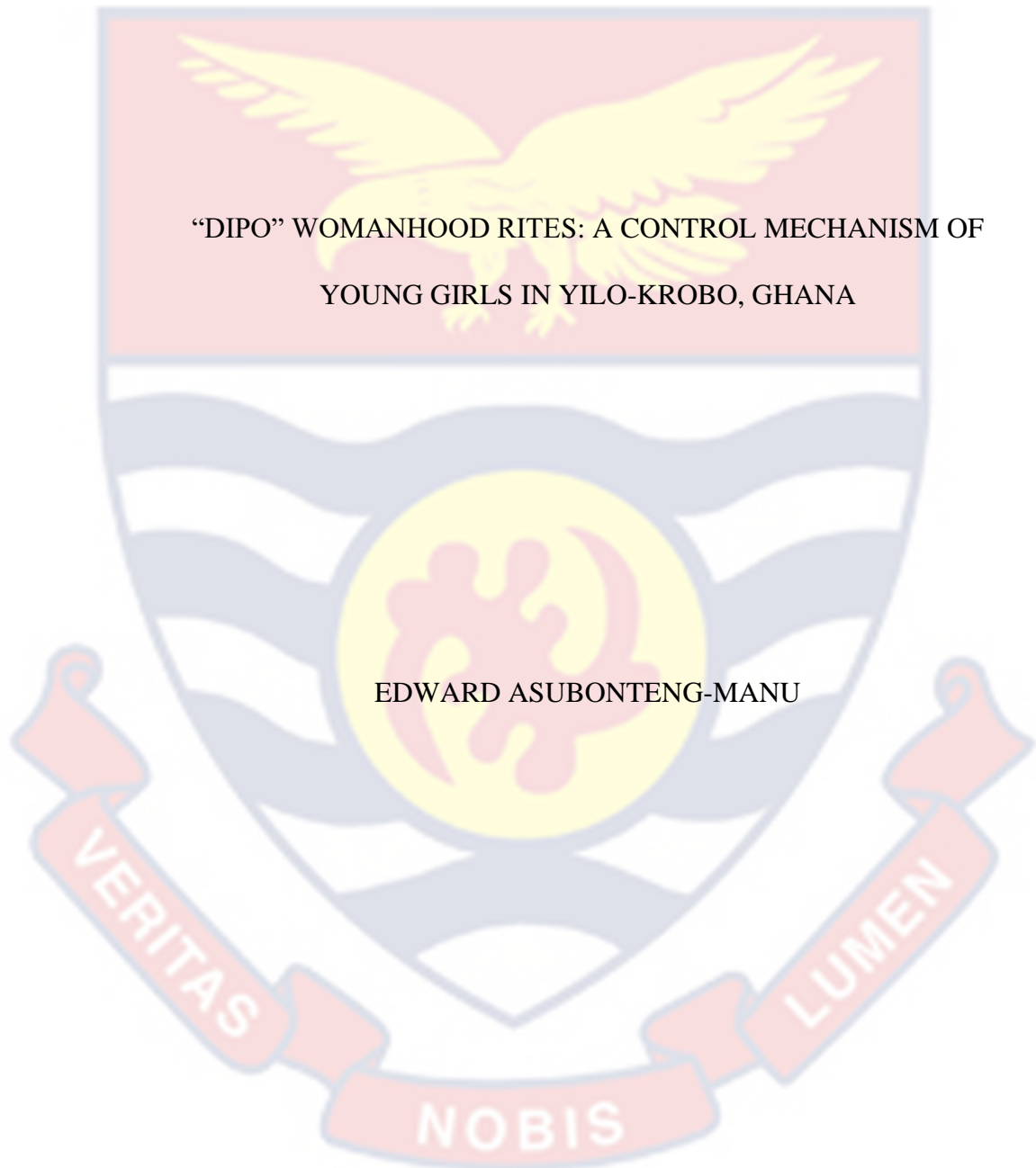


UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST



“DIPO” WOMANHOOD RITES: A CONTROL MECHANISM OF
YOUNG GIRLS IN YILO-KROBO, GHANA

EDWARD ASUBONTENG-MANU

2023



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YOUNG GIRLS IN YILO-KROBO, GHANA

BY

EDWARD ASUBONTENG-MANU

(SS/SOD/16/0005)

This thesis submitted to the Department of Sociology and Anthropology,
Faculty of Social Sciences of the College of Humanities and Legal Studies,
University of Cape Coast, in partial fulfilment of the requirement for the
award of Doctor of Philosophy degree in Sociology.

NOVEMBER 2023

DECLARATION

Candidate's Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of my own original research and that no part of it has been presented for another degree in this university or elsewhere.

Candidate's Signature:..... Date:.....

Candidate's Name: Edward Asubonteng-Manu

Supervisors' Declaration

We hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of the thesis were supervised in accordance with the guidelines on supervision of thesis laid down by the University of Cape Coast.

Principal Supervisor's Signature:..... Date:.....

Name: Prof. William Boateng

Co-Supervisor's Signature:..... Date:.....

Name: Prof. Akwasi Kumi-Kyereme

ABSTRACT

Pre-marital sex is popularly considered to be a forbidden or a deviant act in the Ghanaian socio-cultural context. Violators are punished in some societies to serve as a deterrent since the act has both religious and social implications. The Krobo ethnic group of the Eastern Region of Ghana, is a conservative and patrilineal society where virginity is valued. They conduct *Dipo* womanhood rites for young girls who have reached the marriageable age into womanhood. The young girl undergoing the *Dipo* rites is known as *Dipo-yoo* (*Dipo* girl) and is expected to be a virgin. Accordingly, *Dipo* womanhood rites was instituted to mainly ensure that young girls in Krobo protect their chastity until marriage. Contemporarily, while a school of thought argued that the rites has lost its value due to modifications, another school of thought also claim that the rites is relevant in controlling the sexual conduct of young girls. Given these divergent views, the current study adopted Hirschi's (1969) social control theory to deepen the understanding of the relevance or otherwise of *Dipo* womanhood rites in controlling early pre-marital sexual debut of young girls. To achieve this, the mixed methods (ie. quantitative and qualitative) was employed to gather data from respondents made up of 286 and 66 young girls and boys respectively aged 15-24 years and 16 key informants from communities in Yilo-Krobo Municipality. Findings indicate that commitment and involvement in the rites significantly reduce the likelihood of young girls to engage in early pre-marital sex. On the other hand, attachments to parents/guardians and beliefs in the principle of the rites were not statistically significant in explaining the likelihood of young girls' engagement in early pre-marital sex. The study recommends that the community should engage the social control factors more critically to help the effective use of *Dipo* as a cultural mechanism to control the sexual behaviour of young girls until they are married or matured enough to negotiate safe sex.

Keywords: *Dipo*, Womanhood rites, Control Mechanism, Young girls, Yilo-Krobo

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to the memory of my late inspirational friend, Prof.

Stephen Obeng-Gyimah. May his soul rest in peace in the bosom of The

Almighty God.



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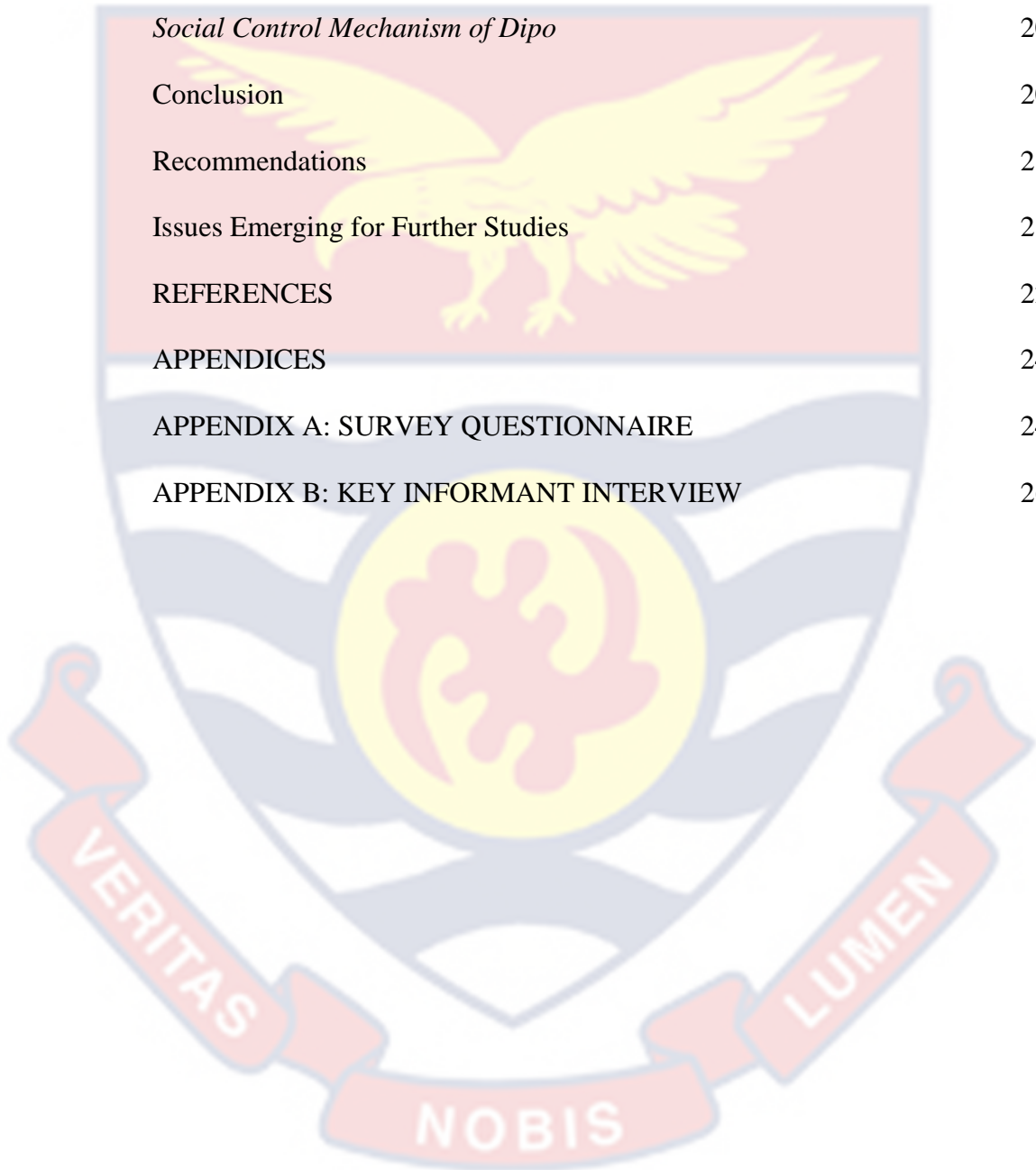
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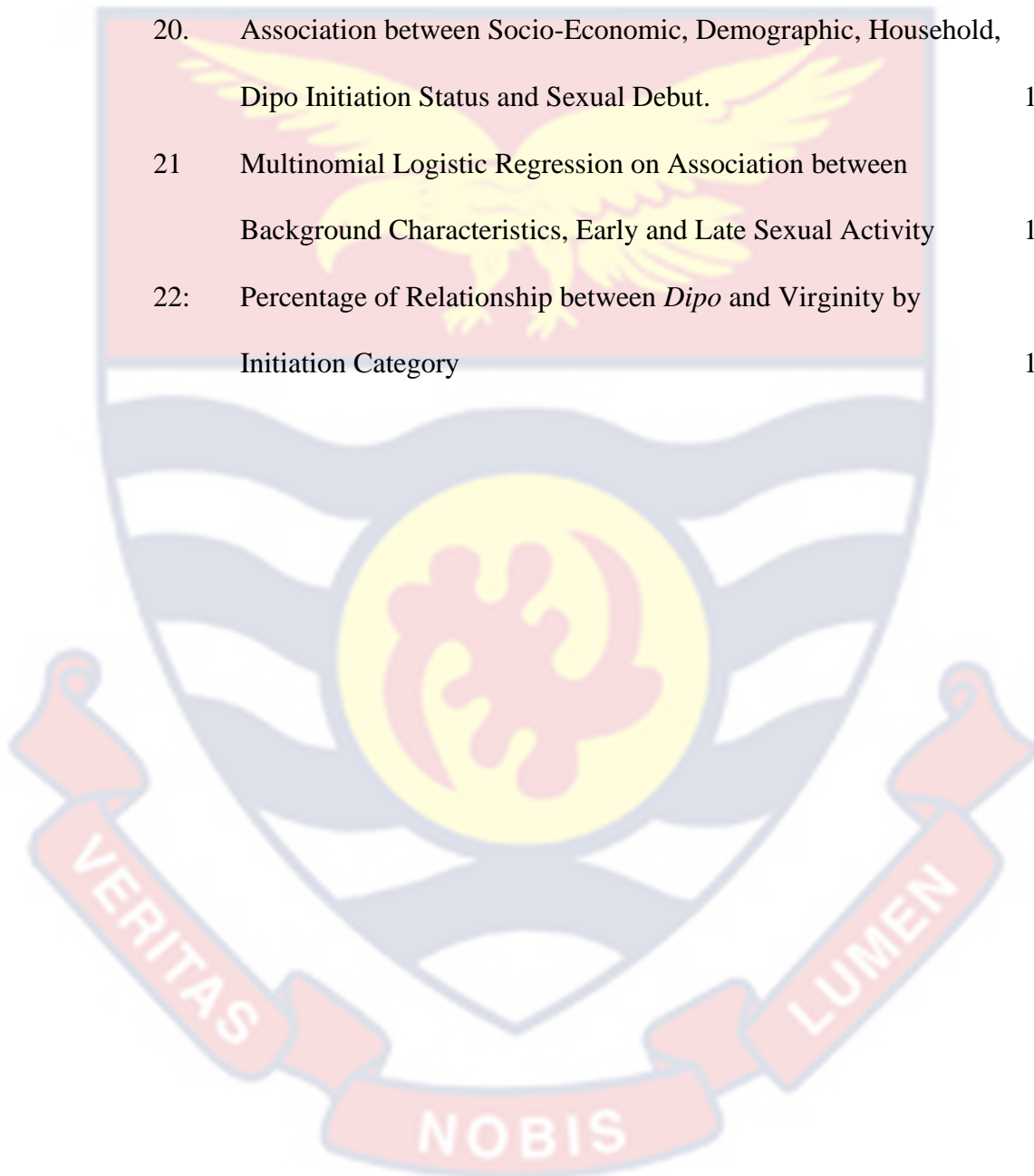
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CHAPTER ONE

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Introduction

This thesis attempts to understand the contemporary relevance of *Dipo* womanhood rites in controlling early pre-marital sexual debut of young girls or otherwise among Yilo-Krobo ethnic group of Eastern Region, Ghana. Ghana is one of the Sub-Saharan African countries where pre-marital sex is popularly considered to be a forbidden or a deviant act. In this vein, Yilo-Krobo, one of the conservative societies in Ghana, expect their young girls to remain chaste prior to marriage. Accordingly, *Dipo* rites was instituted to ensure that young girls protect their chastity until marriage in Yilo-Krobo.

The introduction of the current thesis recognizes the socio-economic and cultural context within which various groups in the community assume the relevance of the rites or otherwise. Hirschi's (1969) social control theory was advanced to aid our understanding of the processes through which *Dipo* is relevant or otherwise in controlling pre-marital sex among indigenes in Yilo-Krobo. A deeper understanding of this will inform indigenes of the need to continue or discontinue observing the rites in contemporary times. This is against the backdrop that over the last decade while some scholars and researchers have stimulated discussions on the need to re-visit womanhood rites to contain early sexual behaviour (Appiah-Sekyere, 2018), others have claim that the practice should be scrapped since it is no longer relevant, but a license to engage in early sexual activity (Langmagne et al., 2018).

Background to the Study

A womanhood rite is referred to as an important ceremony performed for mainly young girls who have come of age to prepare them for marriage (Narh, 2017, pp. 89-90). The “*Efundula*”, *Umcwasho*, and *Akpema* respectively among Owambo communities in Northern Namibia, young Swazi girls, and the Kabire of Northern Togo (Becker, 2004; Exploring Africa, 2022; Rooyen & Hartell, 2010) are some few examples of womanhood rites celebrated in some Sub-Saharan African (SSA) societies. Anthropologists have termed these ceremonies as *Rites of Passage* (and it includes birth, puberty/initiation rite and death). The use of *Rites of Passage* to include womanhood rites means that the girl has reached marriageable age but must be separated from her previous role as a child to be prepared to accept her new role as a wife and mother (Jaskulska, 2015). The term *Rites of Passage* was first identified by Van Gennep (1960) who categorized it under three stages namely, separation, transition, and incorporation. Van Gennep (ibid) explains that separation is a stage whereby the young girl undergoing the initiation is separated from her previous status as a child. Again, he explains transition as a stage where the initiates are taught about their cultural values, practices, and other information of the society. Last, but not least, Van Gennep (ibid) refers to incorporation as a stage whereby the young girl undergoing the initiation has been able to endure the period of seclusion and is brought back to rejoin the community as a new personality. During the pre-colonial period, most societies in Ghana regarded young girls who had experienced first menstruation as matured enough for marriage. But, for them to separate themselves from their old role as children, they were

secluded and given instructions to enable them to perform their new role as wives and mothers.

Largely, some of these *Rites of Passage* such as the womanhood initiation rites, are traditional ethical norms and values embedded in the culture of most traditional societies to regulate the sexual conduct of young girls (Kangaude & Skelton, 2018). However, these rites appear gendered or perpetuation of patriarchal structure of traditional societies (ibid) since women and young girls are often targeted. Thus, in most traditional societies, women are seen as the epitome of moral symbol and are trained to maintain their virginity prior to marriage, whereas boys and men are freer in their sexual behaviour options (Appiah-Sekyere & Awuah-Nyamekye, 2012; Kangaude & Skelton, 2018; Karacan & Bektas, 2016). These socially recognized womanhood rites, nevertheless, were created to also afford families and society the opportunity to train young girls (Rooyen & Hartell, 2010) for them to teach good behaviour to their children (Appiah-Sekyere & Awuah-Nyamekye, 2012; Somani, 2017). Renowned African feminists, including Oyeronke Oyewumi, Sylvia Tamale and Ifi Amadiume have explained that such womanhood or female initiations are “valued and maintained” not only because they include some “aspects of empowerment”, but they are also “a means of reinforcing women’s collective identity as women, vis a vis man” (Arnfred, 2010, pp. 64, 82). As such, in most conservative societies that place value on virginity of young girls, their social mores require them to remain chaste until they have passed through the womanhood initiation and are married (Exploring Africa, 2022; Glozah & Lawani, 2014; Rooyen & Hartell, 2010; Sackey, 2001). In other words, a young girl who is pregnant before undergoing the womanhood

initiation, has not only defied the spiritual restriction of chastity, but has also defiled the entire community (Amos, 2013; Becker, 2004; Lartey, 2014). Considering this, violating, or deviating from such norms, calls for sacrifices and purifications to avert any danger on the pregnant girl and the unborn child and to prevent social calamity (Ahortor, 2016; Huber, 1993).

