

Review

A review on normative and other factors contributing to Africa's adolescent development crisis

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The objective of this review is to examine factors influencing African adolescents' identity development. The review begins with defining identity and discusses major theories of identity development. Moreover, this review focuses on colonialism, globalization, media and other factors which are considered to influence youth identity development. The author has used the terms 'adolescence' and 'youth' interchangeably though they are not exactly synonymous. Identity development is the major developmental task during the time of adolescence including social identity formation. Africans are characterized by collective identity and they have indigenous cultural values and traditions. Despite this, African youth have been losing their cultural identity as a result of the influence of Western value. The old generation in Africa also seems to have ignored to socialize the young ones in line with African values and norms. This ignorance has paved way for young people to be attracted to western value systems and ignoring their own. Meanwhile, absence of contextualized school curricula and migration are also additional negative factors that lead African adolescents to be ignorant of their own culture and adhere to western values.

Key words: Adolescence, Africa, globalization, identity crisis, media, parenting style.

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this review is to examine the impact of globalized culture on the identity development of African adolescents. The review emphasizes on how globalization, media technology and other socio-cultural factors have been affecting the identity development of adolescents. The author believes that the review would contribute in presenting the problem so that future researchers can conduct empirical studies and come up with intervention strategies. The review was merely done based on contemporary theoretical and empirical research on the area plus practical observations of the author about adolescents.

DESIGN OF THE REVIEW

The design used for this review was unsystematic. Thus, recent theoretical and empirical literature sources were used for this review. Besides, the author included his practical observations of problems related to adolescent population in higher institutions of Ethiopia and readings made on similar population in other African countries. It is believed that the review may serve as a literature source to future researchers who are interested in conducting studies in the area of adolescent identity development. Besides, this work has implication for African parents,

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schools, community and government at large to guard young children against negative social identity development.

MEANING OF IDENTITY

Identity is defined as an individual's ability to find answers to questions like "who am I?"; "What group do I belong to?"; "What do I want to be?" (Koc, 2006; Buckingham, 2008) and so on. It is about *identification* with others whom we assume are similar to us at least in some significant ways. Besides having self-identity, one needs to be identified with a society (Howard, 2000) with which he/she belongs to. People's knowledge about their society and culture and identifying with that society is called social identity (Burke, 2015). Cultural identity is attached to the identification of oneself with cultural contexts such as values, symbols, and language of the society (Ibrahim and Heuer, 2015). According to the UN Convention, every child has a right to a cultural identity and children have to be helped to learn their own culture (Tchombe et al., 1995).

Identity can develop and change during different stages in life, especially during the time of childhood and adulthood (Rizgar, 2016) and this makes identity development a challenging issue. Erikson proposed that identity is a complex phenomenon shaped by the interaction of one's own psychological processes (Arnold, 2017), social and cultural environment and physical characteristics. In a society of multiple cultures, government policies, media stereotypes, prevalent societal values and beliefs affect individual identity formation.

THEORETICAL REVIEW OF IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT

Erikson and Marcia are just two of the most known theorists in identity development. Erikson is the originator of the theory of identity development. According to Erikson, identity development is a continuous process and occurs throughout the entire life cycle though it intensifies during adolescence (Erikson, 1956 cited in Ratner, 2014). Achieving identity is thus the major developmental task during adolescence. Identity achievement is characterized by the ability to know one's self, to develop stability in how one sees oneself, and to be true to that self or fidelity (Erikson, 1950 in Arnold, 2017). Erikson claimed that the social environment (Bornman, 2003) is an important factor for identity development. Accordingly, societies need to help a young person to achieve his/her identity.

