
Perceived Markers of Adulthood in the Peri-Urban Areas of Nairobi, Kenya

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Abstract

Research on emerging adulthood and markers of adulthood continues to grow worldwide. However, extensive research is yet to be conducted among African populations. The purpose of this study was to understand the markers of adulthood that young people aged 18-29 years in the Nairobi Metropolitan Region of Kenya consider to be important, to assess whether young people think that they have reached adulthood, and to explore whether there are significant differences between collegiate and non-collegiate populations in perceptions of the transition to adulthood. Data were collected using the Markers of Adulthood (MoA) Scale. Findings from this study indicate that the markers of adulthood that are most important to young people from peri-urban areas in Kenya are learning to control emotions ($M=3.70$, $SD=.66$), accepting responsibility for your actions ($M=3.65$, $SD=.71$), and making independent decisions ($M=3.65$, $SD=.70$). Nearly half (47%) of young people in this study reported that they feel they have reached adulthood in some ways and not others. This study is intended to improve the understanding of the transition to adulthood in Kenya. Understanding young people within the context of emerging adulthood will enable practitioners, parents, instructors, institutions, and society as a whole, to adequately address the unique challenges that emerging adults are facing.

Keywords: Adulthood, transition to adulthood, emerging adulthood, markers of adulthood, young adulthood, Africa, Sub-Saharan Africa, East Africa, Kenya.

Introduction

The transition to adulthood can be long and at times uncertain but it is also a time when young people develop certain character traits that build the foundation for adulthood. In the past, the big 5 transition markers were viewed as the determinants of attaining adulthood status. These included finishing education, obtaining stable employment, independent living, marriage, and parenthood (Schulenberg & Schoon, 2012). However, over time, these markers have evolved due to three key factors. These are significant increases in young people pursuing higher education,

later transition into stable work, and the postponement of traditional markers of adulthood such as marriage and parenting. These transformations have led to changes in the traditional path to adulthood (Côté, 2014). Role transitions such as marriage, finishing education, and becoming parents, as well as reaching the legal age of adult status, have come to be considered of lower importance. Instead of role transitions, the importance of intangible character qualities has grown, such as accepting responsibility for oneself and making independent decisions (Arnett, 1998).

Research conducted in countries such as the United States (Arnett, 2003), China (Nelson et al., 2004), Romania (Nelson, 2009), India (Seiter & Nelson, 2011), Argentina (Facio et al., 2007) and Turkey (Atak & Çok, 2008) also shows that culture has a significant influence on the way individuals experience adulthood. However, few studies investigating this topic have been conducted in Africa. Traditionally, African cultures have predetermined concepts of the transition from childhood to adulthood. In Ghana, for example, the transition to adulthood was traditionally marked by getting married, which happened in the mid-to-late-teens, particularly for girls. For boys, being economically stable was also an important marker of the transition to adulthood (Obidoa et al., 2019).

In Africa, Obidoa et al. (2019) conducted a study to examine the viewpoints of young adults in Nigeria and Ghana regarding markers of adulthood. In Ghana, the study was conducted at the University of Ghana, while in Nigeria, participants were drawn from the University of Nigeria. The 43-item Markers of Adulthood (MoA) scale was administered. The most important markers of adulthood varied among the two countries and was heavily influenced by various sociocultural factors. Emerging adults in Ghana rated the ability to carry out family responsibilities as the most important marker of adulthood, with chronological transitions being the lowest score on the MoA scale. Young people from Nigeria rated the ability to take care of their family as the most important. The criteria with the highest endorsement were good control of emotions, responsibility for one's actions, financial independence, and keeping the family physically safe (Obidoa et al., 2019). Social and cultural shifts have led to significant changes in the transition to adulthood for these young people, and therefore there is a need to understand how this compares to other young people worldwide.

In many African cultures, the transition to adulthood was traditionally initiated when a person reached puberty (Arnett, 1998). This was commemorated in the form of specific rituals and celebrations that focused on preparing young people for adult roles. It also did this through establishment of social norms and expectations. These preparations were carried out according to gender. The absolute determinant of adulthood was marriage and childbearing (Obidoa et al., 2019). However, social changes brought about by colonization, which introduced formal education, led to the delay of the transition to adulthood because girls were able to attend school. Young people in Africa are now putting off marriage well into their 20's. Another vital change affecting young people is that economic change has created new opportunities, which has led to many young people moving to urban areas. Exposure to western culture has also played a significant role in these changes (Obidoa et al., 2019).