In the socio-cultural context of Ghana, for instance, where pre-marital sex is popularly considered to be a forbidden or a deviant act (Anarfi, 2003; Appiah-Sekyere & Awuah-Nyamekye, 2012), those who engaged in it were subjected to substantial long-lasting stigma from the community (Appiah-Sekyere, 2018; Huber, 1993). These were, perhaps, some of the ideals which shaped the discourse about the creation of *Dipo* womanhood rite by the Krobo ethnic group of the Eastern Region of Ghana. As one of the patrilineal societies in Ghana where virginity is valued (Nukunya, 2003; Sackey, 2001), the Krobo ethnic group instituted *Dipo* to mainly ensure that young girls protect their chastity until marriage (Anarfi, 2003; Glozah & Lawani, 2014; Odonkor, 1971). In the pre-colonial days, the punishments were strictly applied and was believed to have curbed the incidence of pre-marital sex (Anarfi, 2003; Ostrow, 2011; Sackey, 2001).

Traditionally, *Dipo*, one of the few preserved womanhood rites in Ghana, is observed for young girls who have reached marriageable age and are initiated in a group to prepare them for marriage (Anarfi, 2003; Steegstra 2005). In this context, the womanhood rite is different from other female puberty rites such as *Bragoro and Kyiribra* among the Akan ethnic group in Ghana that is usually performed for girls after their first menstruation (Huber, 1993; Mensah-Brown, 1968) to signify that they are sexually matured. The young girl

undergoing the *Dipo* rites is expected to be a virgin and is known as *Dipo-yoo* (i.e. *Dipo* girl) (Huber, 1993). These young girls are usually kept in a secret room or *Dipo hut* through out the period of the initiation and given instructions on womanhood, and motherhood before they rejoin the community (Glozah & Lawani, 2014).

As a cultural practice, the *Dipo* womanhood requires every Krobo girl to go through the rite before she will be fully recognised and obtains full status as a Krobo woman (Boakye, 2010, Huber, 1993). In the past when there was no formal education, the *Dipo* girls were confined for more than a year and it was used to instruct or train them to assume their role as women in their family and community (Odonkor, 1971). Put differently, when the girls were matured enough, they were sent to the *Dipo* huts and were given pertinent traditional education by elderly women in the society (Huber, 1993; Steegstra, 2005). These elderly women usually hold that position in the society, because they had passed through the initiation themselves or have remained in stable marriage, or widowed (Glozah & Lawani, 2014; Lartey, 2014).

However, *Dipo* practice was banned by the colonial administration in 1892 until it was restored in the 1930s. When it was finally restored, some indigenes subjected some parts of the activities characterising the celebration of *Dipo* to intense debate. These include exposure of greater portion of initiates' naked body to the public (Agra & Gbadegbe, 2014) and the fact that it involves the pouring of libation and worship of ancestors (Teyegaga, 1985). In light of this, many devout and committed Christians claim that the *Dipo* rites is backward and at variance with their Christian values and have vowed to desist from anything to do with the *Dipo* celebration (Ostrow, 2011). Yet, some of the

converted Christians did not give up the *Dipo* practice as was expected (Sackey, 2008/2009; Steegstra, 2005). This is largely because they regarded the *Dipo* rituals as a revered custom and the fact that it identifies initiates as true Krobo women (Boakye, 2010; Ostrow, 2011; Sackey, 2008/2009; Steegstra, 2005).

Against this backdrop, *Dipo*, though widely observed by the people of Yilo-Krobo amid great joy and fanfares in recent times (Lartey, 2014), it is surrounded with some controversies. Key among them is the lackadaisical attitude of some parents towards the rite and the reduction in age of the initiates (Anarfi, 2003). Thus far, the practice is no longer recognized as a preparation for good marriage, but a license to engage in early sexual activity (Langmagne et al., 2018). This, notwithstanding, empirical, and current anecdotal evidence indicate that the initiation is important and relevant in contemporary times, because it has empowered most of the young girls who passed through the initiation at matured age to eschew early or pre-marital sex (Glozah & Lawani, 2014). With sanctions for disobedience, those initiated at matured age, delay their sexual debut until they have successfully passed the initiation.

Given these divergent views regarding the celebration of *Dipo* womanhood in recent times, the current study adopted Hirschi's (1969) social control theory to explore the relevance of *Dipo* rite in contemporary times. The social control theory postulates that individuals who are less bonded to conventional society may be more likely to turn to illegitimate behaviour than those who are strongly bonded (Hirschi, 1969). The theory will, therefore, deepen the understanding of the extent the *Dipo* womanhood rite mediates the relationship of individual's sociodemographic characteristics and sexual debut among young girls.

Statement of the Problem

Globally, most societies placed value on virginity, especially on females prior to marriage. In a study among a sample of 134 societies, it was observed that majority of the societies (75%) recognize female virginity prior to marriage as valuable (Broude, 1975). For instance, the Marshellese of Oceania and Chuckchee of Siberia do not place value on virginity. The reason is that the former perceive virginity as a foreign idea, whereas the latter do not have any local word for chastity. Similarly, societies such as the the Truk of Oceania, Azande of Central Africa, and the Chewa of Malawi, tolerate and approve of pre-marital sexual activity for unmarried females, because it is either believed to make a young girl fertile or to make her experience menstruation (Bogoras, 1929; Erdland, 1914; Gladwin & Sarason, 1953). On the other hand, societies like the Basseri of Afghanistan, and Fon of Benin have placed value on virginity to protect their young girls against pre-marital pregnancies (Barth, 1961). The Manus of Papua New Guinea also prohibits and restricts sexual acts among the unmarried young girls, because they believe that it is the instructions from the gods (Broude, 1975). Many other SSA traditional societies such as the Kabire of Northern Togo, the Zulu people of South Africa, and the people of Swaziland (now Eswatini), also disapprove of sexual intercourse among unmarried young girls. As a result, they perform initiation rites for the young girls as a traditional means to conserve their virginity, till they have come of age to consent to sex or are ready to be married (Exploring Africa, 2022; Nnazor & Robinson, 2016; Rooyen & Hartell, 2010).

Available literature on indigenous cultures in Africa indicates that during the pre-colonial era, most societies where premarital sex is condemned,

young girls and their families who chose to engage in sex or become pregnant before the initiation, together with the young boys who impregnated them were sanctioned (Amos, 2013; Dintwat, 2010; Kang'ethe, 2014; Yebei, 2005). To this end, extant research and literature on womanhood rites and sexual health in Africa affirmed that in the past where these sanctions were strictly applied, unplanned pregnancy, abortion and other sexual and reproductive health (SRH) problems that are linked to early sexual activity were very rare (Appiah-Sekyere, 2018; Hevi-Yiboe, 2003; Nnazor & Robinson, 2016; Ostrow, 2011; Sarpong, 1977).

In Ghana, for instance, the Krobo is one of the ethnic groups where virginity is “construed as being valuable” (Blank, 2007, p.106; Sackey, 2001). Consequently, the *Dipo*, a yearly womanhood rite, was instituted and usually marked between March and April in Yilo-Krobo and April and May in Manyakrobo. This is to serve, among other things, as a means for young girls to protect their chastity until they have come of age to consent to sex or are ready to be married (Anarfi, 2003; Glozah & Lawani, 2014). This implies that as a means of ensuring that girls imbibed acceptable behaviour of the community, a young girl who conceives prior to her initiation is sanctioned (Huber, 1993). The sanctions included payment of a fine, ostracizing, stigmatization and banishment or expulsion from her family house or community (Huber, 1993; Steegstra, 2005). These sanctions also served as a strong deterrent to the boys from engaging in pre-marital sex with young girls who had not undergone the *Dipo* initiation rite (Amos, 2013; Osafo et al., 2013). This is because, the fear that anyone who contravenes the norms governing *Dipo* goes unpunished by the society has compelled the young men to stay away from licentious behaviours.

However, young girls who abstained from pre-marital sex and their families were rewarded. The reward included the fact that she would be fully recognised and obtained full status as a true Krobo woman and can also inherit family property such as land and other paraveni or immovable assets (Boakye, 2010; Huber, 1993; Narh, 2017). Besides, off-springs of women from royal families would have royal positions in the society as queen-mothers and *asafoatse* (chiefs). However, with the infiltration of Western education, Christianity/Islam, and migration in recent years, divisions have emerged regarding the celebration of *Dipo* among the indigenes. Some parents are conservatives and others are non-conservatives with respect to the celebration of *Dipo* in the community. While the former usually initiate their daughters at matured age as was observed in the past, the latter have chosen to initiate them as toddlers (Langmagne et al., 2018) or refused to be part of the initiation (Ostrow, 2011).

As a result, scholars who have focused on *Dipo* and sexual health have come out with varied opinions about the ceremony. One school of thought has discussed the importance of the rite and advocated the need to *sankofa* (re-visit) *Dipo* (Sackey, 2001; Schroeder & Danquah, 2000). This group has maintained that *Dipo* has proven to be effective in the past when pre-marital sex rarely occurred (Ostrow, 2011). Consequently, re-visiting it will help to control or minimize the spread of pre-marital sex and its resultant teenage pregnancies, which is on ascendency among the young girls in the study community and Ghana as a whole (GSS et al., 2015; Langmagne et al., 2018; Osafo et al., 2013). In contrast, another school of thought claims that *Dipo* has lost its significance as toddlers and infants as low as two years old are being initiated instead of

teenagers who were initiated in the past (Anarfi, 2003; Langmagne et al., 2018; Sackey, 2008/2009). As a result, the practice is no longer recognized as preparation for good marriage, but a license to engage in early sexual activity (Anarfi, 2003). The reason is that once a girl is initiated as a toddler, she is free from any punishment or disgrace if she engages in early sex and becomes pregnant (Langmagne et al., 2018).

This divergent opinions among scholars tend to highlight the elements of social control theory, which advance that individuals with strong attachments, commitments, involvements and beliefs in the norms and values of their community are more likely to negate deviant behaviours or to align with the acceptable behaviour of the society than those who are neither attached to significant others, committed, involved nor believe in the norms and values of their community (Hirschi, 1969; Nye, 1958). Currently, anecdotal evidence suggests that young girls belonging to conservative parents tend to be more conscious about preserving their virginity until their initiation is over to please their parents and significant others. However, amid all these arguments, not much research has been conducted to understand the extent *Dipo* mediates the relationship between sociodemographic characteristics of individuals and the onset of sexual activity among young girls in Ghana. Most scholars, particularly in the last decade, have turned to focus on other dimensions of *Dipo* initiation rite. Ostrow (2011), for instance, focuses on *Dipo* process in its traditional form and other rites of passage among the Manya-Krobo (Odumase). The study by Agra and Gbadegbe (2014) is concentrated on the dresses or costume of the initiates during the ceremony. Glozah and Lawani (2014), on the other hand, compare *Dipo* rite and *Russ* celebration in Norway in reference to social change

and modernity. A more recent study by Abbey et al., (2021) was conducted to understand the differences in psychological distress among the initiated and un-initiated young girls in Manya-Krobo.

This, notwithstanding, the few studies that have focused on the relevance of *Dipo* womanhood rite in the last decade, based their arguments on value judgement as little empirical and theoretical evidence were used to establish cogent arguments on the issue. The study by Narh (2017), which the current study relied on extensively, is one of the few works that has concentrated on the relevance of *Dipo* initiation rite in Yilo-Krobo in recent years. The current study expands on the work of Narh (2017), by employing empirical and theoretical evidence to comprehend the relevance of *Dipo* or otherwise in contemporary times. In addition, the literature on the regulatory role of *Dipo* womanhood rite on sexual behaviour have given little attention to the different categories of initiates in the community: early initiates, late initiates and the un-initiates (Langmagne et al., 2018), which is the focus of the current study. This is important because their initiation status is likely to affect their sexual behaviour.

From the foregoing discussion, the current study assesses the mediating role of *Dipo* on the relationship between individual background characteristics and sexual debut of young girls.

Objectives of the Study

The overarching aim of this study is to assess the mediating role of *Dipo* on the relationship between individual socio-demographic, economic, household, and other characteristics, and sexual debut (early or late initiation of sex) of

young girls in the 21st Century in Yilo-Krobo, Ghana. The specific objectives are the following:

- Describe the historical importance and origins of *Dipo* rite.
- Investigate the perceptions of the *Dipo* womanhood rite among old adults.
- Examine the relevance of *Dipo* initiation.
- Evaluate the effects of female initiation status on young girls' sexual behaviour.
- Critically examine the control mechanisms of *Dipo* womanhood rite on early sexual debut in contemporary times in Yilo-Krobo.

Research Questions

The current study is guided by the following research questions:

- What is the historical importance and origin of *Dipo* among indigenes?
- What perceptions do older adults have about *Dipo* rites?
- Is *Dipo* relevant in contemporary times?
- Does the initiation status of young girls affect their sexual behaviour?
- Does *Dipo* control young girls against early sexual debut?

Hypotheses of the Study

Based on the above objectives, the study formulated the following hypotheses:

H₁: Early-initiated young girls are more likely to have an early sexual debut compared to late-initiated young girls.

H₂: Young girls who will never go through the initiation are more likely to be exposed to sexual activity prior to marriage compared to the initiated young girls.

Significance of the Study

Dipo womanhood rite is relevant in addressing promiscuity, however, the initiation of toddlers in recent times has projected it as a license to engage in early sexual debut. This has motivated the study to assess the mediating function of *Dipo* regarding the relationship between individual characteristics and sexual debut (early or late initiation of sex).

Also, a few, but growing studies on indigenous culture and marriage in Ghana, especially have endeavoured to explore the relevant role of *Dipo* womanhood rite on young girls' sexual behaviour in recent times. Nonetheless, the relationship would be better established or understood if more attention is given to the mediating role of the rite between individual's socio-economic characteristics and sexual behaviour.

Again, *Dipo* womanhood rite has been practiced by the people of Krobo for many centuries, however, perhaps due to the negative connotations attached to the rite in recent times, current studies in the area has been limited. The current study explores anthropological/sociological theory and analysis to advocate sexual ethics among indigenous people and understanding of indigenous culture and sexual conduct. The focus of the study would, therefore, be useful for traditionalists, Pastors, researchers, students, and individuals who desired to be exposed to values of Africa culture.

Delimitation of the Study

The *Dipo* custom is observed in varied forms by the Adangme tribes, which include the *Se* (Shais), Ningos and Krobos in Ghana. However, the *Dipo* custom has remained famous, and it is strictly observed by the Krobos (Lartey, 2014; Mate-Kole, 1955; Steegstra, 2005). Presently, the Krobo area is divided

into two traditional states: Manya or Eastern Krobo who reside around Agormanya and Odumase in the Lower Manya-Krobo Municipality and Yilo or Western Krobo who live in Somanya and its suburbs in the Yilo-Krobo Municipality (GSS, 2014; Wilson, 1987).

The selection of Yilo-Krobo was therefore purposive. However, it was informed by the fact that the Yilo-Krobo is one group that has preserved the traditional form of the rite even when it was proscribed by the colonial government in 1892 in the Krobo traditional areas (Huber, 1993; Steegstra, 2005). Aside from the chieftaincy and political systems developed first in Yilo-Krobo, the womanhood rite ceremonies also started first in Yilo Krobo (Henige, 1974; Narh, 2017). Thus, during the time they were living on the Krobo Mountain around 1600s, the ritual known as “*Yiewi ahe dumi*” (literally “bathing for young ladies”) was performed by Yilo-Krobo for young girls “who have seen their first menstrual blood into womanhood” (Narh, 2017, p. 89). The rite used to take place at the *Okwe* stream under the *Nako deity*, the earth goddess or fertility deity of the *Bajebi* clan of *Bonya* division of Yilo State. However, there were no elaborations attached to the ceremony until the seventeenth century when the womanhood ceremony became known as *Dipo* and was observed by the Yilo- and Manya-Krobo under a new deity. The new deity known as *Kloweki* became the goddess and fertility deity and was worshipped by the Krobo (Huber, 1993; Narh, 2017).

Again, the initiation rite among the Krobo ethnic group have been largely researched by both indigenous and seasoned non-indigenous anthropologists and sociologists. These writers have mainly concentrated on Manya-Krobo (Narh, 2017). For instance, prolific writers like Steegstra (2005)

explained *Dipo* womanhood rite largely from Manya-Krobo perspective, while Ostrow (2011) and more recently, Abbey et al. (2021) concentrated on Manya-Krobo *Dipo* celebration. The only study so far that concentrated on *Dipo* rite among Yilo-Krobo, perhaps, was done by Johnson Narh (2017) who is an indigene of Yilo-Krobo. The study by Narh (2017) focuses on the socio-cultural and historical background of Yilo-Krobo and how *Dipo* is celebrated by the people from the past to present. In the light of the foregoing discussion, the selection of the communities in Yilo-Krobo to explore the urban and rural dynamics with respect to the relevance or otherwise of *Dipo* celebration is significant.

Study Limitations

The study was not without limitations owing to the timing of the survey and financial constraints. The field work started in July 2020 at the time the novel pandemic coronavirus (COVID-19) was high among Ghanaians and the people of Yilo-Krobo Municipality was no exception. Against this backdrop, several approaches were devised to reach participants, but most of them could not achieve the desired results. Eventually, research assistants (RAs) resorted to the face-to-face method, which was initially deemed a bit risky because researchers had to visit and interview respondents on a one-on-one basis. The RAs were therefore asked to strictly adhere to the COVID-19 protocols, particularly, the wearing of face mask, use of sanitizer, social distancing, and washing of hands regularly.

Furthermore, responses to some questions like socio-economic status (SES) and religious affiliation were self-reported without much probing to find out the extent they practice their faith. However, follow-up questions like

household size, parents/guardian's occupation and the age at *Dipo* initiation, reasons for initiation or not, believe in traditional or Christian prayers when there is a problem etc. validated their answers.

Additionally, there was dearth of literature on the *Dipo* rite in the Yilo-Krobo traditional area. The researcher, therefore, relied heavily on the interview results and similar studies that were undertaken among the Akan and Manya-Krobo in Ghana and other countries. Also, the researcher is not a native of Yilo-Krobo. Hence, the services of interpreters and contact persons were employed to conduct the key informant interviews and to get to the different groups of the initiates identified in the Municipality.

Definitions of Terms

The World Health Organization (WHO) defines young girls and boys as those aged between 10 and 24 (WHO, 1999). However, this study concentrates on young girls aged 15-24 years, which is a widely used definition for youth by WHO. The selection of this age group for young girls in the study, however, is deliberate since it recognizes the fact that it is the age at which girls in traditional societies often know their initiation status (Anarfi, 2003; Sackey, 2001).

Early sexual debut is defined as initiating first sexual intercourse before the age of 16 years old. This is because, in Ghana, having sex with a person below the age of 16 years is prohibited, be it consensual or otherwise according to the Ghana Criminal Code (amendment) Act, 2003 (Act 646) (Amoako, 2022).

Womanhood Rites is referred to as rites performed for young girls who have reached marriageable age to prepare them to assume their roles as women in their society. This rite is therefore, meant to change a girl into woman. During the initiation, they are kept in a secluded *Dipo* camps and thought all aspects of

womanhood and motherhood behaviours, including cooking, dressing, sexuality, agriculture, societal norms and taboos, personal hygiene, menstruation and how to deal with future husband and in-laws (Rasing, 2021).

Initiated in this study, refers to young girls who have passed through the *Dipo* rites. These were two categories: early initiated and late initiated. The former refers to those exposed to the initiation below 12 years old, and some of them were infants who didn't understand their initiation. The latter refers to those who were initiated at 12 years of age or older and are regarded as mature since they were developed, experienced menstruation, and understood and appreciated the process of their initiation.

Uninitiated in this study refers to girls who were not initiated and had no intention to undergo the initiation at the time of the survey.