In Erikson's theory identity development versus role confusion occurs at the fifth stage. In this stage, an adolescent either achieves his/her identity or may face crisis. Although identity crisis is a normal developmental process that an individual may face, the influence of

globalization has made the process more challenging (Rizgar, 2016). Because of global changes and population increases, many individuals have complexities with their identity. Marcia expanded the theory of identity development by conducting further research on late adolescents to know their identity status on the issues of vocational, religious, and political values (Kroger, 2000) and he came up with four types of identity status: identity achievement, identity foreclosure, identity moratorium and identity diffusion. Marcia noted that these statuses were based on the presence or absence of exploration and commitment (Marcia, 1966; Kroger and Marcia, 2011). Exploration is a period of re-thinking, and trying out various roles and life plans by the adolescent (Kroger and Marcia, 2011) before he/she decides to identify with a certain group, belief or career while commitment is adhering to a given role, belief or career. Individuals who have achieved identity are those who have (Jane et al, 2011) high commitment and exploration of various roles and choose one among various roles. Yet, individuals with identity foreclosure are those who are committed to identify with significant others with little or no exploration of alternatives.

Identity foreclosure is mainly common among adolescents living in collectivistic societies. For example, one study conducted on Taiwanese adolescents found that most of them have foreclosed identity (Lee and Beckert, 2012 cited in Seginer and Mahajna, 2018). Individuals with identity foreclosure do usually have conferred identities and they are easily influenced (Berzonsky, 1989 in Ratner, 2014) by significant ones such as parents and teachers and adopt others' viewpoints.

In contrast to identity foreclosed individuals, persons with identity moratorium (Ratner, 2014) are characterized by low degree of commitment and they identify themselves with a certain group or role and they are mainly in exploratory period. Similarly, persons who are in identity diffusion or crisis show absence of commitment and lack of meaningful exploration.

Marcia (1983) states that adolescents who have not started identity formation are in the diffused state and they are known by low exploration and low commitment. Such adolescents are not committed to any identity, nor explored possibilities. On the other hand, foreclosed adolescents are characterized by low exploration but with high commitment (Arnold, 2017) to identify with significant ones. These individuals have formed an identity without exploring other available options. This is often the characteristics of youths who oblige to beliefs, values, and goals based on the opinions or expectations of parents.

Arnold (2017) further notices that adolescents in the moratorium status have high exploration and low commitment. Such individuals are actively seeking out possibilities for self-identity, but have not yet made clear identity choices. Meanwhile, adolescents in the achieved

status are those who have high exploration and commitment and establish an identity which is based on their own beliefs, values, and goals, often illustrated by choices of career path, social roles, and personal ideology. In general, identity-achieved individuals (Kroger, 2000) adopt their commitments on the basis of a thoughtful, exploration process while foreclosed individuals are equally committed to identity with defining roles and values without true exploration process prior to their commitment. Moratorium and diffuse individuals are non-committed in terms of key, identity-defining roles and values.

A person develops his/her identity based on group membership in the context of messages (Casey Family Programs, 2000) received from significant others.. For instance, children who grow in a social environment where certain professions are considered as symbols of high social status wish or plan to have these jobs. For instance, the author of this paper repeatedly experienced that if kids grown in urban areas of Ethiopia are asked what they would like to be in the future, their response would be one of these:

'I like to be a doctor', a pilot, a driver, etc.'

These are the, concepts related to identity development, particularly role/professional identity. The response of children also implies their identification with the values attached to such professions by family members or the society at large. According to Marcia, those children who want to be identified with the values of significant people such as family members are foreclosed ones. Such individuals do not explore different options but they are committed to be what their parents or family members expect them to be. From the above theories, the author likes to conclude that identity achievement which is characterized by exploration is considered to be normal. In this type of identity, the individual has the right to choose a certain role independent of the family and the larger society. In the context of collectivist culture like Africa, however, an individual is supported and guided by parents, extended family members, and the elderly and adhere to the values and norms of the society and his/her ancestors. A young person who deviates from the value system of the family and larger society will face condemnation, curse and isolation. Hence, identity foreclosure is common in collectivist culture since the young generation identify with the roles and norms of the society and culture in which they live. Yet, identity foreclosure which is a norm to the African family is regarded as negative in Marcia's theory.