With the disappearance of ceremonies of the traditional markers of adulthood and role transitions, such as initiation ceremonies, the transition to adulthood has become a more ambiguous process. In a descriptive survey of the dimensions of emerging adulthood that sampled university students in Ghana, Mahama et al. (2018) investigated what young adults in Ghana consider necessary markers of adulthood was conducted. The study was aimed at

investigating four aspects. First, the criteria that Ghanaian youth deemed necessary in the transition to adulthood; second, whether they viewed themselves as adults; third whether individual experiences of emerging adulthood changed as one progressed in university; and lastly if there are any gender differences in the endorsement of these markers of adulthood. Mahama's paper explores the markers that would be salient among the Ghanaian youth, as well as the characteristics that mark the transition to adulthood in young Ghanaians. It highlighted how young people in developing countries like Ghana go through complex identity transitions and even develop a 'hybrid identity' whereby some aspects may identify with their own culture, while others fully identify with the western culture. In Ghana young people often live with their family until they marry, often out of cultural traditions and family obligations, but more recently due to aspects of financial dependence (Mahama et al., 2018) The results of this study indicated that conceptions of adulthood are similar to those of other countries with some differences. More than half of Ghanaians in their twenties considered themselves adults. 69% of participants who were older were more likely to feel like they have reached adulthood. Financial independence from parents was considered to be a key marker of adulthood as 90% endorsed this marker of adulthood. A notable difference from western populations was that the sub-scales with the highest endorsement were biological and chronological markers of adulthood. Gender differences were minimal, with only independence and norm compliance sub-scales indicating these differences.

The Transition to Adulthood in Kenya

Kenya is the largest and most advanced economy in East and Central Africa. Its GDP accounts for more than 50 per cent of the region's total. Its economic growth prospects are supported by a growing middle class and an increasing appetite for high-value goods and services (Expo, 2022). In the recent past its prospects have grown with improved "ease of doing business" index. Kenya is the most industrially developed country in the African Great Lakes region; manufacturing accounts for 14% of GDP. Industrial activity, concentrated around the three largest urban centers, Nairobi, Mombasa and Kisumu, is dominated by food-processing industries such as grain milling, beer production, and sugarcane crushing, and the fabrication of consumer goods, e.g., vehicles from kits.

The transition to adulthood has changed significantly in Kenya. Many young people report that they are under pressure from society to show that they have made it in life. The measure of success is material possessions, such as cars, a nice house in an upmarket neighborhood, investments in real estate, a house in the rural areas, going on vacation abroad, and designer wear, among many other status symbols. Traditional markers of adulthood in Kenya include getting a job, preferably a white collar job. In pastoralist lands, adulthood means acquiring livestock, a cultural practice blamed for cattle rustling in northern Kenya. Regardless of the means used to achieve a solid financial base, marriage usually follows soon afterwards. With marriage, the couple is expected to have children and raise them in accordance with their community. Adults are generally expected to participate in the affairs of their communities by making financial contributions. Helping the less fortunate in society is another key marker of adulthood.

As in many developing countries worldwide, the Total Fertility Rate (TFR) has declined markedly in Kenya in recent decades. Age at first childbearing has also increased significantly. Also, more children are being born outside of marriage. Almost a quarter (22%) of young women in Kenya are having their first child outside of marriage (Gathura, 2022). Marriage is being delayed for both sexes in favor for non-marital unions such as 'come we

stay' arrangements, broadly defined as emotional, physical and intellectually intimate relationships that include living together. In Kenya, these kinds of relationships are common.