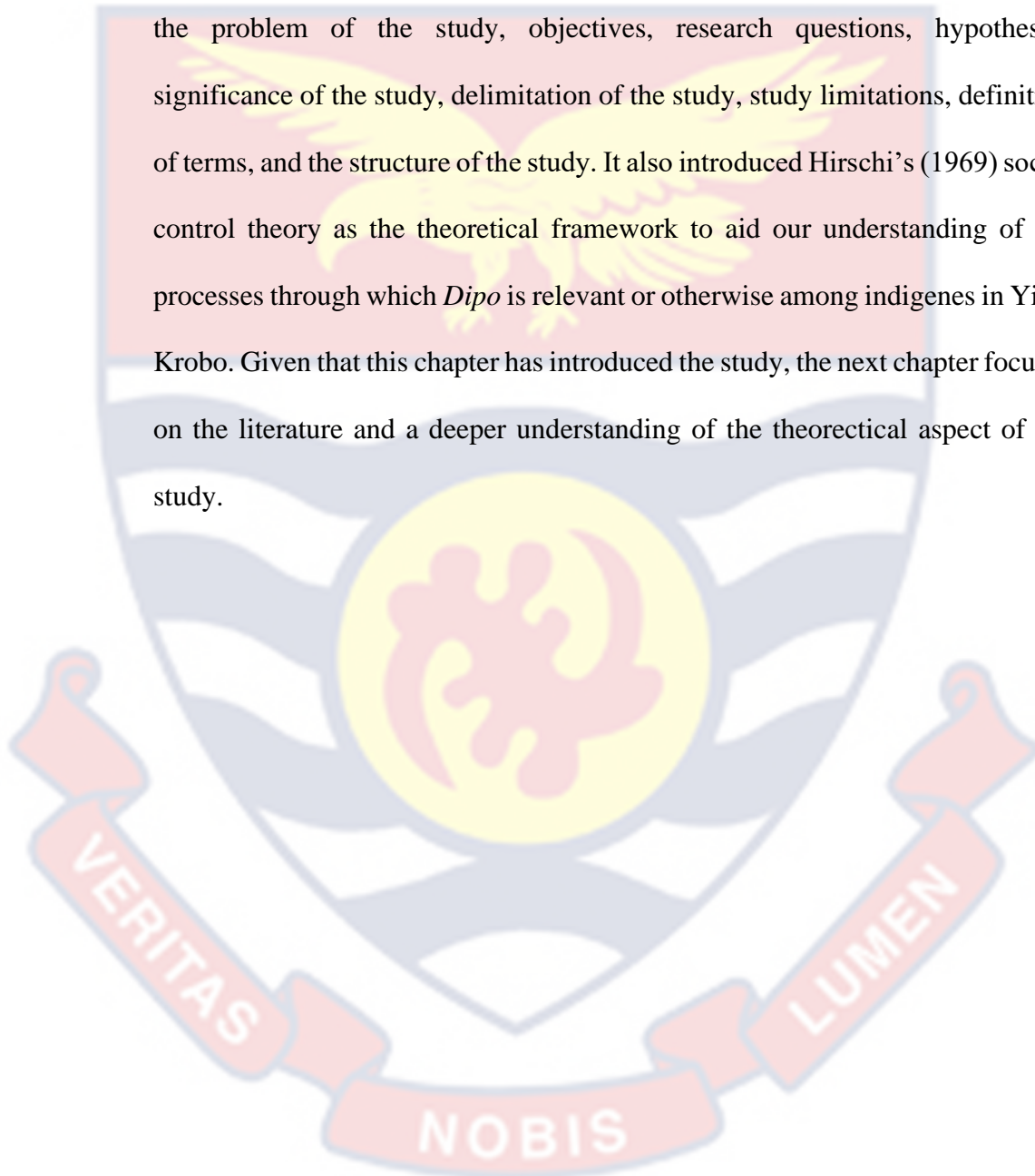
Structure of the Study

The study is organized into eight chapters. Chapter One deals with the background, the problem of the study, objectives, and the hypotheses as well as the significance of the study. The literature review, theoretical review and the conceptual framework of the study are discussed in Chapter Two. Chapter Three presents the brief profile of the study communities, philosophical underpinning the study and the research methodology. Chapter Four contains the socio-economic characteristics, perceptions and the historical importance and origins of *Dipo* womanhood rite among the people of Krobo. Chapter Five discusses the initiation categories of females and their sexual behaviour. Chapter Six considers the relevance of *Dipo* practice in contemporary times. Chapter Seven focuses on the mediating role of *Dipo* and its social control mechanisms on early

sexual debut. Lastly, but not least, the summary of major findings, conclusions and recommendations of the study are discussed in Chapter Eight.

Summary of Chapter

The general introduction of the current thesis dealt with the background, the problem of the study, objectives, research questions, hypotheses, significance of the study, delimitation of the study, study limitations, definition of terms, and the structure of the study. It also introduced Hirschi's (1969) social control theory as the theoretical framework to aid our understanding of the processes through which *Dipo* is relevant or otherwise among indigenes in Yilo-Krobo. Given that this chapter has introduced the study, the next chapter focuses on the literature and a deeper understanding of the theoretical aspect of the study.



CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This chapter presents the review of related literature as well as the theoretical and conceptual framework of the study. The key issues discussed are the relevance of the practice and some activities marking the *Dipo* rite, the significance of the celebration of womanhood rites in some traditional societies in general and among the Krobo ethnic group of Ghana in particular, and the mediating role of *Dipo* female initiation among background characteristics, social control variables and early sexual debut. It also sheds light on the theoretical perspectives that aid our understanding of the processes through which young girls initiate early sexual debut. In addition, the chapter throws light on the profile of the Krobo ethnic group. This is discussed with respect to the meaning of Krobo, the origins of Dangme and the people of Krobo as well as their migration routes, the chieftaincy institution, and their life on the Krobo Mountain.

Relevance of Womanhood Rites in Traditional Societies

In most Latin American countries as well as among Latin American migrants in the US, the traditional celebration of a girl's fifteenth birthday is important. This ceremony called "quinceanera" or "fiesta quinceanera" is important because it symbolizes the end of childhood for girls and announces marriage (Cavagnoud, 2013). Traditionally, the "quinceanera" is celebrated either at the girl's home or in a rented room. On such an occasion, the young girl is the only one who wears a white, blue or green smart dress, a symbol of purity that is bought for her especially for the occasion. However, in some

Catholic families, the young girl and her family members attend a thanksgiving mass at Church, where she must “leave her bouquet in honour of the Virgin Mary” before she leaves for the traditional celebration (Cavagnoud, 2013, p.4).

Similarly, a traditional rite called *Mogi* was celebrated to help adolescent girls in Japan to smoothly change to adulthood. Through this custom, girls were taught about their responsibilities as adults, customs, and history of their society and how to become a good wife and mother. However, in modern times, *Mogi* has been abandoned and the *Coming-of-Age Ceremony* is now officially celebrated to mark young girl’s transition into adulthood. This ceremony, which is celebrated yearly on January 15, involved some of the past *Mogi* activities. For instance, girls wear *Furisode*, bright *Kimono* with long sleeves, which is a traditional dress for unmarried women among the Japanese and some of the girls visit *Shinto* Shrines for purification ceremonies (Batkalova, 2016).

In South Africa, the *Vatsonga/Manchangana* communities celebrate the “vukhomba” initiation rite for girls who have reached menarche. Thus, the “vukhomba”, or a period of seclusion or “being in the hut” is performed for a girl any time after her first menses. However, initiates are prohibited to talk about the “vukhomba” rite with men and un-initiated females. While the un-initiated females felt that “vukhomba” is dangerous for the girls and must be stopped, the initiates see it in a positive light. They claim that it is one of the few cultural practices that espouses the African culture and serves as an informal school where the young initiate girls are taught by other women about the “Facts of Life” (Maluleke & Troskie, 2003).

In the same vein, many Ovambo communities of Northern Namibia initiate young women in the “efundula” and “olufuko” rituals. The “efundula”

and “olufuko” are important because they are celebrated to openly transform young initiates into adulthood. More importantly, after this ceremony the initiate is regarded as an adult woman and could therefore give birth legitimately even if she has no husband. However, in the past, an un-initiated young girl who became pregnant was perceived to be a ‘girl’ and was killed by burning (Becker, 2004; Kuoppala, 2018).

A similar rite exists in Zambia where the initiation of girls usually occurs after the girl has come of age and seen her menstruation. This is done amidst singing, dancing, and displaying clay models (*mbusa*) as a form of displaying their rich traditional values. This initiation is important for the girls because it marks the passage from childhood to womanhood. Besides, the girl is considered an adult woman in the community only when she has experienced the rite. It was an offence for an un-initiated to get pregnant, because, in the past, both the young girl and her baby were killed or abandoned (Rasing, 2003).

Again, a womanhood rite known as *Akpema* is celebrated for young girls aged between 16 and 20 years among the Kabire ethnic group of Northern Togo. Every year, young girls from the Kabye ethnic group who are of their age must undergo the initiation to transit them to womanhood. As part of the initiation ceremony, a girl is taken to the sacred forest to sit on a virginity stone to prove that she has never engaged in any sexual activity. The girl who is successful brings honour to her parents, because it is a sign that she has been well trained. On the other hand, if a girl was found to be pregnant, or had had an abortion, it is a shame to her family and the bride price usually presented by the family of the prospective husband to the girl’s family would be reduced (Broude, 1975; Mair, 1969).

The “Tugbewowo” (ie. Celebration of Beauty) is a womanhood rite among the Dodome of Volta Region of Ghana. It is a rite to climax the beauty of young girls who have come of age and have strong moral values to transit them unto womanhood. In the past, the rite was a traditional resource used to protect the reproductive health of young girls. The fact is that the rite motivated parents to keep reminding their daughters not to deviate from society’s expectations by remaining chaste till after they had passed through the rite. Moreover, the rite was used to teach young girls about womanhood, motherhood, and their role as women in the society (Hevi-Yiboe, 2003).

Among some patrilineal societies of Ghana, particularly, the Anlo ethnic group of the Volta Region, young girls participated in a *Nudodo* ceremony to announce that she has reached the age of marriage (Anarfi, 2003; Nukunya, 1969). Also, some ethnic groups in the Volta Region and other societies in Ghana, subjected brides to virginity test before marriage (Sackey, 2001). In this case, if the woman passed the test, it is a victory not only for the girl, but also for the relatives present who will be presented with a white cloth as a symbol of victory. But should the girl fail the test, it is a shame to her family and the bride price usually presented by the family of the prospective husband to the girl’s family would be reduced (Broude, 1975; Mair, 1969). The suggestion is that these rites were instituted to restrain the sexual behaviour options of pubescent girls than males in most patrilineal societies in Ghana. This could be because in patrilineal societies, paternity is traced through the father’s side. Hence a child whose paternity is not known is regarded as illegitimate (Nukunya, 2003). Consequently, they tend to fear more about pre-marital pregnancy than their counterparts from the matrilineal societies where children born out-of-wedlock

are regarded as automatic members of the matrilineage (Broude, 1975). The significance of the initiation in patrilineal societies is further projected by a study that underscores that even parents who are not in favour of *Dipo* initiating, will not agree for their sons to marry to a girl who has not passed through the initiation. This is because, girls who had not gone through *Dipo* rites are regarded as unclean and cursed (Schroeder & Danquah, 2000).

The Mediating Role of Womanhood Rites on the relationship between Background Characteristics and Early Sexual Debut

Some previous studies have attributed the cause of early sexual debut among unmarried young girls to some of these modifications such as reduction in age of initiation, reduction in the duration of the initiation and a general breakdown of norms and values, which was used to regulate sexual conduct in the past (Feyisetan & Pebley, 1999; Hevi-Yiboe, 2003; Nerquaye-Tetteh, 1996; Ostrow, 2011). In a study that adopted data from the first known national survey in Nigeria on pre-marital sexuality among women, including young girls aged 15-24 years in urban communities, Feyisetan and Pebley (1999) observed that eventhough pre-marital sexual activity is rife, the incidence is more prevelant among those from nontraditional backgrounds. In an exploratory study by Hevi-Yiboe (2003), she opined that the *Tugbewowo* rite of the people of Dodome was observed for unmarried adolescent young girls who have remained virgins. However, according to the writer, *Tugbewowo* rite has been stopped in the wake of Christianity, urbanization, modernization, migration, and Western education resulting in high incidence of pre-marital sexual activity and its associated challenges in the community. In a participatory study with the local people in Odumase Krobo, the capital city of Manya Krobo in the Eastern Region of

Ghana, Ostrow (2011) re-echoed the same sentiments that in the olden days, the punishments associated with *Dipo* were strictly applied and was believed to have curbed the incidence of pre-marital sex. This is because, for fear of being punished, most first sexual activity often occurred at a time most young girls had passed through the initiation and were married (Sackey, 2001). In a qualitative study by Appiah-Sekyere and Awuah-Nyamekye (2012) where informal interviews were held with the local chiefs, queen mothers, opinion leaders, community elders, traditional priests and priestesses and ordinary residents and another study by Crentsil (2015) maintain that in the past when some indigenous practices such as *Bragoro* among the Akans in Ghana were strictly observed, issues such as teenage pregnancy were very minimal. But currently, most of such traditional practices are no longer effective or have been replaced by foreign practices, which appear to be less effective, and thereby leading to widespread of HIV & AIDS and teenage pregnancy cases among the youth in recent years.

Nonetheless, in focus group discussions (FGDs) with parents and caregivers in Somanya, Langmagne et al. (2018) found that the initiation of toddlers instead of teens in contemporary times is exposing some girls to early sexual debut that heightens their exposure to STIs, including HIV and AIDS. This is partly because, once a young girl is initiated, she can engage in sex at any time she wishes and would not be sanctioned even if she conceived outside a properly sanctioned marriage. In another dimension, a study among a low-resource settings of Agbogbloshie in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana, revealed that young adults who are away from home, are likely to be exposed to early sexual debut and other risky sexual behaviours (Cassels et al., 2014).

This is largely because they are separated from parental control, supervision and the socio-cultural restrictions placed on sexuality in their rural areas (Anarfi, 1993; Brockerhoff & Biddlecom, 1999).

Effects of Female Initiation Status on Young Girls' Sexual Behaviour

In a strict and conservative societies where virginity is valued, unmarried young girls, especially are expected to preserve their chastity until they go through an initiation rite to announce that they are matured and old enough for marriage (Arnfred, 2010; Rooyen & Hartell, 2010). Among the Swazi people, a custom known as *Umcwasho* is celebrated for unmarried young females as old as 22 years old to control their sexual behaviour. This custom is strictly performed for unmarried young girls who are virgins at the time of undergoing the initiation. A girl who fails to observe the norms governing the *Umcwasho* custom is humiliated and made to pay a heavy fine, equivalent to the head of a cattle (Rooyen & Hartell, 2010). Similarly, the *Efundula* among the Owambo of Northern Namibia, is a female initiation observed to transform female adolescents into adulthood. It is only through the *Efundula* initiation that a girl is regarded as an adult who can give birth even if she's not legitimately married (Becker, 2004). With structured questionnaires, FGDs and newspaper reports as the main sources of data, Sackey (2001) observed that young girls in most African societies passed through the initiation between 12 and 16 years old and they are expected to remain virgins prior to the initiation and not to engage in any sexual activity after the initiation until they are married.

As one of the patrilineal societies in Ghana where virginity is valued, the Krobo ethnic group instituted *Dipo* womanhood rite to mainly ensure that young girls between the age of 14 and 20 years protect their chastity until

marriage (Anarfi, 2003; Glozah & Lawani, 2014; Nukunya, 2003; Odonkor, 1971; Sackey, 2001). In the pre-colonial times, the punishments were strictly applied and were believed to have curbed the incidence of pre-marital sex (Anarfi, 2003; Ostrow, 2011; Sackey, 2001). However, scholars have indicated that in contemporary times little kids are allowed to go through the initiation, which deviates from how the initiation was performed in the past. As a result, the practice is no longer recognized as a preparation for good marriage, but a license to engage in early sexual activity in recent times (Anarfi, 2003; Langmagne et al., 2018). This is because, most initiates understand the initiation to mean that they can engage in sex immediately after their initiation since they are no longer regarded as children (Munthali & Zulu, 2007).

Relevance of Dipo Womanhood Rite Activities in Contemporary times

In the pre-colonial times, the Dipo rite shared the three-stage process of Rite of Passage as identified by Van Gennep (1960), namely separation, transition, and incorporation. During the time the Krobo were living on the Hill (or Krobo Hill), young girls aged 12 years or when the maturity signs appeared on a young girl, they were separated from their parents and family members for about a year or more (Azu, 1955; Steegstra, 2005). They were kept in a secret camp or “Dipo room” under the strict tutelage of the priestess of Nana Kloweki and were taken care of by women who had vast experience as far as the celebration of Dipo rite is concerned. At the camp, the initiates were restricted to eat Krobo dishes, such as alamua (water Yam), hye (white yam), millet and maize porridge, special types of fishes and vegetables or soup of cassava leaves. However, they were forbidden to eat plantains, cassava, sugarcane, groundnuts,

and cocoyam, because these were food introduced by the Akan people (Huber, 1993).

The next stage is what Van Gennep (1960) referred to as the transitional stage. In the past when there was no formal education, the period of confinement was used to instruct or train young adults to assume their role as women in their family and community (Odonkor, 1971). The instructional or transitional stage involved both social and religious aspects (Teyegaga, 1985). The social stage involved the training of the initiates on personal hygiene, farming techniques, firewood collection and reservation, how to be a good cook, fetch water, wash clothes at the riverside and to take care of children and in-laws. They also went through a series of tests by the priestesses of Nana Kloweki to confirm their ability to perform household chores, their maturity for marriage and ability to bear children. Each test received a mark either on the initiates' wrists, bellies, or on the back of their waists to signify that the girl had really undergone the rite successfully.

The religious stage involved the climbing of a sacred rock known as Totroku or Tegbete, and quoting Bell (1911), Marijke Steegstra described the sacred stone as "a curiously shaped rock of considerable size. It rose out of the ground like a large regular mound, its sides fairly steep and perfectly smooth". This climbing is done amid dancing, drumming, and singing. The Totroku or Tegbete was believed to reveal pregnancy, because an un-initiated pregnant girl would fall during the climbing of the rock. If it is confirmed, the girl would be severely punished or banished from her home (Steggstra, 2005, p.89).

Van Gennep (1960) refers to the third stage as incorporation where the young girls were brought back from isolation to rejoin the community as new

personalities. After this stage, initiates were permitted to marry (Schlegel & Barry, 1980; Nnazor & Robinson, 2016) and bear children. In the pre-colonial days, the incorporation or outdoor stage was when the girl passed through the test and the entire initiation successfully. It was a victory not only for the girl, but also for the relatives. After the initiation, perhaps as a means of attracting potential suitors for the initiates, the men were given the privilege to carry the initiates on their shoulders from the shrines (Narh, 2017).

In the past, the rites were strictly performed for young girls who had reached marriageable age who were taken through the above activities for over a year (Anarfi, 2003). However, in contemporary times, the duration has not only been reduced drastically, but toddlers are also involved in the initiation as well (Langmagne et al., 2018; Narh, 2017). Thus, the initiation of toddlers in contemporary times is a deviation from the past where the rites were meant to basically restrain young girls from engaging in pre-marital sex (Rooyen & Hartell, 2010). Copious studies in recent times have linked the recent widespread of promiscuous behaviour among young girls in the area to the initiation of toddlers since they may be too young to understand and appreciate the dictates of *Dipo*.