THE ROLE OF PARENTING STYLES ON ADOLESCENTS' IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT

Parenting style is the mechanism through which a child

learns appropriate and inappropriate behavior, and understand roles and norms of a community (Ford et al., 2009; Pérez and Cumsille, 2012 in Roman et al., 2015). It is an approach of socialization to raising children by parents and the process in which parents teach their children about norms, values, behaviors, and social skills (Deci et al., 1994; Deci and Ryan, 1995 cited in Grundman, 2010). Parents have a great role in the identity development of their children (Adams et al., 1990 cited in Romano, 2004) and it is very likely that identity development is related to parenting style (Grundman, 2010). Parents can assist youths to achieve identity development and help them move towards independence (Laboviti, 2015).

Parenting style is one of the factors that affect adolescents' identity development. Scholars in the field suggest that parents need to socialize their children in line with the acceptable values of the society so that they can survive and adjust to the social and cultural environment of a given society and be socially competent across the lifespan (Parker, 1998 cited in Tchombe, and Lukong, 2016)). It has been widely accepted for long that parenting style affects children's identity development. Yet, a recent study found the opposite. That is, adolescent behavior had a greater effect in modifying parenting styles (Kerr et al., 2012 in Smetana, 2017) than parenting style modifies adolescent behavior.

Parenting styles are classified as authoritarian, authoritative, permissive, and neglectful (Smetana, 2017). The authoritarian parenting style is characterized by physical coercion, verbal hostility and non-reasoning/punitive dimensions. Authoritative parenting style has connection, regulation, and autonomy-granting dimensions. Research on parenting style found that permissive parents showed steep decreases in monitoring once their children reached adolescence and these children increased their levels of externalizing behavior (Hoskins, 2014) while those from permissive ones showed a higher frequency of substance use and school misconduct.

Research found that among the four types of parenting style (authoritarian, authoritative, permissive and neglectful), those individuals whose parents were authoritarian (Grundman, 2010; Berzonsky, 2004 in Ratner, 2014) were found to be related to identity foreclosure and were more likely to be obedient, and respect the rules. In this regard, Grundman (2010) indicates that students whose parents strongly encouraged attending medical school decided to be a doctor before exploring other alternatives.

The four types of parenting style could be judged from the degree of demandingness and responsiveness continuum. Based on demandingness and responsiveness authoritarian parenting style is characterized by high demandingness and low responsiveness) and authoritative parenting style is characterized by high demandingness as well as high responsiveness continuum (Dogan et al.,

2015)

But permissive-indulgent parenting style is one where there is low demandingness and high responsiveness. Meanwhile, neglectful or uninvolved parents are those who are characterized by low demandingness as well as low responsiveness. Dogan et al. (2015) argue that those children whose parents are permissive indulgent, neglectful and unresponsive are likely to ignore their children and provide less support to achieve a given role. To summarize, those adolescents whose parents are neglectful and permissive, will be in identity moratorium and want to explore more options. This implies that they have less commitment to stick to their own culture and attracted by the global culture.

DRESSING IDENTITY CRISIS AMONG AFRICAN ADOLESCENTS

Identity and dress are interrelated issues and one of the symbols by which individuals identify with their respective society is through their dressing styles. Dressing is a code to communicate one's values, customs and traditions (Arvanitidou and Gasouka, 2011). The type of dress that one wears communicates symbolically about his/her social identity (Davis, 1985 in Arvanitidou and Gasouka, 2011).

A dress shows one's status and his/her role in society and it gives information about the cultural group that an individual belongs to (Obeta and Uwah, 2015; Twig, 2009). Besides, it represents one's tribal or ethnic group and highly linked to a specific culture. Unlike the past, however, today's youths have been trying every fashion specially that of dressing and haircuts leaving aside their traditional values (Amankwah et al., 2012).

In today's globalized world, it has become very difficult for the African youths to learn social values, and norms of their localities. Instead, indecent dressing and hairstyles which are the practices of Western culture have been 'infecting' the young generation. In this regard, the media has a great role in stirring African youths to abandon their customs and engaging in indecent dressing. African adolescents are big admirers of western values than their own. For example, a recent study conducted in Southern Ethiopia on youth (Getahun and Armaye, 2015) found that the majority of adolescents were victims of westernized media, dressing styles, and haircuts. A dress is considered to be indecent if it deviates from the one acceptable by the community and if it affects the value of that community. For example, in Nigeria, miniskirts and dresses that reveal sensitive parts of females are considered to be indecent (Omede, 2003). Indecent dressing is common among students of higher institutions in Africa. For example, a study conducted in Nigeria (Obeta and Uwah, 2015) showed that the Nigerian female students use indecent dresses which are different from Nigerian tradition.