The present study sought to understand the markers of adulthood that young people in peri-urban areas of Kenya consider to be important and whether or not they feel like they have reached adulthood as well as how adult they feel in different relational dynamics. Peri-urban areas are designated spaces of transition from rural toward urban areas (UNESCO, 2014) They are often located between the periphery of urban and rural areas. Peri-urban areas are also defined as non-urban areas that surround metropolitan settlements (Mapping and Forecasting Land Use, 2022). The study engaged young people between the age of 18 and 29 across various demographics such as age, gender, relationship status, marital status, parental status as well as education level. Key to this study was the level of education, therefore the study included young people in university, technical and vocational education and training (TVET); in employment; and not in education, employment, or training (NEETs).

Methods

The target population for this study was young people between the ages of 18-29 years in three selected counties in the Nairobi Metropolitan Region. The study included participants from institutions of higher learning (Universities and Technical, Vocational, Educational Training Centers (TVETs); those who were employed; and those not in Employment, Education or Training (NEET). The sample was divided into two groups: collegiate and non-collegiate. For this study, the collegiate populations included those of the university and TVET. Consent was obtained from all the participants before data collection. For collegiate participants, purposive sampling was used to both select public and private institutions, and to target a representative sample from a public university, a private university, a public TVET, and a private TVET in each county. In total, 11 institutions (2 public universities, 3 private universities, 3 public TVETs and 3 private TVETs) took part in the study. For the non-collegiate population, the researcher also used simple random sampling to target participants from open-air markets, bus stops and informal settlements. Demographic characteristics of the sample are presented in Table 1.

The Markers of Adulthood Scale (MOA) was developed by Arnett in 1994 with subsequent revisions and adaptations in 1997, 1998 and 2001 (Mahama et al., 2018). This scale has been used in many countries, including China, Ghana, Greece, Israel, and the United States (Faas et al., 2020). The MOA is a 43-item tool that has a Likert type rating scale with responses ranging from very important to not at all important. Participants are asked to indicate the extent to which each criterion is considered necessary to be seen as an adult. The 43 items are further divided into sub-scales. These are independence, interdependence, role transitions, norm compliance, biological transitions, chronological transitions and family capacities. Demographic items for age, gender, and education attainment were also included. Participants provided responses which were then averaged to give an overall score for each sub-scale.

To establish what young people aged 18-29 consider to be important Markers of Adulthood, descriptive statistics (means and standard deviations) were computed for each sub-scale of the Markers of Adulthood. Participants indicated their opinion of the importance of each of the items in determining whether a person has reached adulthood, by circling the level of importance: A. very important; B. quite important; C. slightly important; and 4. Not at all important. These were then coded as: 1. Very important; 2. quite important; 3. slightly

important; and 4. not at all important. When the score was done, the highest score was 1, while the least score was 4.

Results

Demographic characteristics of the sample are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Sociodemographic Characteristics of the Participants

	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	187	48.1%
Female	202	51.9%
Educational Level		
University	142	36.4%
TVET	109	27.9%
NEET	139	35.6%
Employment Status		
Employed	62	16.0%
Self-Employed	89	22.9%
Other	234	61.1%
Marital Status		
Single	245	64.0%
Married	57	14.9%
In a Relationship	78	21.1%
Parental Status		
Not a Parent	238	62.5%
Single Parent	36	9.4%
Both Parents	106	28.1%
County		
Kajiado	107	27.8%
Kiambu	158	41.0%
Machakos	118	31.2%
Combined Family Income		
Ksh. 0-19,999	139	37.2%
Ksh. 20,000-39,999	93	24.9%
Ksh. 40,000-59,999	63	16.8%
Ksh. 60,000-79,999	32	8.6%
Ksh. 80,000-99,000	25	6.7%
Ksh. 100,000 and above	22	5.9%

The items in the Markers of Adulthood scale are shown in Table 2, ranked by sub-scale. The highest endorsed markers of adulthood were; ‘Learn ways to have good control of your emotions’, ‘Accept responsibility for your actions’, ‘make independent decisions’, ‘If a man became capable of supporting a family’, and ‘if a man, become capable pf caring for children.’