According to Steegstra (2005) as far back as 1877, girls aged 6 and 7 were seen taking part in the initiation. Whereas Steegstra (2005) associated this phenomenon to the influence of Christianity since some parents would want to initiate their daughters at an early age and baptise them in the church later, Fanning (1999) attributed it to reduction in cost. In contemporary times, the queen mother of Yilo-Krobo has observed how this phenomenon is problematizing *Dipo* as a womanhood rite and has advocated eight years as the

minimum age of initiation. Her decision was influenced by the fact that girls aged eight years in contemporary times are mature enough to comprehend the importance of the initiation and can start to menstruate and become sexually active (Steedstra, 2005). Yet, presently, some parents are observing the initiation for their daughters as young as 4 years or less (Langmagne et al., 2016) for various reasons including for the avoidance of shame (Shroeder and Danquah, 2000). Probably, these parents were able to circumvent the system due to the multiplicity of the sacred stones, as each clan (*kasi*) possesses its own and the priests or priestesses managing them take tax from them to take care of themselves as well as managing the shrine (Huber, 1993).

With respect to the duration of *Dipo* which has been reduced to about ten days (Huber, 1993), and more recent reports opined that the duration has further been reduced to about four days (kasapafmonline.com 2020). Scholars have linked these modifications in contemporary times to the influence of colonialization and Christianity (Huber, 1993; Steegstra, 2005). But it may be realized that the colonial administration of Gold Coast (now Ghana) banned *Dipo* in 1892 (Huber, 1993; Steegstra, 2005). During that time, the elders of Krobo, led by the Kono of Manya-Krobo, Emmanuel Mate Kole, who was a Basel Mission-trained teacher, substituted *Dipo* with the *Bobum* ceremony. The *Bobum* ceremony existed already but was done separately for newcomers and slaves in Krobo, and it lasted for eight days (Steedstra, 2005). The *Bobum* was seen as the final stage ('the outdoorings') part of the *Dipo* ceremony since it is focused mainly on dressing up the girls and showing them to the public that they have been initiated and are ready for marriage. Though some families at the time secretly performed *Dipo* for their daughters under the guise of the night and

organised *Bobum* for them in public, *Bobum* was popular among some people since they thought that it had done away with the fetish part of *Dipo* (Huber, 1993; Steegstra, 2005).

At the death of Kono Emmanuel Mate Kole in 1939, *Dipo* was restored with “all the essential rites still adhered to” (Huber, 1993 p. 166; Steegstra, 2005). However, the duration for the celebration was reduced from over a year to about a week (Huber, 1993). Probably, the Traditional Council yielded to this reduction in duration, not only because they wanted it to be close to that of *Bobum*, but also for the sake of continuation since the latter has been celebrated by the people for a long time when *Dipo* was forbidden.

Even though there have been some drastic changes regarding the age of the initiates and duration for *Dipo* celebration presently, it is reported that all the essential rites have been preserved (Huber, 1993). As a result, the present celebration included the following activities:

On the first day, which is normally a Thursday, the about-to-be initiated girls report to the camp superintended by old women who have experience in *Dipo* initiation process and the old women would mark the initiates' bodies with clay. Afterwards, the old women would replace all the beads on their body with a single reddish bead (le) on their waist. Then another activity known as *yisi-pomi* (shaving the lower part of the initiate's head) is done by the old women with a sharpened razor (Narh, 2017) for the young girls. Afterwards, the old women would dress the young girls in a loin cloth in such a way that both the front and back side of the cloth reach the ground. Later, the old women would spread the roan antelope skin on the ground in her house and the girls are given their first test of purity by asking them to stand on the animal's skin three times.

It is believed that if a woman is pregnant before her initiation and she mounts the antelope's skin will go crazy (Narh, 2017).

Subsequent activities include the role play by the old women to assist young girls to prepare a millet beer (*gmeda*). The millet is a mainstay food of the Adangme ethnic groups, and the millet beer is their traditional beer (Huber, 1993). The millet is cooked in pots on firewood in the old women's kitchen and while it is boiling on the fire, the initiates dance around it while singing lively *ha* tunes. It is believed that if a pot is broken while boiling on the fire, is a "sign and proof that one of the girls is hiding a pregnancy" (Huber, 1993, p.170).

On a Saturday, the would-be initiates are dressed in the *loin* cloth and marched to the riverside such as *Onuma* or *Srado* streams in the community to bath and cleanse them for the rest of the ceremonies (Narh, 2017). On that day, the millet beer is first used by the priest for libation to ask for the deity's blessing and protection for the initiates. Then, the rest of the millet beer is served by the initiates to their own fathers and relatives and the main food eaten to celebrate the day is "plantain fufu" and palm nut soup (Narh, 2017, p.90; Ostrow, 2011) amid singing and dancing. In the evening, a black castrated he-goat would be slaughtered and used to cleanse the feet of each of the young girls to protect them from any misfortune against their health and future conceptions. According to the oral history of Krobo, in the past each young girl received a castrated he-goat from her father. However, in recent times, the old woman purchases one he-goat on behalf of all the initiates under her tutelage to cleanse the feet of each of the young girls.

Then on a Sunday, which is the climax of the ceremony, the traditional porridge meal that is "considered as the true Krobo diet" (Huber, 1993, p.171)

with meat is served in the morning. Later in the day, they will march to the stone shrine (*tegbete*) wearing a long piece of loin cloth that touches the ground both at the front and back sides. The costume exposes part of their body to the public as a testimony for their “purity” and “originality” (Narh, 2017, p.95) and also to differentiate them from the other girls. An elderly woman leads the solemn procession on bare-feet and none of them is supposed to wear a hat or footwear. While at the sacred shrine, the young girls are assisted by the old women to lower their bodies on the sacred stone three times (Steegstra, 2005). Afterwards, they would march back to an enthusiastic crowd waiting for them to carry the newly initiated girls on shoulders high or strap them at their back and run safely back to the old women’s house (Ostrow, 2011) to continue with the ceremony. In the evening, the initiates are elegantly dressed in expensive traditional cloth such as *kente* or *dumas*, and adorned with beautiful and colourful beads, and jewels to match. They are paraded before a huge crowd to portray them as worthy women of Krobo land and are showered with gifts such as money (Odonkor, 1971) and other expensive items. During the outdoor ceremony, the newly initiates will perform the *klama* dance to entertain the crowd present to bring the ceremony to an end (Lartey, 2014).

The Profile of Krobo Ethnic Group

The Meaning of Krobo

According to the Krobo oral history, the name Krobo originated from an Akan word Kro-obo-so-foo (literary meaning, the people dwelling on the mountain/rock). But the colonial masters anglicised it to Krobo, perhaps for easy pronunciation and it invariably became the name for that ethnic group. Today, the Krobo, a patrilineal group are part of the Dangme people in Ghana

of West Africa. They are found in the Southern part of Ghana, and they formed the third largest population beside Akan and Ewe ethnic groups (Fiorgbor et al., 2019) in Ghana.

The Origin of Dangme

Another oral history of the Krobo has it that the Dangme state were originally made up of seven ethnic groups namely Ada, Ningo, Prampram, Kpone, Shai, Osudoku, Krobo (Yilo Krobo and Manya Krobo). Their neighbouring ethnic groups in the Gold Coast (now Ghana), found them as a strong and a unified force that they referred to them as *Ada-wo* (meaning warriors) and their language also became known as *ada-wo-gbe* (meaning the voice/language of the warriors). With passage of time, the identity, language, and cultural values of the Krobo have changed. For instance, their ethnic name was first changed to *Ada-gbe*, then to *Ada-me*, and later to *Adangme* and today, they are known as Dangme (Azu 1926, p.14). Presently, the Dangme is the native language of Yilo- and Manya-Krobo, and it belongs to the Western Kwa language family (Dakubu, 1982).

The Origin of the People of Krobo

Like the case with many ethnic groups in Ghana, different accounts have been given for the origin of the people of Krobo to their present settlement in Ghana. The two major schools of thought with regard to the origin of the people of Krobo have been the Orientalists and Africanists (Narh, 2017: 31).

According to Narh (2017) the Orientalist school of thought, which included scholars such as Danquah (1944), Meyerowitz (1958), and Balmer (1925), are of the view that the Dangmes migrated as one group from as far as the Tigris and Euphrates Valley in the present-day Iraq (Narh 2017: 32). More

recently, a study by Fiorgbor et al. (2019, p.26), has confirmed that the Dangmes were the people originally referred to as *Leshem* (corrupted later to *Le*) or *Laish* (later corrupted to *La*) based on their overt nature, which identified them as lions and they lived in a city far north of Ancient Palestine until they were conquered by the Dan tribe of Israel (see Judges 18). As a result of the Danites invasion, the people of Dangme, also called *La li*, had to move away from their homeland in search of safety. They passed through Sudan and arrived in *Sameh*, near Niger where they settled for some time. They later moved from *Sameh* to settle on the Krobo Mountain in the Gold Coast (now Ghana).

On the other hand, the Africanist school of thought including scholars such as Ward (1949), and Bourret (1948) also claim that the Dangmes and other ethnic groups in Ghana such as the Akans, migrated within African continent around the Chad-Benue area and not outside Africa (Narh 2017: 32). According to Omenyo (2001) and Reindorf (2007), the Dangme people migrated from *Sameh*, an Island situated between two rivers namely Efa and Kpola near Niger. However, due to frequent attacks from their neighbours, Azu (1926) claims that the Dangmes left *Sameh*, leaving Oyo and Dahome. They arrived at Akpe and later moved to Zugu, where they encountered *King Akpate Sukluku*. According to oral tradition, the King demanded human lives from the Dangmes before he would offer them passage through his settlement. As difficult as it was for the travellers to fulfill the King's request, *Nana Kloweki* gathered her people and sang praises to the king of *Zugu*. The praises pleased the King so much that he gave them unconditional access (Odonkor, 1971). They continued their journey until they found a haven on the Krobo Mountains in the Gold Coast (now Ghana).

Nonetheless, other linguistic and archeological evidence have been adduced by some scholars including Dakubu (1972), Elsbernd (1958) and Anquanda (1982) to disband the claim that the Dangmes (including the Gas) migrated to present day Ghana from external source. Thus, they claim that the Krobos inhabited the Accra Plains which is spread up to Yilo-Krobo in the present times. Linguistically, Dakubu (1972) for instance, argues that the dialects of Dangme and Krobo belong to the same language. This language is mainly found in Ghana and in Southern Togo, which may be attributed to the later migration of some Krobo people, and this might have brought about the variation in the Dangme language. In addition, archeological evidence by Anquandah (1982) also suggests that “Accra Plains was earlier inhabited by the aborigines around the first four millennia B.C”, and this “crystallized into village settlements by 500 A.D when Lorlorvor was settled and the Dangme core civilization started” (Narh 2017, pp. 32-33).

With the above narratives regarding the origins of the Krobo, the view of the orientalist school of thought seems more convincing. This view did not only explain how they met their goddess of fertility, *Nana Kloweki* along their journey from Judah, but it is also believed to give account on the genesis of how they came to value young girls’ chastity prior to marriage. This is because, as people originally from somewhere in Ancient Palestine, they might be conversant with the fate of the daughter of Jephthah who was sacrificed while she was still a virgin, which became a custom for virgin young girls in Israel to lament her fate each year (see Judges 11). Hence, to continue to identify with this custom in their new abode, *Nana Kloweki* and her elders introduced *Dipo*

rites to empower young girls to cherish their virginity as well as to give Krobo a unique identity.

Migration Routes of the Dangme

The oral history of the Krobo further indicates that the Dangme travelled as a unified La people through to *Zugu* to *Huatsi* and then to *Tuwo* in *Togolo*. They also stayed at *Tsamla* before leaving for *Kpesi* and later to *Atakpame* and then moved to *Agome*, where some of them chose to make it their permanent settlement. The rest of them crossed the Volta River and arrived at *Togolo* where they settled for some time before they continued to settle at *Kloyom* or Krobo Mountains. However, history has it that while staying in *Togolo*, the seven (7) Dangme groups separated into several groups (Odonkor, 1971; Wilson, 1987). Hence, they renamed the place as *Lolovo*, an Ewe word meaning ‘love is finished’ or separation. Wilson (1987) also supported this claim that the people of Dangme believed that their ancestors settled on the Krobo Mountain from *Lolovo* in *Togolo*. Consequently, they dwelled on the Krobo Mountain until they were forcefully ejected by the British colonial authorities in July 1892.

Life on the Krobo Mountain

The Krobo Mountain, also known as *Kloyo* is located at latitude 6.00 North and longitude 0.0250 East and it reaches a height of 358 m (Bedele 1988: 297-298). An Archaeologist, William Gblerkpor (2008/2009) explained that the Krobo Mountain is separated by a dry valley into two peaks, and it is divided into the south-western (Yilo-Krobo) and north-eastern (Manya-Krobo) by a gorge. He describes the Mountain as a rocky steep-sided terrain with pockets of gentle slope to flat portions (Gblerkpor, 2008/2009: p.154). The writer further indicated that the Krobo Mountain had a high population density during the 19th

century. He estimated that there were about 3000 people occupying the Mountain as at 1800s and this figure could increase when their relatives farming beneath the Mountain joined them to celebrate the *Dipo* rite and funerals on top of the Mountain.

According to the historical account of Krobo, while staying at *Lolovo*, they had frequent attacks from their enemies. To stay safe from their enemies, they constantly searched for a place and finally discovered the Mountain. However, before they went to occupy it, two renowned hunters namely *Moase* and *Madza* were tasked by the rest of the people of Krobo to find out whether the place was conducive for their settlement. The two hunters came back with a favourable report that the Mountain was indeed a suitable place for habitation. According to the oral history of Krobo, the two hunters later led a separate group to occupy the Mountain and each group settled on a different part of the Mountain. Thus, while *Moase* led the Manya-Krobo group, *Madza* also led the other group that settled at Susi, Bose, and Nowe. However, an anecdotal and empirical evidence suggest that the Yilo (full name is *No Yilo Lumo* meaning “the Governor or the governor of the land) were the first group to ascend the Krobo Hill and they gave the name “Manya” meaning “the outskirts of the town” or “late comers” to the Many people (Odonkor, 1971, p. 47).

Later, other groups joined the original two groups on the Krobo Mountain. These were the Ewe group known as Susui or Domeli and they came from Adome and the Bonya or Bose group also joined them (Narh, 2017). Moreover, after the Ntim Gyakari war in 1700s, the *Nyewe* group believed to be refugees from Denkyira (Wilson, 1987), migrated through *Maase* and *Dawu* under their leader, Padi Oketeku to join the other Krobo on the Mountain.

Chieftaincy Institution in Yilo-Krobo

According to the oral history of Yilo-Krobo, the secular principle of chieftaincy was introduced by the *Nyewe* people, who were the refugees from Denkyira in the Central Region of Ghana. The *Nyewe* chieftaincy system was based on the Akan chieftaincy system with stool, palanquin, and sword as part of the regalia (Wilson, 1987). Thus, the oral history of Krobo indicates that when the *Nyewe* people first arrived on the Mountain, the people they met there were practising pure priesthood (*oboasom*) where the priest/chief priest was not visible to the people, including visitors. On the other hand, the chieftaincy system brought by the *Nweye* group allowed their leaders to be more visible to all and sundry and this endeared them to the people. The oral history of Yilo-Krobo has it that around 1733, a war broke out between the Akwamu and Ogome. The elders of Ogome made one Padi Oketeku Akrobetto, the leader of the *Nyewe* group as the captain of the army. Eventually, Padi Oketeku Akrobetto-led army defeated the Akwamus. However, their victory was not prolonged as pressure was mounted on Ogome to settle some huge debts to their enemies, including the Akyems. The debt was eventually settled by the *Nyewe* group led by Padi Oketeku and their chieftaincy became a paramountcy.

However, the study by Narh (2017) gave a different account regarding how the *Nyewe* chieftaincy became the sole paramountcy in Yilo-Krobo. Thus, though the study by Narh (2017) recognized the diarchy system practiced by the Yilo-Krobo in the past, yet it accounted for the fact that the *Nyewe* chieftaincy became the sole paramountcy in Yilo, because the Ogome elders delayed in installing a new chief priest to replace a demised one. Narh (2017), explained that the diarchy system involved the *Gano* who was the head of the theocracy

with his office at Ogome, and a secular monarchical head who was referred to as *Kono* meaning “the one carried on shoulders or the champion in competition such as war” with his stool at Sra. This diarchy system was practised until 1874 when both the theocratic and secular heads died almost at the same time of smallpox disease. At this time, the elders of *Nyewe* installed a new *Kono* in 1876, but that of the *Gano* was delayed. Subsequently, the *Kono* office was recognized as the sole paramountcy of Yilo-Krobo in 1883 through the Native Jurisdiction Ordinance (Narh, 2017: 155, 161).

The Huza System of the Krobo

The Krobo ethnic group was described as energetic, intelligent, and hardworking people who were mostly cocoa farmers (Dickson & Benneh, 1970; Ward, 1948). While on the Mountain, they invented a unique system of acquiring land for farming from the surrounding areas. Thus, knowing that their land was very limited for their growing population, they introduced the *huza* system of land acquisition (Wilson, 1987). With this system, individual farmers usually from the same town would form a group under an elected leader and would ask a rich person to acquire a plot of land on their behalf. Having secured the land, the group would later pay the rich person and then share the land among themselves (Gblerkpor, 2008; 2009). By this method, the Krobo were able to acquire a vast area of Eastern Akim lands in Southern Ghana for the purpose of cultivating food crops, cocoa, and oil palm (Hill, 1961).

Descending from the Krobo Mountain

According to anecdotal and some empirical evidence, while living on the Mountain, the people of Krobo were practising human sacrifice that put great fear in their neighbouring ethnic groups (Huber, 1993). The oral history

accounts that during the pre-colonial days, the Akyem and other tribes had to travel through Somanya to Akuse, Amedica and surrounding areas to buy salt and other essential commodities. However, whenever they passed through the Krobo land, some people of Krobo would attack and kill them and sacrifice their bodies to *Nadu* and *Kotoklo* who were their war gods, and this was reported to the colonial government.

On July 7, 1892, Governor Griffiths in the company of a huge army stormed the Krobo Mountain and threw canon bombs to forcefully drive them from the Mountain top to settle them on the plains, which had remained their abode. Having succeeded in evicting the Krobos from the Mountain top, the British colonial governor subsequently criminalized the festivals and the practice of *Dipo* initiation rites for young women they deemed fetish by placing them under the banned customs mentioned in the Native Customs Ordinance (Steegstra, 2005, p.285).

Another oral history of the Krobo narrated that when the Krobo climbed the Mountain amid rampant attacks from their enemies, they piled up heavy stones and rocks in their premises, which they would roll down to kill their enemies, mainly the Ashantis when they attempted to attack them. As a result, the Ashantis were afraid to come near the Mountain. So, the Krobo lived on the Mountain peacefully for a long time until the British colonial authorities arrived in Gold Coast (Ghana) and later planned to settle them on the plains.