Indecent dressing is associated with several negative

outcomes. One study revealed that indecent dressing predicts sexual harassment. Accordingly, those girls who put on indecent dressing were found to have faced greater incidence of sexual harassment than others (Ibrahim and Haruna, 2014). Similarly, another study found that those campus girls who dressed indecently were found to be victims of rape, prostitution, HIV/AIDS, and poor school grades (Omede, 2003). Indecent dressing among the youths has become a symbol of modernity across the globe in recent days (Fayokun et al., 2009) and it has become popular among youths in university campuses. For example, a study conducted in Nigeria showed that girls (Obeta and Uwah, 2015) wear short skirts to get attention from male instructors and also due to their assumption that unique dressing is a symbol of being in a higher status. Sagging is another indecent dressing and a symbol of identity crisis among boys in higher education students. It is a style whereby trousers are no longer worn around the waist (Didigwu, 2015) but would be hanging on the buttocks thereby exposing their underwear.

Historically, black youths in prison sagged their trousers (Dvorak et al., 2008) since they were prohibited from wearing belts for fear black prisoners would commit suicide by hanging themselves with belts. Besides, black prisoners sagged their trousers to show that they are homosexuals. Later on, sagging became a symbol for rapper musicians as a fashion. 'Sagging' of pants has sexual connotations especially for those prison inmates who deliberately pull their pants down (Mathis cited in Uzobo et al., 2014). Sagging has become a fashion among urban youths in Africa. For example, one study conducted in Nigerian universities (Uzobo et al., 2014) found that 'Sagging' is more prevalent among urban adolescents between 15-20 years as a result of the influence of television and the internet. From the author's personal observation, sagging has also become a fashion among male university students in Ethiopia. This is especially true in universities where rules and regulations on dressing codes are not effective.

FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO ADOLESCENTS' CULTURAL IDENTITY CRISIS

Colonialism and globalization

The impact of colonialism and the influence of western media have been big challenges that African youths have been facing at the moment (Kochalumchuvattil, 2010). Because of the influence of colonialism, African value system which emphasizes communalism is criticized by the west (Azhar et al., 2014) and the western individualistic life style is appreciated for it gives freedom and autonomy. The coming of individualism along with colonialism weakened collective value systems and close knit-family structures in Africa. Colonialism has also

disrupted African cultural practices, and indigenous knowledge (Shizha, 2013).

Globalization is a recent phenomenon that influences people across different cultures to behave and act in the same way. It is characterized by amalgamation and homogeneity of values (Kaul, 2012). Kaul underlines that globalization is so fatal that it has destructed many local language and cultural values have become extinct. Globalization has been homogenizing the world and making people to be more similar in dress, language, and communication (Burton cited in Rizgar, 2016) which in turn destroys unique cultural values and identities. As a result, people all over the world try to speak the same language, dress the same clothes and enjoy the same type of music (Eze, 2014). Cultural globalization is characterized by expansion (Savacol, 2010 cited in Belayneh, 2018) and dominance of language, cultural values and norms of a certain society (usually the West) across borders.

There are pros and cons about the impact of globalization. Globalization has enabled the sharing of cultural practices and customs (Belayneh, 2018) across the world. It is an instrument to bring universal unity and democracy based on a global culture (Barban, 2008), especially in relation to communication systems (McLuhan, 1968, 1964, cited in Barban, 2008). On the contrary, there is a negative view of cultural globalization. For example, it has disintegrated indigenous values and it has become a threat to the cultural identity of societies (Bornman, 2003) both at individual and societal levels. Moreover, globalization has not resulted in a unified political and economic identity (Rajaei, 2001). It has rather destroyed national identities and resulted in cultural dominance and supremacy (Babran, 2008) by the west. In addition to these, globalization has deteriorated endemic cultures and created gaps among generations. As a result, youths are forced to develop a bicultural identity that combines their local identity with an identity linked to the global culture (Arnett, 2002). This can be considered as identity confusion.

