of the peoples' beliefs not only on their cultural heritage, which they so much cherish but also on the didactic and aesthetic components of the rites.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest

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