But, after many fruitless attempts by the British Governor to lure them to descend from their Mountain abode to settle on the plains, the Colonial Authority adopted a new strategy. This time they resolved to kidnap the women and wives of Krobo men whenever they descended to fetch water or to weed

their farms. This compelled their husbands to follow in search of their kidnapped wives. By this means, most of the Mountain dwellers were arrested by the colonial masters and kept on the plains. Meanwhile, while they were on the Mountain top, they had their farmlands on the plains. But it happened that some of their neighbouring towns were also farming near the same area. Hence, there arose some misunderstanding between Krobo and some of their neighbours, and the British Governor gave a ruling that henceforth each party should continue to farm and own the portions it had so far cultivated. This ruling was convincing enough to get the Krobo to descend from the Mountain to settle on the plains.

Theoretical Review

A deeper understanding and conceptualization of the processes through which the *Dipo* practice can mediate the relationship between young girls' socio-demographic and economic characteristics and early sexual debut can be captured under the social control viewpoint propounded by Hirschi (1969).

Social Control Theory

Social control theorists posit that individuals are prevented from committing crimes because of social controls (Durkheim, 1951; Hirschi, 1969; Kornhauser, 1978; Nye, 1958; Reiss, 1951; Sampson & Laub, 1993). In lieu of this, whenever these controls break down or weaken, deviance is likely to result (Reiss, 1951). This implies that crime will occur unless prevented by strong social and personal controls (Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990). Put differently, in a society where pre-marital sexual activity is forbidden or frowned upon, if certain social norms are not put in place to restrict individuals, there is the likelihood for the individuals to engage in the act. To this end, social controls

are important, because they basically help traditional societies to preserve and observe what they consider acceptable to them (Karacan & Bektas, 2016).

The most comprehensive extension of social control theory in contemporary times, which this study adopts, was propounded by Travis Hirschi (1969). Like earlier control theorists, Travis Hirschi postulates that individuals who are less bonded to conventional society may be more likely to turn to illegitimate behaviour than those who are strongly bonded. In other words, social control theory assumes that “delinquent acts result when an individual’s bond to society is weakened or broken” (Hirschi, 2002: 16). Hirschi, however, provides new ways to account for delinquent behaviour. He attributes the bond to conformist society to four interconnected elements, namely attachment, commitment, involvement, and belief.

Hirschi (1969) explains that attachment, the first strand, is the extent to which individuals have close affectional ties to others, especially those they admire and identify with. The theme of this first principle is that individuals, who are sensitive to the feelings of others and who are close to others, will be constrained from participating in delinquency because they will not want to hurt or embarrass those they like or admire. In contrast, those who lack such ties will not have to consider the feelings of others and will be at liberty to commit crime. Hirschi (1969) further explains that an adolescent’s attachment to parents and best friends is indicated by close supervision, monitoring and discipline, good communication, affection, respect, and the extent they would prefer to be like them.

Hirschi (1969) also refers to the second strand of the social bond as commitment. Commitment refers to the amount of time, energy, and money an

individual invests in conventional activities, such as obtaining an education, building up a business, and acquiring a reputation or virtue. The rationale underlying this principle is that the greater effort a person has committed to attaining success in conventional activities, the more risk the person stands at losing those achievements by engaging in deviance. Thus, one is prevented from committing crime, if the crime is likely to cost one's investment in conformity. Commitment to conventional activities is measured both by educational achievement (eg. desire to attain more than a high school education) and occupational aspirations and orientations.

With involvement, Hirschi (1969) argues that if individuals participate more in conventional activities, such as spending time with the family, meeting appointment deadlines and completing projects, they will be too busy to have time to engage in deviant behaviour. The tenet of this theme is that involvement in conventional activities may leave a little time for engaging in deviant behaviour.

By introducing belief, the fourth strand, Hirschi (1969) argues that individuals vary in the extent to which they believe in conventional behaviours. Thus, "...the less a person believes he should obey the rules, the more likely he is to violate them" (Hirschi, 1969: 26). By extension, social control theory argues that individuals who believe that conventional values and norms, such as respect for traditions, parents, teachers, and others are worthy may be less motivated to delinquent behaviour than those who lack them.

Nevertheless, Hirschi's (1969) social control theory has been criticised by several scholars. Thomas and Hepburn (1983) have criticised Hirschi's theory on the grounds that it does not explain upper world (white colour) crime;

it does not adequately account for the motivation to deviate; it ignores the deterrent effects of the law; it is being too individualist, and too conservative. Furthermore, the claim that parental attachment inhibits delinquency regardless of parental behaviour has been challenged. Jensen and Brownfield (1983) find in their study that even though attachment to straight or conservative parents controls drug use by adolescents, attachment to drug-using parents does not. Besides, a study by Krohn and Massey (1980) indicates that the social bonding variables of beliefs, attachment, and the combination of commitment/involvement are moderately related to delinquency, but more related to minor than serious delinquency.

Despite the criticisms, many studies have demonstrated support for the social control theory (Banyard et al. 2006; Sprott et al. 2005; Young & Vazsonyi 2011). In their study, Young and Vazsonyi (2011) for instance, examine the relationships among parenting factors (closeness, communication, support, and monitoring), peer deviance, and adolescents' risky behaviour, among rural African American youth. They observe that peer deviance was the only salient predictor of risky sexual behaviours. Additionally, Sprott et al. (2005) conducted their study among 1,956 Canadian youth and found that those who were strongly attached to school were less likely to involve in violent offending. The authors concluded that the important effect of school attachment in the lives of young girls and boys should not be minimized. Similarly, Banyard et al. (2006) also indicated in their study that school attachment, amongst other social control factors, protected young girls and boys from violent behaviour.

More recently, the social control theory has become popular among some researchers in Sub-Saharan Africa and Ghana in particular (Gyimah et al.,

2013; Tenkorang & Adjei, 2014). For instance, Gyimah et al. (2013) investigated the interconnectedness of several dimensions of religion and premarital sexual attitudes among young boys and girls in the informal settlements of Nairobi, Kenya. They observed that those who are committed to and affiliated with Pentecostal/Evangelical faiths are more likely to have conservative attitudes towards premarital sex. In a similar vein, Tenkorang and Adjei (2014) adopted the tenets of the social control to explore the extent to which parental monitoring and supervision mediates the effects of household living arrangements on age at first sex. Their results indicate that young girls and boys in Ghana who live alone, or with grandparents had a higher risk of first sex compared with those who lived with both biological parents. They attribute the result to parental monitoring and household wealth as the restraining factors regarding the effects of household living arrangements on age at first sex.

Social Control Theory as Predictor of Early Sexual Debut

Attachments to family, parents, peers, and schools as hypothesized by Travis Hirschi (1969), have been found to have significant association with early sexual debut. A study investigated the social control over sexuality among young girls in different regions (urban and rural) in Turkey, where exposure to pre-marital sexual affair is a strong taboo for unmarried women (Sridawruang et al., 2010). In the study, social control mechanisms, such as the family, relatives, neighbourhood, peer group and religion that are believed to activate sanctioning systems when norms are violated were assessed. The outcome shows that females were less likely to experience pre-marital sex compared to their male counterparts. They explain that females who have strong bond to family and kinship relations have a functional importance especially in the

continuation of tradition, such as the sustenance of virginity among unmarried women in Turkey (Karacan & Bektas, 2016).

Similarly, a study conducted among teens in a predominantly White environment in the USA, those who had engaged in oral or coital sexual activity before age 15 years, were found to belong to families with poor maternal relationships or less supportive relationships with their mothers (Price & Hyde, 2011). In the same vein, Deptula et al. (2010) also associate high quality parent-child relationships to reduced risk of early sexual initiation among young adults.

Moreover, drawing on social control theory, Pilgrim et al. (2014), assess the association between household family structure and early sexual debut among adolescent girls, ages 15–19, in rural Rakai District, Uganda and findings suggest that family structure is important to adolescent girls' sexual behaviour. The authors show that girls who headed their own household and girls living with stepfathers, grandparents, siblings, or other relatives had significantly higher hazards of early sexual debut before age 16 compared to adolescent girls living with both biological parents. Perhaps this may be since girls without resident fathers may lack protection and may be more susceptible to sexual advances and exploitation. Furthermore, those living in households with a polygamous father are also likely to receive less monitoring and supervision if the father lacks sufficient time with each child (Defo & Dimbuene, 2012; Kawai et al., 2008).

In another study involving young girls aged 15-24 years in Nigeria to expand our understanding of how social control factors of involvement/commitment and belief in religion can influence their sexual behaviour, the results indicate that those who were highly religious were more

likely to delay sexual initiation. This was based on several reasons including their commitment and belief in the teachings at their religious place: fear of sanctions by religious groups/leaders, and their involvement in activities at their place of worship (Somefun, 2019). In a related study involving young girls between 15 and 24 years old, Odimegwu (2005) concludes that those who strongly participate in religious activities or are committed to religious beliefs and practices are more likely to delay early sexual debut than their counterparts who were not religious.

Theoretical Framework of the Study

The present study found social control theory (SCT) as an appropriate theoretical framework. This is because, though the SCT was developed in the late 1960s to account for deviant behaviours, it has been “conceptualized as a mechanism to regulate relationships in social life in general and to be useful in ensuring social order” (Karacan & Bektas, 2016, p.88), such as maintaining chastity among young girls in traditional societies. In lieu of this, the theory has not only been used in the Western settings to explain the timing of first sexual intercourse among young girls (Crockett et al., 1996), but some scholars in Africa have also successfully advanced its perspectives to explore the processes of sexual behaviour among young girl in Ghana in particular and Africa in recent years (Defo & Dimbuene, 2012; Gyimah et al., 2013; Somefun, 2019; Tenkorang & Adjei, 2014). Thus, Ghana, like many other African countries recognized the virginity of women not only as a social value and an important entity for families (Glozah & Lawani, 2014; Mair, 1969), but also as a means by which “societies maintain sexual order” (Nnazor & Robinson, 2016: 157).

Against this background, extant studies have demonstrated the *Dipo* rite as a social control mechanism against early sexual debut of young girls.

Hugo Huber (1993), a Swiss anthropologist for instance, views *Dipo* rite from the functionalist point of view. He illustrates that through the *Dipo* initiation, young girls are able to preserve their virginity until marriage. This is largely because the *Dipo* among the Krobo shows that in the past, young girls, especially who chose to engage in sex or become pregnant before marriage and their families were sanctioned (Huber, 1993). The sanctions included payment of a fine, stigmatization, banishment, and expulsion from the family house (Huber, 1993). These punishments also served as a strong deterrent on the boys for impregnating a girl who had not undergone the *Dipo* initiation (Osafo et al., 2013). The reason is that many young men are aware of the ramifications associated with impregnating a young girl who had not undergone the *Dipo*, and they strictly avoid engaging in sexual activity with them.

While addressing the question about why *Dipo* has remained remarkably resilient in the face of modernisation and the challenges by the colonial administration and the Basel Missionaries to outlaw the performance, Marijke Steegstra (2005) maintains that the *Dipo* initiation rite still forms an integral part of the culture of the Krobo ethnic group where chastity prior to marriage is highly valued. This is because most of the punishments associated with *Dipo* are punitive enough to deter unmarried girls from engaging in pre-marital sex or becoming pregnant. The reason is that only few non-Christian houses in Krobo would allow their daughter who becomes pregnant before the *Dipo* initiation to remain in their home (Sackey, 2001; Schroeder & Danquah, 2000).

Also, Johnson Narh (2017), an anthropologist and a native of Yilo-Krobo has shown in his study that in the past, the initiates were confined in a *Dipo* camp for a long period where they were taught domestic science of marriage and service to their husbands, children and in-laws and the need to remain chaste until marriage. The author further revealed some of the benefits associated with the initiation. This includes the fact that a young girl who successfully passes through the initiation becomes a pure Yilo-Krobo woman and the off-springs of those from royal families can “inherit Yilo-Krobo royal office” (Narh, 2017: 95). Hence according to him, *Dipo* is a calculated effort and traditional resource instituted to restrict girls from engaging in pre-marital sex.

Nevertheless, other writers (Anarfi, 2003; Langmagne et al., 2018) have underlined that the claim that *Dipo* womanhood rite is a socially approved mechanism against pre-marital sex, is no longer tenable. This is largely because, the *Dipo* rite has undergone massive modifications due to rapid social-cultural changes experiencing in Ghanaian societies. For instance, the duration for the initiation has been reduced drastically from about a year to about a week in contemporary times (Anarfi, 2003). Again, unlike in the past when the rite was customarily performed for virgin young girls aged between 14 and 20 years and those who went through it successfully were believed to make good wives (Amos, 2013; Anarfi, 2003), nowadays, young girls as young as 5 years are being initiated (Langmagne et al., 2018). As a result, most Christians do not approve of the *Dipo* celebration, because they complain that it has “become more pagan and provoke immorality” (Steggstra, 2005: 6). The reason is that once a girl has been initiated at an early age, she is free from any punishment or

disgrace if she engages in early sex and becomes pregnant (Anarfi, 2003; Langmagne et al., 2018). Despite the criticisms levelled against the performance of *Dipo*, which revealed that young girls who passed through the rite at matured age were of the view that *Dipo* initiation is relevant to control early sexual behaviour of young girl in contemporary times. The results in Table 22 where 86.6 percent young girls reported that their chastity was due to the strict adherence of *Dipo* measures is a clear indication that *Dipo* initiation is relevant in contemporary times.

Conceptual Framework

The reviewed literature and theoretical framework have demonstrated a strong association between womanhood rites and early sexual debut among young adults in Africa and Ghana in particular. It is therefore, important at this juncture to put together the main ideas from the literature review and theoretical thoughts into a conceptual framework to guide this study. The conceptual framework for the study as shown in Figure 1 depicts the avenues through which *Dipo* mediates socio-demographic variables and young girls' sexual debut in Yilo-Krobo.

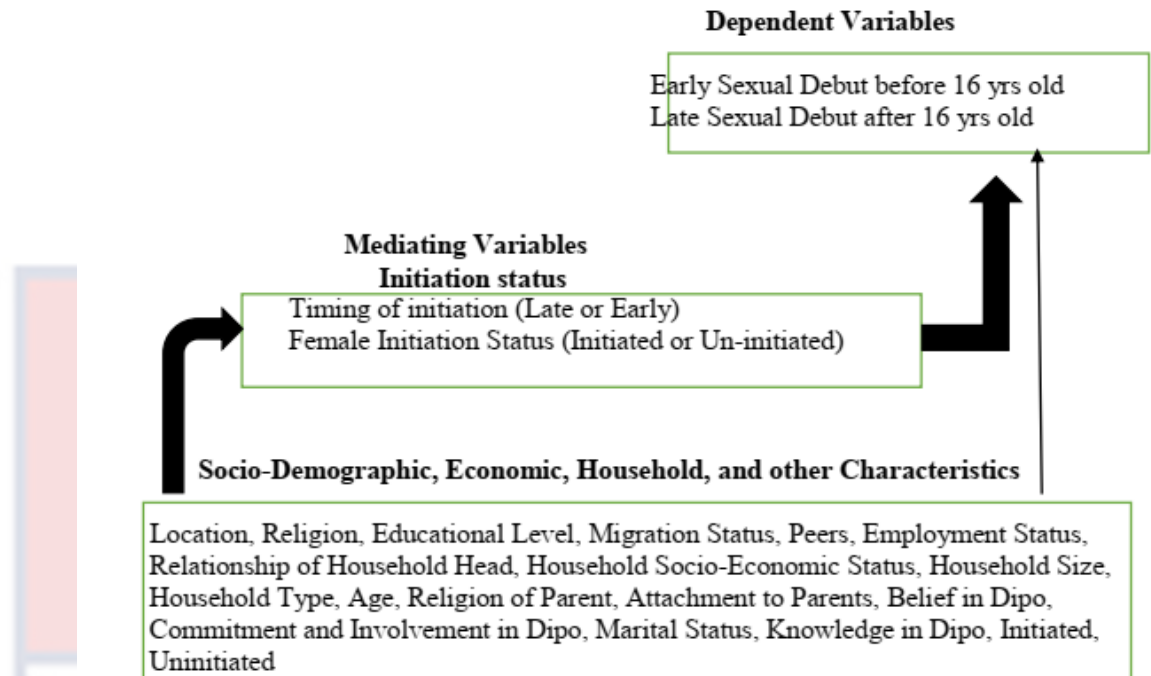


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework of the Study. Source: Constructed by Resercher, 2020.

The current study is premised on the notion that though each independent variable affects age at first sex (dependent variable), however, the major interaction between the independent and dependent variables is determined by a mediating factor, which is the initiation status of young girls. Thus, in accordance with Hirschi's version of the social control theory (1969), the current study identifies that young girls who are committed to, involved in *Dipo* rites activities and are often attached to parents/guardians regardless of their position on *Dipo*, or have belief in the principles of *Dipo*, and have passed through the initiation rite at matured age are able to delay their sexual debut until the time they are old enough to negotiate safe sex. In contrast, those who are not committed to, involved in, or have no belief in the principles of womanhood rites and are not often attached to parents/guardians and have not passed through the *Dipo*, or have passed through *Dipo* at an early age, are more

likely to be exposed to early sexual debut, which often occur at the time they were not married or too young to negotiate safe sex.

Gaps in Literature

What is missing in the literature on the relevance of *Dipo* is the fact that the few scholars who have written on the topic in the last decade paid little attention to theoretical and empirical evidence as they mainly based their arguments on value judgement (see Narh, 2017). Moreover, it appears they mainly focussed on young girls who passed through the initiation as toddlers and concluded that the initiation is no longer relevant in the current dispensation. This is because, pre-marital sex hitherto considered forbidden is now on ascendancy among young girls in Yilo-Krobo (Anarfi, 2003; Langmagne et al., 2018). Generalisation of results from studies that focused on the initiation of toddlers alone may appear a bit problematic. The reason is that in contemporary times, empirical evidence has shown that the initiation involves young girls who were initiated as toddlers, as matured girls as well as those who were not initiated (Abbey et al., 2021; Anarfi, 2003; Langmagne et al., 2018). Hence, ideally, a study that focuses on the relevance of *Dipo* rite in contemporary times should consider these different categories of initiates to comprehensively understand the effect of the practice on the sexual conduct of young girls.

The present study sought to fill this gap in knowledge by using theoretical and empirical evidence to examine the relevance or otherwise of the observance of the *Dipo* womanhood rite among unmarried young adults in contemporary times. It also categorized the young females according to their initiation status (early initiates, late initiates, and un-initiates) to

comprehensively understand the relevance or otherwise of the observance of the *Dipo* puberty rite in Yilo-Krobo Municipality. This approach would among other things, serve as a source of theoretical and empirical evidence to deepen our understanding on the need to project the values of Africa tradition.

Moreover, the reviewed literature on the practice of *Dipo* have raised many issues, including its significance and the need to revive it to stem the tide of promiscuity and its associated sexual reproductive health (SRH) problems among young girls and boys in the society (Schroeder & Danquah, 2000). Yet, these writers did not sufficiently address the issue of how it could be practised and accepted by all and sundry in the community in contemporary times. The current study again, fills this gap in knowledge.

Summary of Chapter

The reviewed empirical and theoretical literature have given an in-depth discussion of womanhood rites and the need for the practice in contemporary times. The chapter also identified some of the gaps in literature that the current study seeks to fill. Given that the discussion on the literature and theoretical aspect of the study has been dealt with in this chapter, the next chapter focuses on the methods and procedures used to collect data on the field.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter begins with a brief profile of the Yilo-Krobo Municipality in relation to the socio-economic and demographic characteristics and the selected study areas. The research methodology involved the techniques employed in gathering data from the field, and a detailed account of the population of study, research design, sampling design and sampling techniques. It considers the philosophical underpinning that guided the study, the method of analysis, and the ethical issues. The chapter also considers the pre-testing exercise, elements in the instruments and the measures adopted to contain the novel COVID-19 pandemic that was on ascendency at the time of the field work.