Table 2. Endorsement of Items on the Markers of Adulthood by sub-scale

	M (SD)	% Very Important	M	SD
A Person Has Reached Adulthood if He/She (Is/Has):				
Independence			1.78	0.5
1.Financial independence from parents	1.55 (.85)	63.4		
2.No longer living in parents' house	2.23 (.08)	33.3		
14.Not deeply tied to parents emotionally	2.44 (.14)	28.2		
18.Make independent decisions	1.35 (.70)	73.8		
31.Accept responsibilities for actions	1.35 (.71)	75.1		
37.Establish a relationship with parents as an equal	1.79 (.01)	52.2		
Interdependence			1.92	0.5
17.Committed to long term love relationships	2.39 (1.22)	34.1		
19.Make lifelong commitment to others	2.37 (1.10)	29		
38.Learn to always have good control of your emotions	1.30 (.66)	77.6		
39.Greater consideration for others	1.87 (.98)	45		
40. Capable of supporting parents financially	1.86 (.94)	56.2		
Role Transitions			2.39	0.84
3.Finished with Education	2.06 (1.12)	44		
4. Married	2.62 (1.23)	27.1		
5. Have at least one child	2.85 (1.21)	22.4		
6.Settled into a long-term career	2.06 (1.09)	41.7		
7.Purchased a house	2.30 (1.21)	36.4		
8.Be employed full time	2.43 (1.17)	29.5		
Norm Compliance			1.83	0.7
8.Avoid becoming drunk	1.92 (1.19)	56		
9. Avoid illegal drugs	1.60 (1.05)	70.2		
10.Have no more than one sexual partner	1.90 (1.20)	56.7		
11.Drive automobile safely and close to the speed limit	2.05 (1.20)	48.3		
12.Avoid use of profanity/vulgar language	1.93 (1.12)	49.4		
13. Use contraception if sexually active not trying to conceive	2.06 (1.16)	45.5		
35. Avoid drunk driving	1.63 (1.05)	67.4		
36. Avoid committing petty crimes like vandalism and shoplifting	1.56 (.93)	66.2		
Biological Transitions			2.64	0.96
26. Grow to full height	3.02 (1.21)	20.1		

27. Women become biologically capable of bearing children	2.28 (1.24)	39.4		
28. Men become biologically capable of fathering children	2.20 (1.24)	42.5		
33. Have had sexual intercourse	3.06 (1.21)	20.1		
Chronological Transitions			2.76	0.71
15. Reached age 18	2.17 (1.20)	43.3		
16. Reached age 21	2.16 (1.16)	39.7		
32. Have obtained license and can drive automobile	2.54 (1.23)	29.8		
41. Allowed to drink Alcohol	3.30 (1.08)	12.5		
42. Allowed to smoke cigarettes	3.48 (1.01)	9.9		
43. Completed National Youth Service (Military Service)	3.24 (1.08)	11.7		
Family Capacities			1.6	0.64
20. If a man becomes capable of supporting a family financially	1.45 (.74)	67.9		
21. If woman becomes capable of caring for children	1.54 (.84)	64.9		
22. If woman becomes capable of supporting a family financially	1.66 (.83)	56.2		
23. If a man becomes capable of caring for children	1.54 (.83)	63.2		
24. If woman becomes capable of running a household	1.61 (.87)	59.2		
25. If man becomes capable of running a household	1.79 (.99)	51.1		
29. Become capable of keeping family physically safe (men)	1.65 (.94)	58.5		
30. Women become capable of keeping family safe	1.77 (.98)	52.2		

Average endorsement of the items on the sub-scales for the overall sample are shown in Table 3. The sub-scale with the highest average score was Family Capacities while the sub-scale with the lowest average score was Chronological Transitions.

Table 3. Important Markers of Adulthood sub-scale Means

	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Independence	389	1.78	.50
Interdependence	388	1.92	.61
Role Transitions	389	2.38	.84
Norm Compliance	389	1.83	.71
Biological Transitions	388	2.65	.97
Chronological Transitions	388	2.80	.72

Family Capacities	388	1.60	.64
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The endorsement of the sub-scales for collegiate participants and the endorsement for the sub-scales for non-collegiate participants are compared in Table 4.