Globalization has accelerated the intrusion of western values and forced youths to be victims of antisocial behaviors such as substance use and premarital pregnancy (Nsamenang, 2002; Stevenson and Zusho, 2002; Welti, 2002 in Arnett, 2002). Globalization is a modern capitalism and monopolizing the political, economic and cultural realms worldwide recently (Babran, 2008) and mainly perceived as influence by the west. One of the reasons for globalization is advances in communication technology that have increased tremendously throughout the world (Illovsky, 2006). The great acceleration of globalizing forces presents those in the heritage field with a series of urgent challenges (Biehl et al., 2015).

Rapid global transformations are altering the environments in which individuals prepare for adulthood (Larson, 2003 in Arndt, 2014). Youths are sandwiched between their own societal values on the one side and

with the wider values on the other side. This is mainly common in societies where there are no customs of guiding and supporting the young generation to learn values and traditions of its own societies. The impact of globalization is greater on adolescents compared to other age groups. One of the reasons for this is that adolescence is a time when an individual begins an independent life from parents. Besides, adolescence is a period when an individual is exposed to diverse cultural beliefs and behaviors (Jensen et al., 2011).

Africans hold collective values where there is interdependence of family members. Accordingly, the young generation is expected to identify with the values of forefathers. But this value is criticized by the western world in that African values restrict the freedom to individuation, by emphasizing on communalism (Kochalumchuvattil, 2010). As a result, Africans have lost their collective identity and fallen into identity crisis due to the impact of colonialism and globalization (Ndubuisi, 2013). In a collective identity, a person identifies with the group and may dedicate his or her life to the group over individual identity (Tchombe et al., 1995).

Globalization is a big threat to Africa's identity whereby the west has dominated Africa in terms of culture, politics, and economy (Kanu, 2013). Globalization has a great influence on youths (Azhar et al., 2014) cultural practices and preferences in daily life. It has a serious impact (Daramola and Oyinade, 2015) on African culture, norms, and values and it has been affecting people's behavior, and life style. Daramola and Oyinade (2015) further explain that African people have begun to develop selfishness, they have started to live foreign way of life, and listen foreign music due to the influence of western culture.

Adolescents are abandoning their social and cultural identity and preferring western lifestyles. This is particularly true for those young people living in towns. One of the reasons for this is that cities have more access to different western based media (Babran, 2008). As a result of globalization, there is a decline of traditional cultural norms and values (Tchombe et al., 1995) and youths are likely to appreciate and model Western values. Besides globalization, African youths have been affected by the legacy of colonialism. This is particularly true for those adolescents living in formerly colonized nations of Africa. As a result, adolescents have abandoned their cultural identity and they have been identified with western culture (Eze, 2014; Taye and Ajisafe, 2016).

School system

Education is the means through which societies transmit knowledge, values and tradition to the new generation. In this regard, schools play an important role in supporting youths' development of ethnic and cultural identity (Idris

et al., 2012). Education plays a big role in socializing individuals in line with the norms and values of the society and it is used to keep society remain stable (Idris et al., 2012). Yet, the school system and media in Africa has played no role for youths to love their own culture and identity. As a result, African youths have become victims of Since school curricula and contents are reflections of Western values. Colonialism has affected African school system and it has replaced values, customs and norms of the African society including child socialization practices (Maina, 2003). By taking the reality in Kenya, which was one of the colonized countries in Africa, Maina further argued that colonial education system has created cultural conflict alienated citizens from their culture and it has made them to feel like foreigners in their own country.

Media

Adolescence is a time of identity development (Arnett, 2011) and media is the means of being connected with others who have similar values. Arnet underlines that the influence of media is high especially in a society where there is freedom of the press and less censorship by the government.

Media are the major facilitators which the West (Kaul, 2012) employs to control, invade and undermine other's culture and impose its values (McQuail, 2000 cited in Wang, 2008). The expansion of digital technology like the internet has been attracting the attention of young people more than ever. Increased access to international media, has resulted in hopelessness and crisis in youths (Jensen, 2003 in Gardiner et al., 1998). Thus, parental guidance is important to avoid the potential risks of negative media effects (Genner and Sarah, 2016). The mass media have played an adversary role to deepen a sense of alienation in Africans by propagating that Africans should be like Westerners (Tchombe et al., 1995).