Philosophical Underpinning of the Study

There are many philosophical approaches in research (Blaikie, 2010), but it is significant for a researcher to select the one that is suitable to the research problem under study. The selection of a philosophical approach for this study considered many issues, including the knowledge the researcher intends to obtain and interpret as acceptable knowledge (epistemology).

With the overarching aim of this study to assess the mediating role of *Dipo* on the relationship between individual socio-demographic, economic, household, and other characteristics and sexual debut in contemporary times, the epistemological stance with a focus on both the positivist and interpretivist-constructivist perspectives was considered as the suitable approach for the study. This was done because data would be gathered to understand whether

Dipo initiation rites averts early sexual activity, and how the various initiation categories of young girls and older adults in the study communities perceive *Dipo* as a sexual control mechanism.

The positivist paradigm sees research as a scientific explanation of findings. It relies on empirical observations to discover and confirm a set of probabilistic causal laws that can be used to predict general patterns of human activity (Crotty, 1998; Tuli, 2010). The aim of this perspective is to develop the most objective methods possible to get the closest approximation of reality (Ulin et al., 2004). This perspective employs quantitative methods in terms of how variables interact, shape events, and cause outcomes (Tuli, 2010). It also relies on conventional scientific methods such as hypotheses framing and testing to either accept or nullify the hypotheses. This perspective claims that knowledge is based on direct observation or manipulation of natural phenomena through empirical, often experimental means (Neuman, 2012).

On the other hand, studies that seeks to understand a particular phenomenon, and use personal voices in their report generally tend to belong to the constructivist paradigm with focus on interpretative stance (Creswell, 1998). Those belonging to the interpretivist-constructivists perspective are naturalistic and tend to be non-manipulative, unobstructive, and non-controlling (Tuli, 2010). This means that while this perspective is less concerned with generalization of their finding to a population, they tend to be more concerned with in-depth understanding of the research problem (Tuli, 2010). Under the interpretivist-constructivists approach, the phenomenological theoretical perspective was considered. A phenomenology is a form of qualitative research

that uses interviews, observations, and in-depth analysis to understand non-numerical data.

Research Design

This study adopted the cross-sectional research design with sequential mixed research method whereby the qualitative was preceded by the quantitative data collection. The fundamental rationale for using the mixed methods (Quantitative and Qualitative) approach is that it is argued that it can yield more reliable and representative findings (Fitzgerald, 2006; Wisdom & Creswell, 2013). Moreover, social scientists have recommended the use of more than one research method to achieve good data for social research, because they greatly complement each other (Boyden & Ennew, 1997).

In this study, whereas the quantitative data helped in understanding whether *Dipo* initiation rite averts early sexual activity among the respondents, the qualitative data also contributed to generate detailed data on the experiences, perceptions, emotions, beliefs, and behaviours of the participants.

Profile of the Study Areas

The Yilo Krobo Municipality where the two study communities are located is one of the 26 Municipalities/Districts in the Eastern Region of Ghana. Formerly, it was part of the Kaoga District Council that was made up of Yilo Krobo, Manya Krobo and Asuogyaman Local Councils. But it was split into three separate administrative districts in 1988/89. The Yilo Krobo District was accorded a Municipal status on the 6th of February 2012 with the passage of Legislative Instrument (L.I.) No.20512. The Municipality lies within latitude 6o.00'N and longitude 00. 30'W and 10 .00'W. The Municipality covers an estimated area of 805 square kilometres, constituting 3.3 percent of the total

land area of the Eastern Region. Lower Manya Krobo Municipality and Upper Manya Krobo District bound the Municipality in the north and east respectively. In the south, the Municipality is bounded by Akwapim North Municipality and Shai Osudoku District and in the West by New Juabeng and East Akim Municipalities and Fanteakwa District. The Municipality has about 230 settlements, but it is predominantly rural. According to the last Population and Housing Census (PHC) held in 2010, about 70 percent of the population are rural. The Yilo-Krobo Municipal has a single constituency and seven zonal councils, namely, Somanya, Oterkpolu, Boti, Nkurakan, Nsutapong, Klo-Agogo and Obawale. The Municipality is divided into six chieftaincy divisions. These divisions are Bornya, Plau, Bunase, Nyeweh, Ogome and Okper and one paramountcy headed by the “Konor”. All the divisions have their ancestral homes on the Krobo Mountain, which is one of the tourist attractions in the Municipality.

The Yilo-Krobo Municipality is endowed with many tourists’ sites. Notably, the Boti Falls, a popular tourist’ site in Ghana today, is located at Boti-Huhuanya in the Municipality. Another beautiful tourist site is a Snake-like Palm Tree located at Yiwase in the Municipality. The ancestral caves in the Krobo Mountains that form an ancestral home of the Krobo people is another tourist’s attraction site in the Municipality. The chiefs and people of Yilo Krobo traditional area celebrate many festivals each year that attract tourists to the area. Notable among the festivals is “Kloyosikplemi” which is usually held in November each year. The *Dipo* womanhood rite is observed by the people of Yilo-Krobo between March and April. While the “Kloyosikplemi” is celebrated in honour of their ancestral home on the Krobo Mountains, the *Dipo* initiation

is observed for the pubescent young females in the community (GSS, 2014). Anecdotal evidence indicates that the Municipality has not only preserved many of its tourist sites and festivals, but it is also a conservative one where virginity of women is valued. Figure 2 shows the Map of Yilo-Krobo Municipal and the study communities (in arrows).

Somanya

Somanya is the capital town of Yilo-Krobo Municipality and as an urban area, it has the largest population of about 16,265 in the Municipality followed by Nkuranka (5,540) and Sra (5,354). According to the traditions of Yilo-Krobo, the name Somanya was originally referred to as sewu-mano (meaning a place for acting Sewu). Sewu was a kind of a popular dance among the people from Sra and neighbouring villages that took place in a small hamlet, which soon grew into a prominent commercial centre and it became known as Somanya (Odonkor, 1971).

Currently, Somanya is located approximately 45 km from Koforidua, the capital town of the Eastern Region and 50 km from Accra, the nation's capital (GSS, 2012). The community has several government and private owned primary and senior high schools with a University of Environment and Sustainable Development (UESD) that was opened by the President, Nana Akufo-Addo in August 2020. The main sources of livelihood for most of its population are farming, livestock rearing, artisanal works and trading.

Ogome

Ogome is one of the important traditional rural areas in Yilo-Krobo Municipality, with a population of about 3,926 (GSS, 2014). According to the oral history of Yilo-Krobo, the people of Ogome discovered and first settled on

the Krobo Mountains around the Thirteenth Century. The Ogome were led by priestly patriarchs and were therefore, the head of the theocratic authority in Yilo-Krobo (Narh, 2017, p.139). As tradition demands, the Ogome people will have to cleanse their stool to pave way for the celebration of *Dipo* in both Yilo- and Manya-Krobo. The Ogome area is a farming community, and it is located close to the Municipal capital, Somanya. It has schools and Churches and other basic social amenities such as portable pipe-borne water, clinics, electricity, and the major asphalt road from Accra to Somanya and beyond passes through the community.

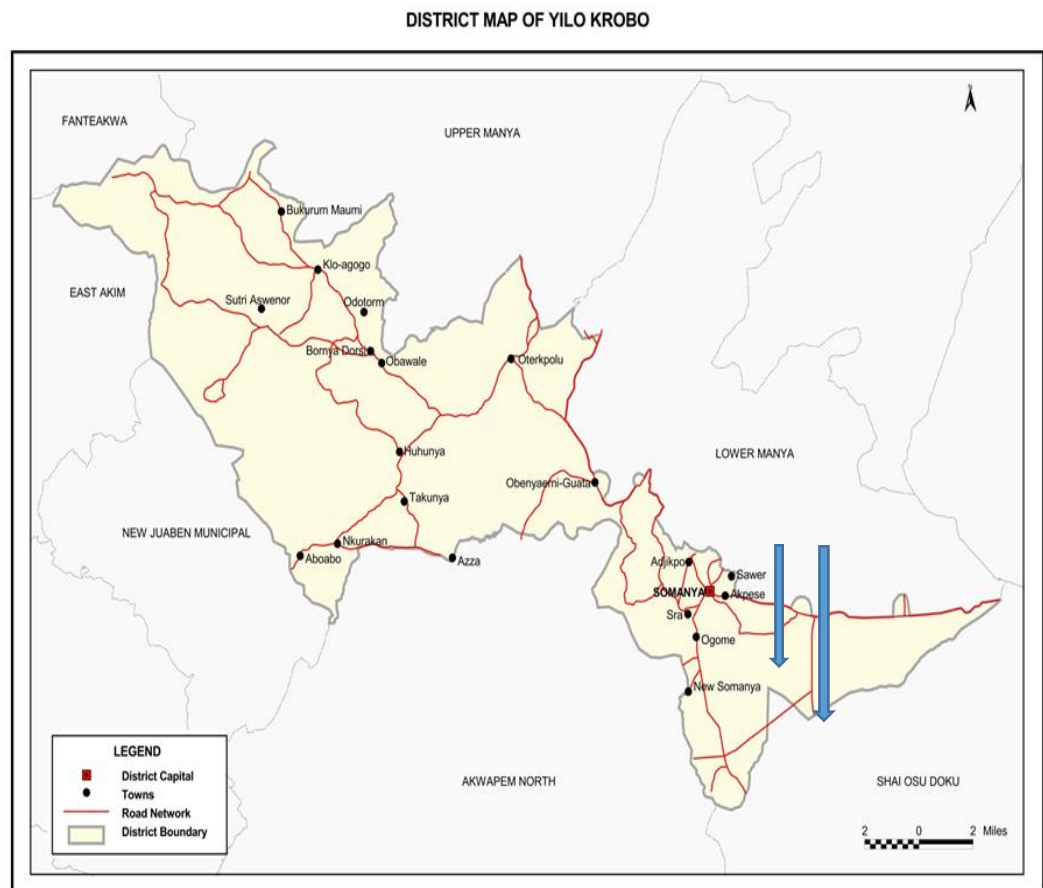


Figure 2: Map of Yilo-Krobo Municipal showing the Study Communities, Somanya and

Ogome (in Arrows). Source: Adapted from GSS, 2014, p.3

Sampling Techniques and Population

The simple random sampling, a type of probability sampling that gives every member of the population an equal chance of being part of the sample (Taherdoost, 2016), was employed to select respondents for the quantitative data. According to the 2010 Population and Housing Census report, there are 5452 households in the study communities (4350 in Somanya and 1102 in Ogame) (GSS 2014). Having obtained the list of households in the community, a unique identifying number was given to each household and put in a container (Levin & Fox, 2011). Then, without replacement (i.e. once a number was selected, it was removed from the population or the container to avoid re-selection), the researcher randomly picked numbers from the container (Mustafa, 2010). At the end of the procedure, the selected households were visited to find out if they met the inclusion criteria and their readiness to participate in the study. However, those without the targeted population were skipped to the next household until the the 403-sample size was selected. Households with young girls who met all the initiation categories (ie. early initiated, late initiated, and un-initiated) were interviewed separately. From this process, the estimated sample size representing the young girls' initiation categories were obtained for the quantitative data.

Based on the researcher's knowledge of the community set up and the purpose of the study, the purposive or judgmental sampling, a type of non-probability sampling technique, was used to select participants for the qualitative data (Babbie & Benaquisto, 2010). This technique enabled the researcher to get a fair representation of the traditional leaders, elders, Pastors, and Caretakers to be included in the study, considering that the survey was

undertaken during the COVID-19 time when it was difficult for people to welcome visitors in their house and let alone to grant them interviews. However, this technique although may not provide a good description of the views of those in support or against *Dipo* initiation, their views gave an important insight into the nature, relevance or otherwise, and performance of *Dipo* among the indigenes (Babbie & Benaquisto, 2010).

Sample Procedure

A sample is defined as a representative of the general population that is of interest for the study topic (Omair, 2014). Since researchers neither have time nor the resources to analyze the entire population, it is required of them to select a sample in a manner that is representative of the general study population (Omair, 2014; Taherdoost, 2016).

The 2010 Population and Housing Census put the population of young girls and boys aged 15 – 24 years in both study communities as 4285 (that is 3506 and 779 for Somanya and Ogome respectively). In view of this, the study applied the mathematical formula proposed by Miller and Brewer (2003) to determine the sample size. The mathematical formula by Miller and Brewer (2003) given as: $n = \frac{N}{1+N(\alpha)^2}$

Where:

n is the sample size.

N is the population of the study areas.

α is the allowed margin of error at (5%)

The sample size for the study was determined by the formula above. Thus, substituting the population figure obtained into the formula, the sample size (n) was determined as $4285/1+4285(0.05)^2 = 4285/11.7125 = 366$. The

sample size estimated was 366. However, because population in the study communities might have increased between 2010 and 2020, an estimated projection of 10 percent was assumed. Hence, the sample size obtained for the young people aged between 15 and 24 years old was 403 due to the adjustment. So, the sample size (n) became 403. Then, the simple proportional formula $P \times n/N$, where:

P is the population size of young people in the study communities,

N is the total population of young people in both communities,

n is the calculated sample size was used to distribute the sample size proportionately for each community (Adei et al., 2015). This then became $3506/4285 \times 403 = 329.7$ or approximately 330 for Somanya and $779/4285 \times 403 = 73$ for Ogome.

Data Collection Instrument

The primary and secondary sources of data were employed to collect information for this study. With COVID-19 cases surging at the time of the field work, conducting focus group discussions (FGDs) among young girls and boys was not possible. This is because, despite the assurance that all the protocols announced by the Government would be strictly adhere to, parents were still in doubt as to whether their children would be well protected against the COVID-19 disease. In the end, they did not sanction for their wards to join the FGDs. Hence, the researcher adopted semi-structured questionnaires that contain a mix of closed- and open-ended questionnaires. Whereas this method gave the young boys and girls more opportunities to fully express themselves, the researcher too was able to understand the reasons behind their answers. The purposively selected key informants were interviewed with unstructured interview guides.

To gather the data using survey questionnaires with a limited budget, three research assistants (2 males and a female) were employed based on their experience in the administration of questionnaires and fluency in the languages spoken in the study communities. As a grey area of scientific inquiry, an intensive one-day training workshop was organized for the research assistants (RAs) in Accra on June 20, 2020. During the workshop, PowerPoint slides were used to illustrate the objectives of the research and the best way to administer the questionnaires and establish good relationship with participants in order to elicit information from them.

At the end of the training section, the RAs were used to engage in a pre-testing exercise that took place from June 21-28, 2020, in Dodowa, the capital town of Shai-Osudoku District in the Greater Accra Region. Dodowa was selected for the pre-testing due to its proximity and the fact that the indigenous people also perform similar womanhood rites. The pre-testing was very useful, because it helped to test the validity of the questionnaires. Besides, it afforded the researcher the opportunity to be familiar with the use of some important terminologies and concepts pertaining to the womanhood rite. Also, some questions on abortion, pregnancy and STDs, including HIV and AIDS were flagged as very sensitive and were deleted from the final questionnaire.

Since the survey exercise was anticipated to take place during the era of the novel COVID-19 pandemic in Ghana, the training workshop was also used to admonish the RAs to strictly adhere to the COVID-19 protocols announced by the Government. These included wearing face masks, social distancing, frequently washing of hands under running water, and use of hand sanitizers. The actual field work finally took place over a period of one-and A half months

(July 15 – August 30, 2020). Most interviewees preferred to be interviewed in their homes and on the average, each interview session lasted for forty-five minutes.

During the field work, the RAs were basically tasked to interview young boys and girls in the selected households who were between 15 and 24 years with a questionnaire. In the face of the pandemic, different methods of administering questionnaires to participants were devised. For instance, the RAs tried telephone and online survey techniques to reach participants, but they proved ineffective. This is because, besides that most of the respondents had no access to the internet facility, some of them also gave excuses on the phone like “I’m very busy” or “Will it be possible to meet you in person?” The RAs then resorted to the face-to-face technique to administer the questionnaires. Initially, this technique was deemed risky due to the likelihood of exposing the RAs to the spread of the deadly COVID-19 pandemic.

The closed- and open- ended techniques enabled the researcher to meet the goal of the survey. This is because, while the former allowed respondents to indicate their position regarding the relevance or otherwise of *Dipo*, the latter on the other hand, allowed respondents to express their feelings, opinions, and experiences regarding the rite in the language they felt comfortable with. As a measure to contain the pandemic, each RA was asked to complete a maximum of three questionnaires per day to reduce their contact hours. Moreover, the RAs always carried extra facemasks on them, which they gave to participants who were without such personal protective equipment (PPE) and sanitized their hands before the start and at the end of each interview. Participants who offered to fill in the questionnaires themselves, were given new pens or pencils.

Table 1 shows the estimated and actual (in bracket) sample size of respondents in the two communities (Somanya and Ogome) in Yilo-Krobo Municipality.

Table 1: Estimated Number of Participants in Quantitative Survey by Locality and Initiation Status

Study Area	Sample Size				
	Male	Early Initiates (Toddlers)	Late Initiates (Matured)	Un-initiates	Total
Somanya (Urban)	60 (33)	90 (36)	90 (49)	90 (64)	330 (182)
Ogome (Rural)	10 (33)	21 (25)	21 (81)	21 (29)	73 (168)
Total	70 (66)	111 (61)	111 (130)	111 (93)	403 (350)

Source: Constructed by Researcher. July-August 2020

Key Informant Interviews

The key informant interview (KII) was used to obtain information from selected adult participants including chiefs/queen mothers, elders, opinion and religious leaders, the *Dipo* Priest and women who take care of *Dipo* girls. The purposive sampling technique was utilized to select participants who took part in the KII. The main goal of utilizing the purposive sampling technique was to enable the study obtain information from older adults who occupy special positions in the community and were willing to respond to the questions (Hudelson, 1994) that elicited information on *Dipo* puberty rite as it is performed in the communities. This method also enabled the research team to pose some pertinent questions about the *Dipo* that were asked by young girls and boys during the quantitative interviews for the older adult participants to share their views on them. Table 2 gives the breakdown of the number of participants for the key informant interviews in the study communities:

**Table 2: Number of Old Adults Interviewed for the Key Informant
Key Informant Interviews**

Informants	Number Interviewed
Chiefs/Queen-mothers	3
Elders	5
*Traditionalists	4
Pastors	2
Dipo Caregivers	2
Total	16

Source: Constructed by Researcher, July-August 2020

***Traditionalists in this study, refers to persons who do not only follow an established tradition, but also have the notion that the traditional way of doing things are better than the modern ways.**

Since the researcher is not an indigene of Yilo-Krobo, contact persons were used for the community entry to secure and sustain the interest of the community throughout the period for the survey. For instance, as most customs in Ghana demand, the research team led by the contact persons, first paid a visit to the chiefs and elders in their palaces to announce their presence in the community and to explain their mission to them. While at the palaces, some chiefs and elders were identified and contacted at their convenient time and place for the interviews. Also, through the effort of the contact persons, the research team was given some time to explain the objectives and benefits of the study to a group of chiefs and elders who had gathered at a meeting at Ogome, near the Assemblies of God Church. The *Dipo* Priest who was also present at

the meeting agreed to grant us an interview at a later day. The team followed up on him and he honoured his promise.