Table 4. Endorsement of the sub-scales of the Markers of Adulthood

	Education Level	n	M	SD
Independence	Collegiate	248	1.85	.48
	Non-Collegiate	138	1.66	.50
Interdependence	Collegiate	248	2.02	.60
	Non-Collegiate	137	1.72	.58
Role Transitions	Collegiate	248	2.56	.81
	Non-Collegiate	138	2.06	.81
Norm Compliance	Collegiate	248	1.90	.73
	Non-Collegiate	138	1.68	.63
Biological Transitions	Collegiate	248	2.88	.89
	Non-Collegiate	137	2.20	.94
Chronological Transitions	Collegiate	248	2.98	.59
	Non-Collegiate	137	2.46	.80
Family Capacities	Collegiate	248	1.67	.66
	Non-Collegiate	137	1.47	.57

An independent samples T- Test was run to establish whether there were differences in the endorsement of the markers of adulthood between collegiate and non-collegiate participants and whether the differences were significant. Non-collegiate participants scored higher on all seven sub-scales compared to their collegiate counterparts. Analyses were conducted to investigate whether there are differences in what young people considered to be important markers of adulthood with various demographic characteristics (age, gender, education level, employment status, marital status, parental status, county of origin and combined family income. First, to investigate whether there were gender differences in the endorsement of the markers of adulthood, an independent samples t-test was conducted. The results indicate that there were no gender differences in what men and female participants consider to be important markers of adulthood as indicated in Table 5.

Table 5. Independent Samples T-Test for the Markers of Adulthood

Markers of Adulthood				t	df	Sig. (Two-tailed)	Mean Difference (Cohen's d)	Standard Error Difference
		M	SD					
Independence	Collegiate	1.85	0.49	3.503	277.912	<.001	0.49367	0.05277
	Non-collegiate	1.66	0.50					
Interdependence	Collegiate	2.02	0.6	4.836	288.59	<.001	0.59385	0.6264
	Non-	1.72	0.51					

Role	collegiate							
	Collegiate	2.56	0.81	5.766	284.591	<.001	0.80797	0.08563
Transitions	Non-collegiate	2.06	0.8					
Norm	Collegiate	1.90	0.73	3.117	317.821	.003	0.69963	0.07138
Compliance	Non-collegiate	1.68	0.63					
Biological	Collegiate	2.88	0.89	6.799	268.791	<.001	0.91342	0.09867
Transitions	Non-collegiate	2.20	0.94					
Chronological	Collegiate	2.98	0.59	6.623	218.619	<.001	0.67387	0.07821
Transitions	Non-collegiate	2.46	0.80					
Family	Collegiate	1.67	0.66	3.071	316.440	.003	0.63541	0.06485
Capacities	Non-collegiate	1.47	0.57					

To establish the reliability of the Markers of Adulthood sub-scales for the study, Cronbach’s alpha was calculated for the sub scales. Alphas ranged from .58 to .83 as shown in Table 6.

Table 6. Cronbach’s alpha for the seven sub-scales of markers of adulthood scale

Sub-scale	Cronbach’s α
Independence	.53
Interdependence	.58
Role Transitions	.80
Norm Compliance	.78
Biological transitions	.79
Chronological transitions	.68
Family Capacities	.83

To investigate whether there are other demographic differences in the endorsement of the seven sub-scales of markers of adulthood, a one-way analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was conducted. With regards to age, there were significant differences in the endorsement of the sub-scales of independence ($F_{11,350} = 2.975, p <.001$), biological transitions ($F_{11,349} = 4.182, p <.001$), and chronological transitions ($F_{11,349} = 3.766, p <.001$).

Table 7. One-Way Analyses of Variance between Markers of Adulthood and Age

	M	SD	df	F	η^2
Independence	1.78	.50	11,350	2.975***	.085
Interdependence	1.93	.60	11,349	2.118	.063
Role Transitions	2.40	.85	11,350	2.680	.078
Norm Compliance	1.83	.70	11,350	2.486	.072
Biological Transitions	2.68	.95	11,349	4.182***	.116
Chronological Transitions	2.81	.72	11,349	3.766***	.106
Family Capacities	1.61	.64	11,349	.761	.023