Adolescents of the 21st century use electronic media for self-socialization (Arnett, 2011) and spend their time browsing the web especially the social media and watching different television channels. Media technology affects every action of adolescents including their dressing style. For instance, recent study found that mass media are the major factors found to have influenced dressing style of female students in Nigeria (Obeta and Uwah, 2015) while disregarding their local and religious values. Compared to other age groups, children and adolescents are generally considered to be more exposed to the effects of media (Genner and Suss, 2016) and the smartphone has become a companion in any situation. The global media tend to be dominated by Western Hollywood values, products, perspectives and culture (Taye and Ajisafe, 2016). One of the reasons for adolescents to face more media exposure is the relative autonomy and independence they have. Compared to

children, adolescents are relatively more mature and have greater autonomy given by their parents and the society (Arnett, 2002) to do what they wish. As a result, they are open to experience what is new and unusual thing such as listening different music and watching television channels. These are just some of the agents that change their beliefs and behaviors and lead them to identity crisis

The influence of global media and a rapid expansion of the internet are converging and homogenizing youths to speak the same language, worship the same religion and everything else propagated through media (Genner and Suss, 2016). Western countries export (Kraidy, 2002) their cultural products and impose their sociocultural values on poorer and weaker nations in the developing world. Through social media, adolescents interact with other people across the globe having varied dressing style, hair do, and personalities. Studies show that the percentage of social media users among the young remains significantly higher (Genner and Suss, 2016). Therefore, developing unique cultural identity has become more challenging than ever before (Jensen et al., 2011).

Rural to urban migration

The expansion of modern economy significantly altered the cultural landscape of Africa and forced young people to abandon their traditional roles (Schraeder, 2005 cited in Mazzei and Cushner, 2011). Besides, the expansion of urbanization in Sub-Saharan African countries has brought (Sommers, 2008) multidimensional challenges to youth among which poverty is one. Rural young people in Africa are leaving their villages (Sommers, 2010) and migrating to towns more than ever before. Recent study in one of the zones in the Amhara region, Ethiopia, indicated that several economic and socio-cultural factors were the major push factors (Dagmawi and Wohabie, 2018) that instigate rural youths to migrate to towns. Some of the reasons are in search of a better life and access to education as well as for employment opportunities (Melesse and Nachimuthu, 2017; Dagmawi and Wohabie, 2018). Once African rural youths migrate to towns (Sommers, 2008) they abandon their lineage system and replace their original identity with the new environment.

Identity crisis: A normative age graded factor to adolescence

Identity crisis is a normative age graded influence that an adolescent will face (Baltes et al., 1998 in Fadjukoff et al., 2010). Nonetheless, Lindh and Korhonen (2010) argue that identity development is a lifelong developmental task which occurs throughout the lifecycle though adolescence is the critical time where crisis related to identity