Figure 3: A Portrait of an In-depth Interview with a Key Informant at Adjikpo, Somanya



Source: Field Work, July-August 2020

The service of an interpreter was also employed to assist in the interpretation of key informant interviews that were conducted in Dangme language. Figure 3 is a picture of one of the key informant interviews where an interpreter and a research assistant were present and their sitting arrangement. Those in the picture are the researcher (hand stretched), the key informant (in white dress), the interpreter (seated near the researcher) and a research assistant (facing the camera).

Secondary Data

The study also relied on secondary sources of data. The secondary data was done by reviewing various documents from transparent and trustworthy government and individual's publications. These sources included the 2010 Population and Housing Census and the District Analytical Report on Yilo-Krobo published by Ghana Statistical Service (GSS) in 2012 and 2014 respectively and individual publications, such as journal articles, books and information on *Dipo* and other womanhood rites on the internet.

Measures

Mediating variables

Regarding initiation status, young girls were first asked, "Have you been initiated in "Dipo" rite? And the responses were grouped: 1. No 2. Yes. Those who answered 'No' and have no intention of undergoing *Dipo*, were considered as Un-initiated. Those who answered in the affirmative were asked a follow-up question, "At what age were you initiated?" Those who were initiated at age less than 12 years were considered as Early-initiated, while those who were initiated at 12 years and over, were considered as Late-initiated

Socio-Demographic, Economic and other Variables

The attachment component was used to measure the extent to which individuals have close affectional ties to others, especially those they admire and identify with. The theme of this component is that young boys and girls who are attached to parents/guardians and peers and also undergo the initiation rite at maturity, are argued to delay their first sexual encounter. The measures used to assess strong family bonds and attachments were 1. 'How often do your parents/guardians know where you are when you are away from home?' 2.

‘How often do your parents know who you are with when you are away from home?’ 3. ‘How often do you want to be like your mother/father/foster parents?’; 4. ‘How often do your parents/guardians ask about your academic work or business?’ 5. ‘How often would your parent/guardian stick by you when you got into a terrible trouble?’ 6. ‘How often do you take part in making family decisions?’ and 7. ‘How often do you enjoy spending time with your mother/father/foster parents?’ The responses were rated on a 3-point scale ranging from 1. Never; 2. Sometimes; 3. Often. Attachment bond ranges from 1 to 7, and higher values on the index represented higher levels of respondent’s attachment to their parents/guardians.

The second strand, which is involvement was indexed by 4 items that asked respondents to rate on a scale of 1 to 4 (1. Not important; 2. Somewhat important; 3. Important; and 4. Very important). The questions asked were 1. ‘How important is it to you to pass through the initiation rite successfully?’ 2. ‘When you are in town, how important is it to you to witness the performance of the initiation rite?’; 3. ‘How important is it to you to belong to any social club/group in the community that organizes the initiation rite?’ and 4. ‘How important is it for you to be married as a virgin?’. Within a range from 1 to 4, higher scores represented higher levels of involvement.

Moreover, committed to undergo *Dipo* rite initiation as a virgin and playing a role in *Dipo* celebration on the other hand, asked respondents to rate on a scale of 1 to 3 (1. Not Committed at all 2. Committed 3. Very Committed). The questions asked were: 1. Are you committed to invest money, time, and energy in the celebration of “Dipo” in this community? 2. Are you committed in playing a role in the celebration of “Dipo” in the community? 3.

Are you committed in ensuring that the community remembers you as someone who ensures that *Dipo* rites are observed/preserved in the community? 4. Were/are you committed to undergo “Dipo” rite? And 5. Were/are you committed to remain a virgin until you passed “Dipo” rite/married? Within a range from 1 to 5, higher scores represented higher levels of commitment.

The fourth strand of the theory, belief was measured by the respondent’s adherence to and belief that the rules associated with *Dipo* rite are fair and it is coded: 1. Disagree 2. Agree. The Question, “Do you know about “*Dipo*” rite celebration in this community?” with Yes/No answer, was used to separate participants with knowledge about the *Dipo* initiation from those who lack knowledge of the *Dipo* initiation rite in the study community.

Other control variables were educational level, household type, marital status, migration status, household social economic status, religion, peer influence, household size and relationship with household head. In this case, the conceptual framework of the study demonstrated an association between the socio-demographic characteristics, mediating variables, and the dependent variables. Thus, earlier studies have revealed that background characteristics such as religion, location, marital status, education, peers, level of attachment to parents, commitment to, involvement in and belief in traditional activities have influence on the female initiation status and age at initiation and sexual behaviour (Defo & Dimbuene, 2012; Gyimah et al., 2013; Hirschi, 2002; Munthali & Zulu, 2007; Rooyen & Hartell, 2010; Ostrow, 2011). For instance, extant studies have documented that while most Christians have problems with *Dipo* celebration, the traditionalists view the rite extremely important and insisted on performing it for their daughters (Ostrow, 2011).

In this study, current age of participants was measured according to their age at the time of the survey. Marital status was measured at the nominal level and the categories were coded as 1. Never married; 2. Currently married; 3. Separated; 4. Divorced; 5. Widowed, 6. Consensual union. Religious affiliation was categorized into 1. Christian; 2. Muslim/Islamic; 3. Traditionalist; and 4. No Religion. Participants were also asked whether they have ever stayed outside their present location, and it is coded 1 for 'No' and 2 for 'Yes'.

Participants were asked about their current/highest level of education to determine whether they are still in school, or out-of-school and it is a multi-category level variable including 1. No education; 2. Primary; 3. Secondary; 4. Post-secondary; 5. Tertiary. Similarly, household living arrangements are multi-categorical comprising 1. Nuclear; 2. Extended; 3. Single parent; 4. Stepfamily; 5. Grandparent.

Dependent Variable

The main dependent variable for the study was sexual debut (i.e., early, or late) and this information was obtained from a couple of questions. Firstly, participants were asked, "Have you ever had sexual intercourse?" and the response was grouped Yes/No. Those who answered in the affirmative were asked a follow-up question, "How old were you the first time you had sexual intercourse?" Those who had sex at age less than 16 years were considered to have an early sexual debut while those who had sex at 16 years and above were defined as late debutants (Ekundayo et al., 2007). In the context of this study, sex was defined as young girls and boys who have ever engaged in heterosexual intercourse or copulation. Given the delicate nature of some questions such as participants' sexual behaviour, those were asked towards the end of the survey

after the issues bordering on their background, knowledge and practice of *Dipo* initiation rite and social control had been dealt with (Ekundayo et al., 2007).

Methods of Data Analyses

Quantitative

The Micro-soft Excel spread sheet was used for data entering and data cleaning. STATA 14.0 was adopted to analyze the data for the generation of tables, graphs, and figures to describe the trends and patterns of information gathered. The correlation, Pearson chi-square and linear regression were also used to test the hypotheses.

Qualitative

Regarding the qualitative method, the information gathered were transcribed from the local languageS, mostly Twi and Dangme to English language and used to explain some of the patterns and themes gathered from participants from the study communities. The major themes discussed were introduction of *Dipo*, relevance of *Dipo*, the deterrent effects of *Dipo*, *Dipo* as an idol worship or social identity, the use of *Dipo* as a social control mechanism and sexual behaviour among young girls and boys.

Ethical Considerations

Gray (2006) has noted that ethical consideration is critical in research since it borders on the researcher's behaviour in relation to the participants or those who are affected by the research. In lieu of this, Pillay (2014) has declared that strict ethical principles should be applied in research, especially those involving children. Based on this, stringent ethical procedures were followed throughout the research process. Participants or their parents/guardians were asked to sign a written consent form or give oral consent before the start of each

interview session. Additionally, the interviews took place at participant's convenient time and place and no one else, but the RAs or in the case of the key informant interviews, the researcher and interpreters were present. Participants were interviewed in the language they understand or feel comfortable with and were asked to indicate whether they feel comfortable to tape-record the interviews. At the end of each key informant interview, what was written down or recorded, was read or played back to them to verify the accuracy of the responses.

Also, before commencing any interview session, the researchers explained to participants that in case they feel uncomfortable answering any of the questions posed, they should express it for the interviewer to skip it. Participants were also informed that participation in the study was voluntary, and they are at liberty to discontinue the interview at any time without been subjected to any penalty. Furthermore, to observe confidentiality, participants were informed that instead of their names, they would be identified only by code numbers and the information provided would be kept in a locked place where only the researcher would have access. Against this backdrop, the data collection was smoothly done.

The use of quantitative and qualitative methods whereby the data were collected sequentially helped to address the objectives of the study. In this study, the qualitative data was preceded by the quantitative data collection.

Summary of Chapter

The chapter discussed the epistemological stance which focused on positivism and interpretative constructivism as the philosophical approach that guided the study. The chapter also discussed the geographical location, political

administration, and the physical environment of the study areas. The study adopted mixed methods (Quantitative and Qualitative) whereby the qualitative was preceded by the quantitative data collection. The semi-structured questionnaire containing both open-and closed-ended questions were the main techniques used to gather primary data from the field. The simple random sampling technique was used to select respondents for the quantitative data. On the other hand, the purposive sampling technique was used to select participants for the qualitative data. Respondents were asked questions about their initiation status, sexual behaviour, the relevant of *Dipo* in containing early sexual debut, social control variables and the effect of the rite as a control mechanism against early sexual debut in contemporary times. Participants' thoughts, feelings, and beliefs about the historical and relevance of *Dipo* initiation in current dispensation were explored through the key informants' interviews. A day's training workshop was organized for research assistants (RAs). As part of the workshop, RAs were briefed on the measures adopted to contain the novel COVID-19 pandemic that was on ascendancy at the time of the field work. With the methods and techniques adopted to collect data from the field discussed in this chapter, the ensuing chapter sets to discuss the results from the qualitative and quantitative data gathered from the field.

CHAPTER FOUR

SOCIODEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS, HISTORICAL IMPORTANCE OF ORIGIN OF *DIPO* WOMANHOOD RITE AND PERCEPTIONS OF *DIPO* PRACTICE AMONG OLD ADULTS

Introduction

The chapter focuses on the background characteristics of respondents that was examined with respect to variables such as age, sex, religion, education, location, age at initiation, socio-economic status (SES), migration status, household type, and household size. All these variables are important to present an indepth understanding of the topic under discussion. The chapter also discusses the origins of the *Dipo* rite and the viewpoints of old adults concerning the introduction and relevance of the womanhood rite in contemporary times. Through the interviews, it emerged that various accounts have been given for the origin of the *Dipo* womanhood rite. However, due to time and space, this study discusses three of the origins of *Dipo*. These are the noble man who married two women (two rivals), a woman who celebrated the coming of age of her only daughter, and an informal vocational school established by Nana Kloweki to train young girls in domestic science prior to their marriage.

Background Characteristics of Participants

The background characteristics of respondents in the study as presented in Tables 3 - 13 and Figures 4 – 9 are examined with respect to some variables, including initiation status, age at initiation, religion, education, location, socio-economic status (SES), migration status, household type, and household size.

Age Group of Participants

The age group of 15-24 years old is important to study. This is because, it is not only the age group that is reported to be most at risk to new HIV and AIDS cases (UNICEF et al., 2002), but also it is the age group that most young girls are initiated or will never be initiated in the community (Anarfi, 2003; Sackey, 2001). Previous studies that sought to gather information from initiated young girls who have in-depth knowledge about the rite targeted those aged 18 years and above (Agra & Gbadegbe, 2014). The results in Figure 4 show that most of the young girls surveyed were in the age group 20-24 years old (56.0%) compared with the 15–19-year age group (44.0%). This could suggest that at the time of the survey, most of the Senior High School (SHS) and tertiary students who were mostly within the latter age group (GSS et al., 2015), were in school with limited visitation periods given to few family members due to the outbreak of the novel COVID-19 pandemic (Xinhua, 2020). Hence, interviews were conducted among participants who were mainly found in the communities, and they included both in- and out-of-school individuals.

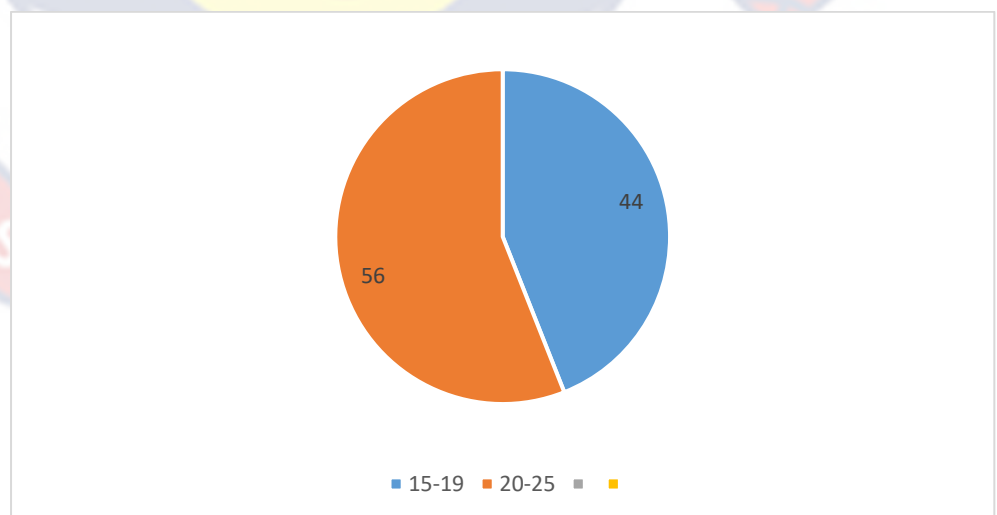


Figure 4: Age Group of Young Girls. Source: Field Work, July-August 2020,

Educational Status

Levels of education attained show that most respondents had attained or were in Junior High School (JHS) (39.4%), followed closely by Senior High School (SHS) (38.0%), Primary (13.4%), Tertiary (6.3%) and No Education (2.8%) as presented in Table 3. The implication is that the educational level is high among the young girls in the community. Yet, it has no influence on a young girl's likelihood to be initiated since both the educated and uneducated young girls have equal odds of going through the initiation (Maluleke & Troskie, 2003). Previous studies that discussed social norms and ethics which restrained sexual behaviour among young boys and girls in the past, targeted both in- and out-of-school young boys and girls (Anarfi, 2003).

Table 3: Young Girls' Educational Status

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
NO FORMAL EDUCATION	8	2.8	2.8	2.8
PRIMARY SCHOOL	38	13.4	13.4	16.2
JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL	112	39.4	39.4	55.6
SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL	108	38.0	38.0	93.7
TERTIARY	18	6.3	6.3	100.0
Total	284	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Work, July- August 2020.

Employment Status

Out of those employed, the self-employed or engaged in self-employed activities such as business/trading, and farming formed the highest (41.2%) compared with those who were learning a profession/trade (8.1%) as well as those in the public sector (3.5%) as presented in Table (4). About 14.1 percent of the young girls were unemployed, while those who were still in school formed 29.6 percent at the time of the survey. The proportion of unemployment among young girls in the community is significant and it needs immediate attention, because of the adage that ‘the devil finds job for the idle hands.

Table 4: Young Girls’ Employment Status.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
UNEMPLOYED	40	14.1	14.1	14.1
BUSINESS/TRADING	39	13.7	13.7	27.8
SEWING/TAILORING	32	11.3	11.3	39.1
FARMING	12	4.2	4.2	43.3
LEARNING A TRADE/PROFESSION/ APPRENTICESHIP	23	8.1	8.1	51.4
PETTY TRADING	34	12.0	12.0	63.4
PUBLIC SERVANT	10	3.5	3.5	66.9
SELF-EMPLOYED	10	3.5	3.5	70.4
NOT APPLICABLE	84	29.6	29.6	100.0
Total	284	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Work, July-August 2020

Religion of Young Girls

In a study by Ostrow (2011), both devout Christians and Traditionalists were interviewed and there were divergent opinions with respect to the celebration of the *Dipo* womanhood rite. While the devout Christians

vehemently refused the initiation for their daughters, the Traditionalists felt that it was important to perform the rite for their daughters. The current study includes respondents belonging to the various religious backgrounds in the community. The results indicate that an overwhelming majority of the young girls (90.8%) professed to be Christians followed by the Traditionalist and No-Religion (3.9% each) and Islamic Religion recorded the least (1.4%) as displayed in Table (5). A Similar trend was observed for the religion of parents/guardians of the females in the study communities in Table (6). This implies that some parents/guardians who are Christians are also prominent traditionalists (refer here as Chrstraditionalists) in the community who give priority to cultural practices in their community. An elderly man who is about 90 years old explained further who a Chrstraditionalist is:

Yes, I'm a Christian, but I still believe in (traditions) it. I believe in it. Yes, Dipo is still very strong. You've got to undergo Dipo. Because the education (given them) is very important. They teach them how to behave in their marriage life, how to serve their husbands, and the family members etc. The old ladies even teach them how to cook (**An Elder, 90, Somanya**).

Table 5: Young Girls' Religious Affiliation.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
CHRISTIAN	258	90.8	90.8	90.8
MUSLIM	4	1.4	1.4	92.3
TRADITIONALIST	11	3.9	3.9	96.1
NO RELIGION	11	3.9	3.9	100.0
Total	284	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Work, July – August 2020

Religion of Parents

The results in Table (6) showed that Christianity is the dominant religion among the parents/guardians of respondents in the study communities and most young people are attached to their parent's religion. This finding is important to the study that explores young girls' attachments to parents/guardians. In the 2010 Population and Housing Census (PHC), a similar pattern of the Christians dominating other religious affiliations was observed for the regional and national levels (93.9% and 71.2%) respectively (GSS, 2012; 2014).

Table 6: Parents/Guardians' Religious Affiliation.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
CHRISTIAN	245	86.3	86.3	86.3
MUSLIM	4	1.4	1.4	87.7
TRADITIONALI ST	21	7.4	7.4	95.1
NO RELIGION	13	4.6	4.6	99.6
RASTAFARIAN	1	.4	.4	100.0
Total	284	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Work, July-August 2020

Locality

In terms of locality, the distribution in Figure (5) depicts that more than half (52.5%) of the young girls were living in the urban communities as against 47.5 percent of those living in rural areas.