***p<.001

To further investigate whether there were differences in the endorsement of the sub-scales of the markers of adulthood across age groups 18-21 22-25 and 26-29 years, ANOVA was conducted. Differences in the endorsement of the various markers of adulthood were noted in the endorsement of the sub-scales of independence ($F_{2,359} = 11.610, p < .001$), with those who are in the age group of 18-21 years scoring significantly higher than those in the (22-25) and (26-29) years. Mean difference .22 $p < .001$ interdependence ($F_{2,358} = 7.396, p < .001$), with those who were in the age group 18-21 years age group scoring higher than those in the 22-25 years and 26-29 years category, mean difference .35 $p < .001$. role transitions ($F_{2,359} = 9.692, p < .001$), with those who were in the age group 18-21 years scored significantly higher than those in the 22-25 and 26-29 years age group. Mean difference .46 $p < .001$ biological transitions ($F_{2,358} = 16.865, p < .001$), with those in the age group 26-29 years scored higher than those in 18-21 and 22-25 years age group. Mean difference .56 $p < .001$. and chronological transitions ($F_{2,358} = 14.744, p < .001$), those who were in the age group 18-21 years scored significantly higher than those in the 22-25 and 26-29 years age group. Mean difference .56 $p < .001$.

Table 8. One-Way Analyses of Variance between Markers of Adulthood and Age Groups

	M	SD	df	F	η^2
Independence	1.78	.50	2,359	11.610***	.061
Interdependence	1.93	.60	2,358	7.396***	.040
Role Transitions	2.40	.85	2, 359	9.692***	.051
Norm Compliance	1.83	.70	2,359	3.751	.020
Biological Transitions	2.68	.95	2,358	16.865***	.086
Chronological Transitions	2.81	.95	2,358	14.744***	.076
Family Capacities	1.61	.64	2,358	.930	.005

*** $p < .001$

Significant differences were noted with regard to employment status and the sub-scale of independence ($F_{2,381} = 7.323, p < .001$), where the ‘other’ score that represented participants who were neither employed or self-employed was significantly higher than those who were employed or self-employed (mean difference .18 $p < .001$).

Table 9. One-Way Analyses of Variance Between Markers of Adulthood and Employment Status

	M	SD	df	F	η^2
Independence	1.78	.50	2,381	7.323***	.037
Interdependence	1.92	.61	2,380	4.079	.021
Role Transitions	2.38	.84	2,381	2.228	.012
Norm Compliance	1.83	.70	2,381	3.655	.019
Biological Transitions	2.65	.96	2,380	2.484	.013
Chronological Transitions	2.80	.71	2,380	1.647	.009
Family Capacities	1.59	.64	2,380	1.839	.010

*** $p < .001$

Marital status and the sub-scale of role transitions ($F_{2,376} = 8.915, p < .001$), where participant who were married scored higher than those who were single or in a relationship (mean difference .51 $p < .001$).

Table 10. One Way Analyses of Variance between Markers of Adulthood and Marital Status

	M	SD	df	F	η^2
Independence	1.78	.50	2,376	1.734	.009
Interdependence	1.92	.61	2,375	3.629	.019
Role Transitions	2.38	.83	2,376	8.915***	.045
Norm Compliance	1.83	.71	2,376	2.626	.014
Biological Transitions	2.65	.95	2,375	6.788***	.035
Chronological Transitions	2.80	.71	2,375	4.491	.023
Family Capacities	1.60	.64	2,375	3.624	.019

*** $p < .001$

Parental status and the sub-scale of biological transitions ($F_{2,373} = 7.222, p < .001$), where participants who were not parents scored higher compared to those who were parenting together and those who were single parents (mean difference .53 $p < .001$) No significant differences in the importance of the markers of adulthood sub-scales were observed with respect to combined family income.