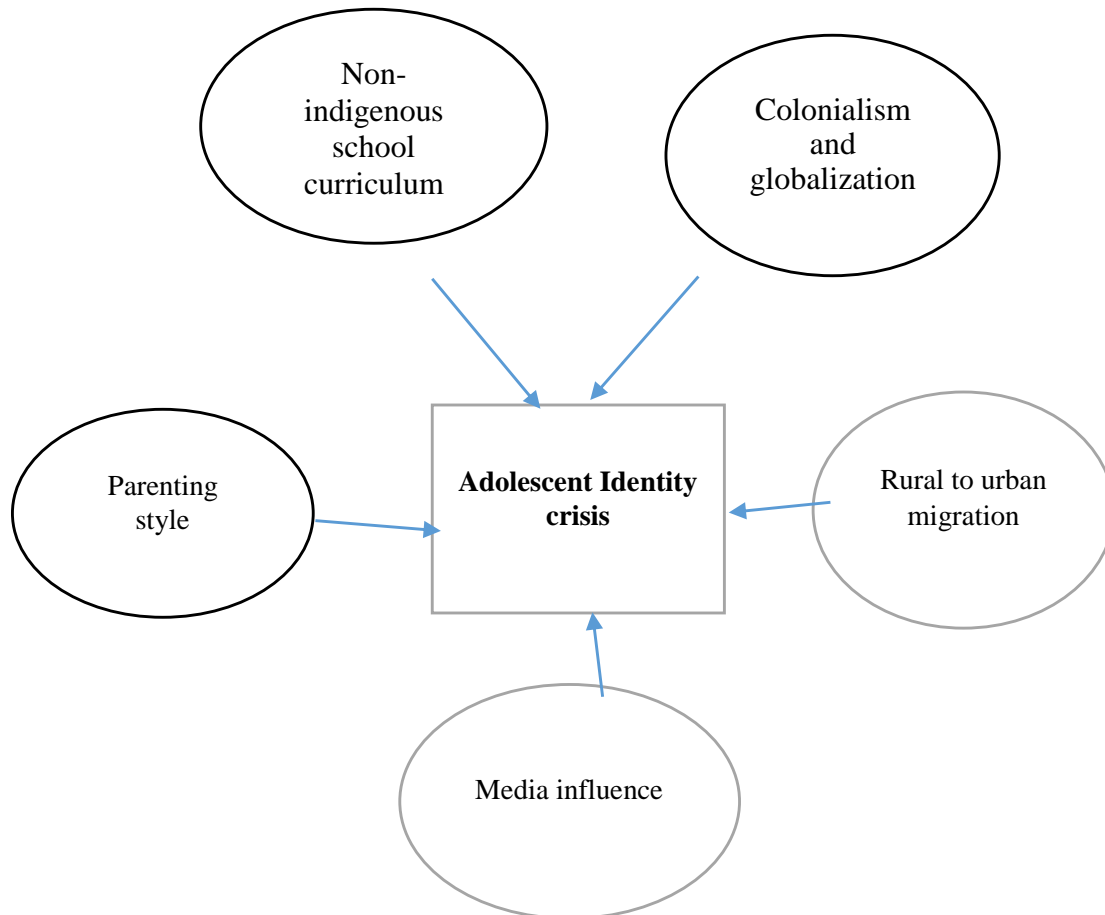


Figure 1. Model summary for factors contributing to adolescent identity crisis.

development is intensified.

Identity development in today's adolescents is fluid and malleable, rather than fixed since modern adolescents have more freedom (Giddens cited in Buckingham, 2008). One of the reasons for this is that during this period, spheres of influence and engagement of adolescents shift away from parents and family members towards peer networks, the media and the social, economic and cultural environments in which they live (Harter 1999; Wuermli et al., 2012; Juarez et al., 2013 cited in Banks, 2015).

Adolescence is a time when an individual will reach conventional level and (Gardiner et al., 1998) will abide to the rules and regulations of the society. Despite this however, young people are abandoning their own societal values and follow non-indigenous customs. This is a big challenge for the transmission of norms and values to the young generation and leads adolescents to identity crisis. Modern youths are surrendering their cultural identity and moving into, and becoming westernized. For example, it is not uncommon to see massive changes in youngsters' dressing and addictions to social media. The major factors that contribute

adolescent identity crisis have been summarized using the following model (Figure 1).

Conclusion

Africans have their own values, traditions and norms which are quite different from the west. However, these values have been eroded from time to time and western values and norms are becoming popular due to the influence of globalization, media and other similar factors while African indigenous values are being considered as symbols of backwardness. As a result, African youths, particularly living in urban areas, have been in great cultural identity crisis and digital media like the internet, television channels and movies have been playing an adversary role in this regard. Meanwhile, there is failure on the part of African societies and parents in particular to guide youngsters to learn the values of their own community. Peer pressure as well as neglectful and permissive parenting styles is also contributing factors for youngsters to be admirers of western values by neglecting their own. In addition to this, reluctance of

parents and the community at large to help adolescents identify with the local values can be considered as a factor for youths to adhere to western values than its own. Thus, it is high time for African societies to help youths adhere to its own cultural values.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The authors have not declared any conflict of interests.

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