Table 11. One Way Analysis of Variance between Markers of Adulthood and Parental Status

	M	SD	df	F	η^2
Independence	1.78	.49	2,374	1.887	.010
Interdependence	1.92	.61	2,373	1.244	.007
Role Transitions	2.38	.83	2,374	4.340	.023
Norm Compliance	1.83	.71	2,374	1.939	.010
Biological Transitions	2.65	.96	2,373	7.222***	.037
Chronological Transitions	2.80	.71	2,375	5.031	.026
Family Capacities	1.59	.63	2,375	1.393	.007

*** $p < .001$

Differences were also noted with regard to the different levels of education and the sub-scales of independence ($F_{2,383} = 1.876, p < .001$), where the score for participants in TVET scored higher than those in university or those Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) (mean difference .24 $p < .001$) interdependence ($F_{2,382} = 4.258, p < .001$) where the score for ‘other’ represented by those Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) was higher than that for those in university or TVET; (mean difference .26 $p < .001$), and role transitions ($F_{2,383} = 10.908, p < .001$), where the score for ‘other’ was also higher than those in university or TVET; (mean difference .46 $p < .001$) Norm compliance ($F_{2,383} = 3.766, p < .001$), where the score for ‘other’ was higher than those in university and TVET; (mean difference .22 $p < .001$) as well as biological transitions ($F_{2,382} = 20.018, p < .001$); (mean difference .70 $p < .001$) and chronological transitions ($F_{2,382} = 11.983, p < .001$);(mean difference .54 $p < .001$).

Table 12. One-Way Analysis of Variance between Markers of Adulthood and Level of Education

	M	SD	df	F	η^2
Independence	1.78	.50	2,383	7.739***	.039
Interdependence	1.92	.61	2,382	12.080***	.059
Role Transitions	2.38	.84	2,383	16.679***	.080
Norm Compliance	1.83	.70	2,383	7.804***	.039
Biological Transitions	2.64	.96	2,382	23.954***	.111
Chronological Transitions	2.79	.71	2,382	26.363***	.121
Family Capacities	1.60	.64	2,382	5.435	.028

***p<.001

In order to establish the participant’s views of whether they have attained adulthood status, the participants were asked the question ‘Do you feel like you have reached adulthood?’ The response for the entire sample responded as follows; 41.5% responded ‘Yes’, 4.3% responded ‘No’, and 47.3% responded ‘In some ways yes and some ways no’, and 6.9% did not respond, as indicated in Table 13.

Table 13. “Do you feel that you have reached adulthood?”

	N	%
Yes	163	41.5%
No	17	4.3%
In some ways yes, in some ways no	186	47.3%
Participants who did not respond	27	6.9%

Discussion of Results

Social and cultural variants often determine how young people experience the transition to adulthood. Young people that grow up in WEIRD (Western, Educated, Industrialized and Rich) Societies tend to delay settling down and take longer to settle in their careers. This ultimately affects how they transition to adulthood (Wright et al., 2023). Findings from this study indicate that the markers of adulthood that are most important to young people from peri-urban areas in Kenya are learning to control emotions, accepting responsibility for your actions, and making independent decisions. When the items on the Markers of Adulthood scale were organized into sub-scales, the with the highest mean was family capacities, followed by independence and norm compliance. These findings are similar to studies conducted in America that indicate individual rather than collectivistic markers of adulthood were considered important markers of adulthood (Arnett, 1998). Especially notable in the present study was that participants did not consider ‘allowed to drink alcohol and ‘Males complete military service’ as important marker of adulthood, even though they are widely promoted as significant markers of adulthood in the Kenyan culture (Beguy et al., 2011).

Findings from this study also indicated some differences in some markers of adulthood between collegiate and non-collegiate groups. For example, non-collegiate participants scored a higher mean on the ‘role transitions’ sub-scale than collegiate populations. Role transitions include finishing education, being married, having at least one child, settling into a long-term career, purchasing a house, and being employed full time. Non- collegiate participants rated

these as more important markers of adulthood compared to the collegiate participants. These results indicate that young people in Kenya who do not attend college tend to subscribe more to the traditional markers of adulthood (education, marriage, parenthood and long-term careers).

In other African studies of markers of adulthood, for example, the study carried out with young people from Ghana and Nigeria, emerging adults in Ghana considered the ability to carry out family responsibilities as the most important markers of adulthood with chronological transitions being the least important markers of adulthood (Obidoa et al., 2019). This is similar to Kenyan emerging adults, who also endorsed 'Family capacities' as the highest ranked sub-scale of the Markers of adulthood. Results were also similar with the least endorsed sub-scales. The least endorsed sub-scale of the markers of adulthood by Kenyan participants was 'chronological transitions.' This was similarly least endorsed by the Ghanaian and Nigerian emerging adults.

In the same study, the criteria for adulthood with the highest percentages were good control of emotions, responsibility for actions, financially independent keeping family physically safe. Young people from Nigeria rated being able to take care of family as the most important, followed by independence, chronological transitions and age transitions (Obidoa et al., 2019). Similarly, In Kenya, the markers of adulthood that are most important to young people from peri-urban areas were learning to control emotions, accepting responsibility for your actions, and making independent decision. In Africa, which constitutes collectivistic cultures, the transition to adulthood maybe experienced differently. This might explain the similarities in the endorsement of the markers of adulthood across East and West Africa. Collectivistic cultures mostly focus on the community more than the individual.

These findings differ from those of young people in America and other countries. According to Arnett (2024), the "Big Three" criteria for adulthood across many studies in the United States, including his own studies, are accepting responsibility for yourself, making independent decisions, and becoming financially independent (also see Sharon, 2015). Learn always to have good control over your emotions also ranks consistently high, as it did in the present study, where it was rated highest. A longer transition to adulthood is becoming more common in today's society. Young people are taking time to explore the various options that are available to them. (Arnett, 2024)

In the present study, to understand the views on whether they have reached adulthood status, when asked, 'Do you feel that you have reached adulthood?' 41.5 % of participants responded 'yes', 4.3% responded 'No' and 47.3% responded 'In some ways yes and others no'. This is similar the findings on American emerging adults (Arnett, 2020). Participants who reported that they had reached adulthood had a lower percentage similar to a study done with Iranian emerging adulthood, in which only 19.7% felt that they had not reached adulthood while 63.1% felt that they had reached adulthood and 17.2 % felt that they had partly reached adulthood (Fathi, 2018).

In a study conducted with Ghanaian young adults, 68.7% responded that they had attained adulthood status while 31.1% reported that they had not reached adulthood (Mahama et al., 2018); Kenyan participants in the present study scored lower of feeling like they have reached adulthood. In a study conducted with Ghana and Nigerian young adults, young adults in Nigeria 61.4% responded that they had reached adulthood, while 20.7% responded 'No', while 17.8% responded 'In some aspects yes and in others no'. Emerging adults in Ghana rated ability to carry out family responsibilities as the most important marker of adulthood

with chronological transitions being the lowest score of Markers of Adulthood (Obidoa et al., 2019).

Conclusions

Overall, the results of this study broadly indicate that a significant number of young people feel that they have reached adulthood in some ways and not others (47.3%). The markers of adulthood among the several countries vary and are heavily influenced by various sociocultural factors. For example, in a study that investigated how Greek students view the transition to adulthood, the results indicate that young Greeks endorse individualism aspects such as accepting responsibility for actions and decide on personal beliefs and values. The highest scored sub-scales were norm compliance, interdependence, and family capacities. These also reflect more of the cultural values of obligation. When asked if they felt they have reached adulthood, two thirds of the participants responded, "In some ways Yes and in some ways 'No' (Petrogiannis, 2011). This is similar to the Kenyan participants, where the majority reported that they have reached adulthood in some ways and not others.

Identity formation experiences seem to be different for young adults from various cultures, including immigrants. They tend to struggle with their transition to adulthood this is because they were challenged by the various cultural and developmental transitions as well as adjusting to new norms. This tends to affect their adulthood experiences (Dolberg & Amit, 2023). A cultural approach to understanding adulthood is important. Awareness of the diversity of norms, customs, cultural practices and beliefs about the transition to adulthood, we gain a greater appreciation of this unique period in these cultures gives a holistic view (Arnett & Jensen, 2023).

Research on the transition to adulthood is steadily increasing with focus on socio-demographic groupings. Significantly less attention has gone into understanding young people's transition to adulthood in Africa. The continent is made up of counties with a rich and vibrant, history and culture factors such as colonization have led to various changes. In conclusion, research on the transition to adulthood has increased. Topics on adulthood have developed into collaboration within the field of human development. Developmental transitions are, in some ways, shaped by social and cultural experiences. It is therefore expected that young people's transition to adulthood will be a cultural as well as a developmental concept.

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