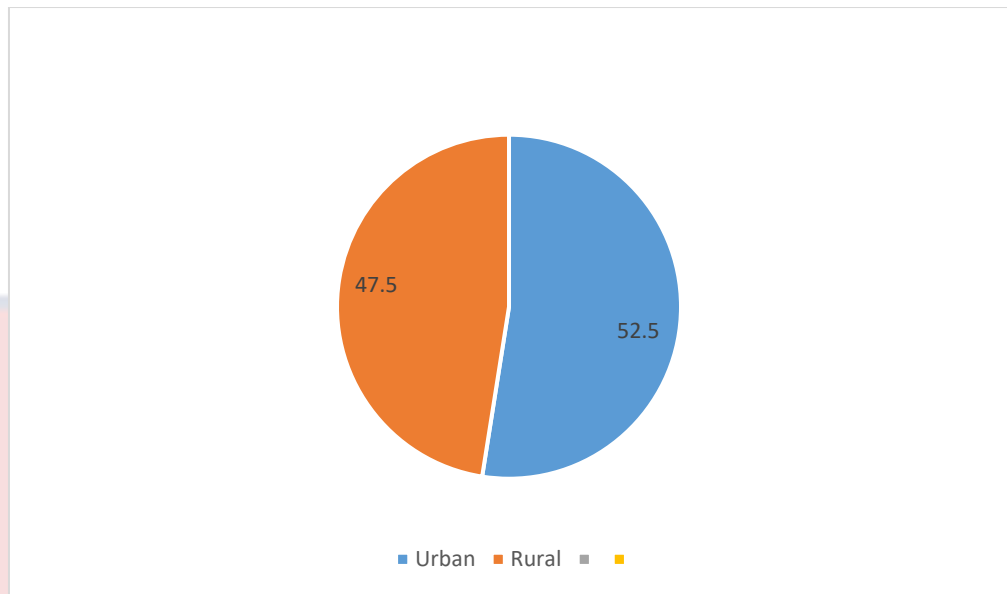


Figure 5: Locality of Young Girls. Source: Field Work, July-August 2020

Against the backdrop of rapid social and economic changes in most traditional societies in recent times, previous scholars have indicated that the urban areas have experienced countless impact of these changes than their rural counterparts (Karacan & Betkas, 2016). Nevertheless, both the rural and urban settings have kept most of their traditional values intact, the outlooks and behaviours of the former suggest they are more traditional and conservatives than the latter with respect to sexual conduct (Askun & Ataca, 2007). Similarly, a study by Maluleke (2012) has highlighted stark differences in terms of participating in womanhood rites and have concluded that participation is rife in the rural areas than urban areas.

Marital Status

As observed in Table (7), most of the respondents (69.0%) were single. This is expected, because the 15-24 years old in Ghana and most African countries is the age group that most of them are in school or are under the protection of their parents or guardians (Defo & Dimbuene, 2012; GSS et al., 2015). The remaining proportion of respondents were either married (15.5%),

in consensual union (10.9%), divorced (1.4%) or separated (3.2%). Statistically, the population of the young people (15-24 years) who are the backbone of every society, constitutes about 20 percent of the Ghanaian population (GSS, 2014). Available data further indicates that about 4.8 percent of all births in the Municipal belong to young adults aged less than 25 (GSS, 2014). Marital status of respondents is, therefore, important, because often young girls who are not married and have been initiated feel that they are matured enough to initiate sex (Langmagne et al., 2018). However, this behaviour is likely to heighten their risk to sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) and human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (HIV/AIDS), abortion and teenage/unintended pregnancy (Agra & Gbadegbe, 2014; Sackey, 2001).

Table 7: Marital Status of Young Girls.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
SINGLE	196	69.0	69.0	69.0
MARRIED	44	15.5	15.5	84.5
CONSENSUAL UNION	31	10.9	10.9	95.4
DIVORCED	4	1.4	1.4	96.8
SEPARATED	9	3.2	3.2	100.0
Total	284	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Work, July-August 2020

Migration Status

Studies have found that migrants are more likely to engage in early sexual debut prior to marriage and other risky sexual behaviour compared with non-migrants (Kimuna & Djamba 2012; Saggurti et al. 2011). This is largely

because unlike the non-migrants, migrants are usually not bound by social controls placed on sexuality in their home communities (Brockerhoff & Biddlecom, 1999). Findings from the current study indicate that proportion of return migrants who stayed outside the Municipality for a period of a year and above are relatively lower than the non-migrants (49.6% compared with 50.4%) as shown in Figure (6). Probably, many young girls did not visit the community during the survey period, because restrictions had been imposed on public gathering due to the COVID-19 pandemic that also disrupted that year's *Dipo* celebration (kasapafmonline.com 2020).

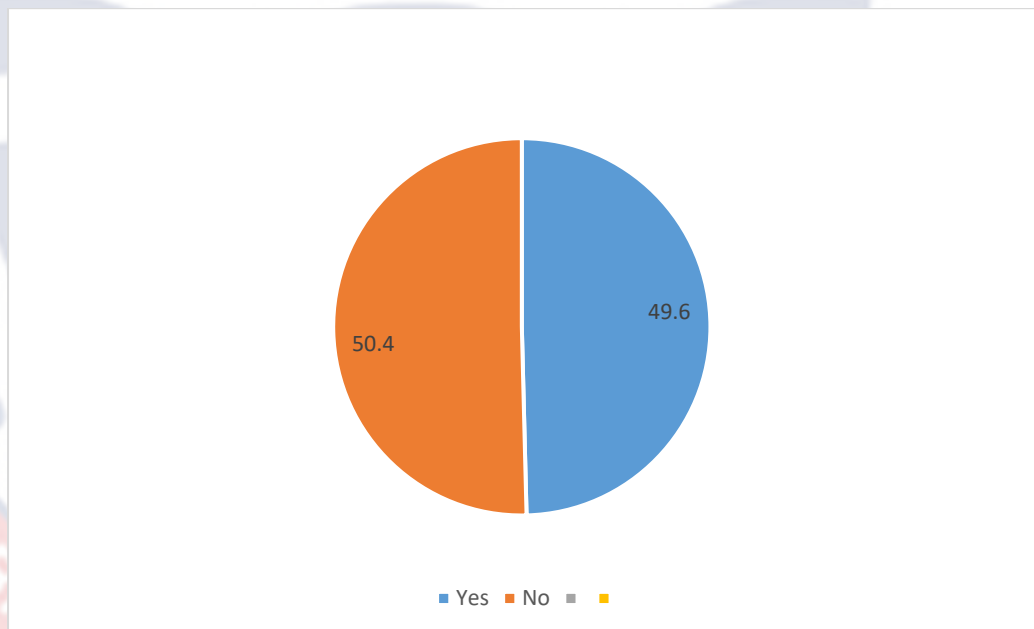


Figure 6: Migration Status of Young Girls. Source: Field Work, July – August 2020

Length of Stay outside the Municipality

Another significant variable to the study is the duration of stay of respondents outside the community before returning to the community. This has influence on the initiation of respondents and age at initiation. For instance, in

her study, Priscilla Boakye (2010) indicated that as a teenager, she travelled from Nigeria where she was living with her parents to specifically undergo the *Dipo* initiation in Odumasi-Krobo. Table (8) reveals that about one-third (33.8%) of the return migrants stayed outside for a period of 1-5 years before returning home, whereas those who stayed outside the Municipality for a longer period ranging from 6 to 10 years and over constituted 17.6 percent. This suggests that most of them were born in the Municipality, but later left to stay with family members, to seek employment or to continue their education in another region or outside the country. Some of them may have returned to the Municipality at the time they are matured enough to probably undergo the initiation rite, which has been delayed due to the novel COVID-19 pandemic.

Table 8: Length of Stay of Young Girls outside the Community.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
1-5YRS	96	33.8	33.8	33.8
6-10 YRS+	50	17.6	17.6	51.4
NOT APPLICABLE	138	48.6	48.6	100.0
Total	284	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Work, July-August 2020

A Young man described in a statement below how parents/guardians living outside the Municipality send their grown-up daughters to undergo the initiation in Somanya:

Parents send their daughters all over the country – from Accra, Kumasi, and other remote villages and very far places to get the *Dipo* done for their daughters. Last time, I met a woman, and she told me she's come all the way from Tamale to do the *Dipo* for

her daughter and will go back after the Dipo. And if you see their daughters who've come for the Dipo initiation, they're really grown-ups. Normally, those who come from other places to get the Dipo done for them are usually grown-ups (**A Young Man, 17, Ogame**).

Socio-Economic Status

In this study, Table (9) reveals that those who self-reported that they belonged to average families constituted the majority (75.0%), followed by the rich and poor families (12.7% and 12.3% respectfully). Though, those who indicated that they were from poor families formed the least, poverty should be understood as a socially constructed problem that needs the efforts of all stakeholders to curtail it (Boateng, 2014). This is because, as a patrilineal society (Nukunya, 2003), poverty reduction is important for the residents. Previous literature reports that the motivating factor to initiate or not to initiate young girls in the community largely depends on the parent's socio-economic status (Fanning, 1999). Similarly, a study by Munthali et al. (2018) underscores that some young girls are not initiated because of lack of money for food and gifts. Furthermore, a study by Steegstra (2005) observed that girls from rich families enjoy staying in the *Dipo* camp, because friends and relatives visit them, which adds to their status and prestige.

Table 9: Young Girls' SocioEconomic Status.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
RICH	36	12.7	12.7	12.7
AVERAGE	213	75.0	75.0	87.7
POOR	35	12.3	12.3	100.0
Total	284	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Work, July – August 2020

Household Size

As observed in Table (10), more than half (55.6%) of the young girls were from households with average size-members (4-6 members), followed by households with large size-members (7-10+ members) with 32.7 percent and the small household size (1-3 members) recorded the least with 11.6 percent. The Population and Housing Census (PHC 2010) also recorded an average household size of 4.2 with the implication that each household in the community constitutes about 4 persons (GSS 2014). This has implications for the study, because families with large size members tend to reduce cost of the initiation by initiating toddlers together with their older sisters (Fanning, 1999).

Table 10: Young Girls' Household Size.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
0-3 MEMBERS	33	11.6	11.6	11.6
4-6 MEMBERS	158	55.6	55.6	67.3
7-10 MEMBERS+	93	32.7	32.7	100.0
Total	284	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Work, July-August 2020

Household Type

It was observed from Table 11 that most of the young girls were from nuclear families comprising the head, spouse, and their children (65.8%) followed by extended families (29.2%) and the single-parent families formed the least (4.9%). The results confirmed what was observed in the 2010 PHC, which revealed more nuclear families than extended and single-parent families in the Municipality (GSS 2014). The result is significant because, previous literature has shown that young girls who headed their own household, living with stepfathers, grandparents, siblings, or other relatives had significantly higher hazards of early sexual debut before age 16 compared to young girls living with both biological parents (Defo & Dimbuene, 2012; Kawai et al., 2008).

Table 11: Young Girls' Household Type.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
NUCLEAR	187	65.8	65.8	65.8
EXTENDED	83	29.2	29.2	95.1
SINGLE- PARENT	14	4.9	4.9	100.0
Total	284	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Work, July-August 2020

Attached to Peers

From Figure 7, it is observed that while 36.6 percent have no best friends, approximately two-thirds (63.4%) of the young girls have someone they referred to as best friends and are therefore, attached to them. By attachment, it implies that they are the people that the young girl often spends her leisure time

with since they can trust and confide in them. The result is significant, because a myriad of studies has reported that most young adults often succumb to pressure from peers to engage in indiscriminate sexual conduct (Cherie & Berhane, 2012; Potard et al., 2008; Selikow et al., 2009). This is summarized in a popular adage in Ghana that: “show me your friend and I will show you your character”.

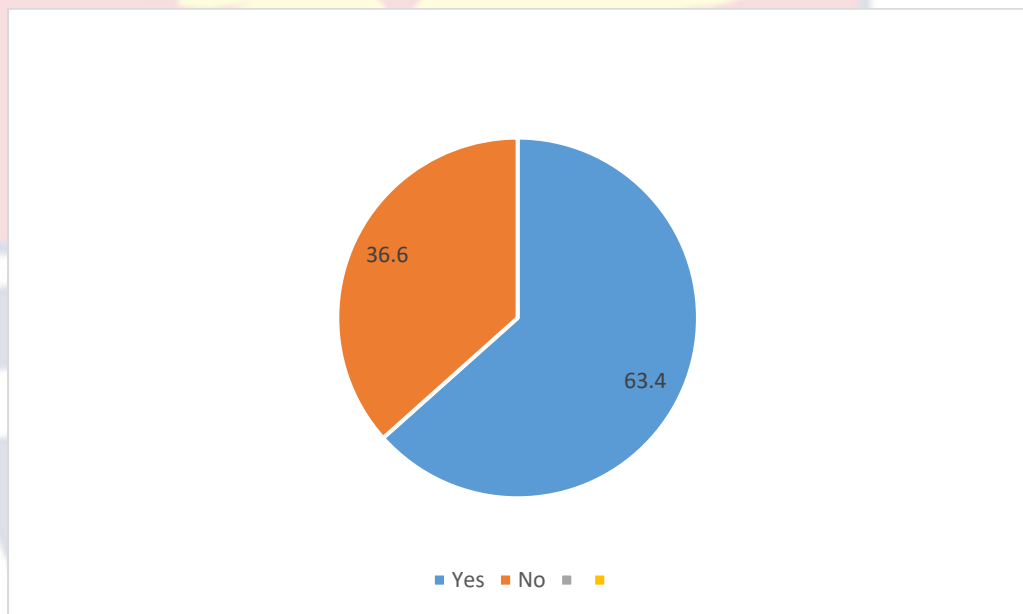


Figure 7: Young Girls Attached to Peers. Source: Field Work, July – August 2020

Relationship with Family Head

Table 12 shows that more than half of the young girls (54.2%) stay with their father or are living in a household where the father is the head. Those staying with their mother (15.5%), grand parents (10.6%), and spouse (10.2%) followed in that order. This finding is expected, because as one of the patrilineal societies in Ghana, children belonging to Krobo parents do not only inherit their fathers, but it is also the father who performs the disciplinarian role (Nukunya, 2003).

Table 12: Young Girls' Relationship with Household Head

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
FATHER	154	54.2	54.2	54.2
MOTHER	44	15.5	15.5	69.7
AUNTY/UNCLE	17	6.0	6.0	75.7
GRAND- PARENTS	30	10.6	10.6	86.3
SELF	3	1.1	1.1	87.3
STEP-PARENTS	7	2.5	2.5	89.8
SPOUSE	29	10.2	10.2	100.0
Total	284	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Work, July-August 2020

Social Control Variables

In terms of the social control variables, the Table (13) indicates that an overwhelming majority (76.1%) of the young girls were attached to their parents/guardians. This is expected, because most of the respondents were not only belonging to their parents/guardian's religion but were also observed to be either in school or in apprenticeship and are therefore, being taken care of by their parents/guardians. Table 13 further reveals that about 44.4 percent were committed/involved in the celebration of *Dipo* in their community, and more than two-thirds (67.6%) were those who had the belief that the rules attached to the celebration are fair. Scholarly works have found that girls who have strong bond to family and kinship relations have a functional importance especially in the continuation of tradition, such as the sustenance of virginity among unmarried women in Turkey (Karacan & Bektas, 2016). Nonetheless, a study

by Jensen and Brownfield (1983) on drug use among young people, found that only attachment to straight parents/guardians' controls drug use among young people, attachment to parents/guardians irrespective of their behaviour or attitude towards drug use did not.

Table 13: Elements of Social Control among Young Girls.

Attached to Parents	Frequency	Percentage
Sometimes	216	76.1
Very Often	68	23.9
Commitment/Involvement		
Not committed/Involved at all	97	34.1
Committed/Involved	126	44.4
Very Committed/Involved	61	21.5
Belief		
Agree	192	67.6
Disagree	92	32.4
Total	284	100.0

Source: Field Work, July-August 2020

Knowledge of Dipo Practice

Earlier *Dipo* womanhood studies have mainly concentrated on young girls who have passed through the rite and have some knowledge about the rite (Agra & Gbadegbe, 2014). However, the current study concentrated on the level of knowledge among young girls from different categories of initiation (early-initiation, late-initiation, and un-initiated). Figure (8) indicates that knowledge of the initiation is almost universal (95.1%) among the young girls in the community. This is significant, because it is an indication that the rite as it is observed nowadays is sustainable. The result is also not surprising, because it was gathered from the key informant interviews that usually, on the day of the celebration, the whole town would be flooded with people, including tourists

who throng the Municipality in their numbers to catch a glimpse of one of the richest and colourful cultural displays in Ghana. According to an elder, the whole community is normally flooded with initiates and other people during the initiation period:

On the day of the ceremony, the whole Somanya is flooded with the initiates from the Trom junction to Sawyer and every home will be celebrating. Some people even bring their daughters from abroad to purposely perform the rite for them in Somanya. This is because, it's only in Somanya that you can perform the rite for your daughter. You can't do it anywhere, not even in the villages (An Elder, Sra).

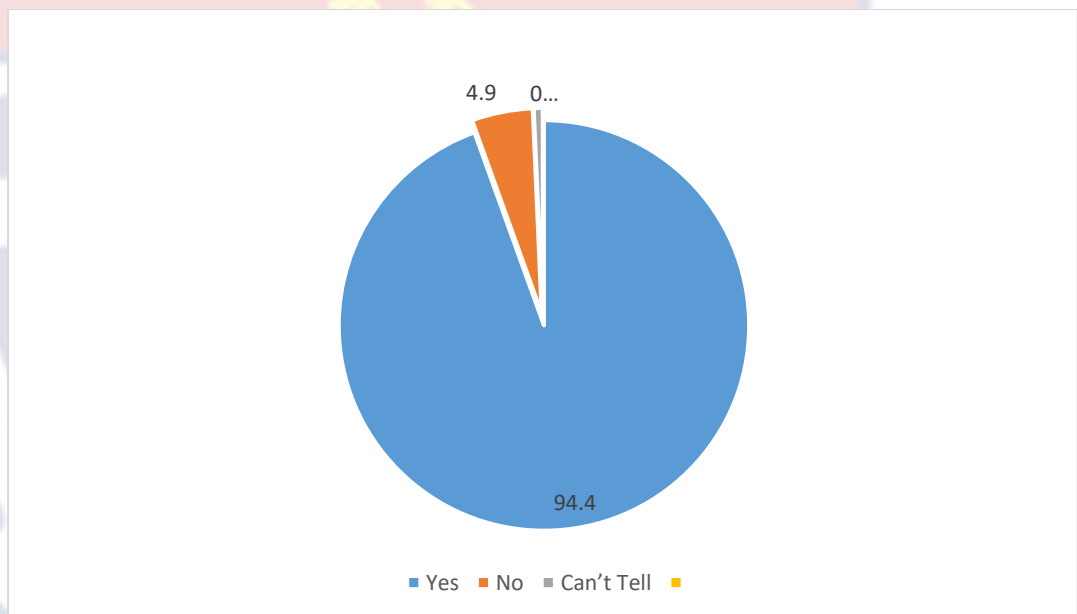


Figure 8: Young Girls' Knowledge of Dipo Rite. Source: Field Work, July-August 2020

An elderly woman who has been caring for initiates for the past 15 years now, also attested to the fact that *Dipo* womanhood rite is popular among the young girls in the community. Her argument, however, is based on the number of young girls who come to perform the initiation under her care as captured in her statement below:

The participation is encouraging, because sometimes I can host about 30-40 girls in this house. But those whose houses are not far from mine, can decide to sleep in their houses. However, they must be here at dawn throughout the initiation period (**A Caretaker, Ogome**).

On the other hand, only few people (4.9%), mostly the un-initiators responded in the negative. Moreover, about 0.7 percent of young girls who said they cannot give any response, are perhaps those who do not have an in-depth knowledge concerning how the initiation is performed.

Initiation Status

Initiation of young girls is important in traditional societies, because it transits them from childhood to adulthood. On the other hand, the un-initiated girls are regarded as children irrespective of their age (Arnfred, 2010; Munthali et al., 2018). Figure 9 gives credence to the fact that the *Dipo* is still popular among the indigenes as the proportion of females who had participated in it were more than twice as much as those who had not (68.3% compared with 31.7%). The rite is popular among the current generation because it is regarded as a cultural practice that gives the people of Krobo a unique identity (Narh, 2017). This was how an elder expressed it:

Nowadays, the main reason why they perform the rite is that after the *Dipo* has been performed for you, you become a member of the Krobo society (**A Traditionalist, Somanya**).

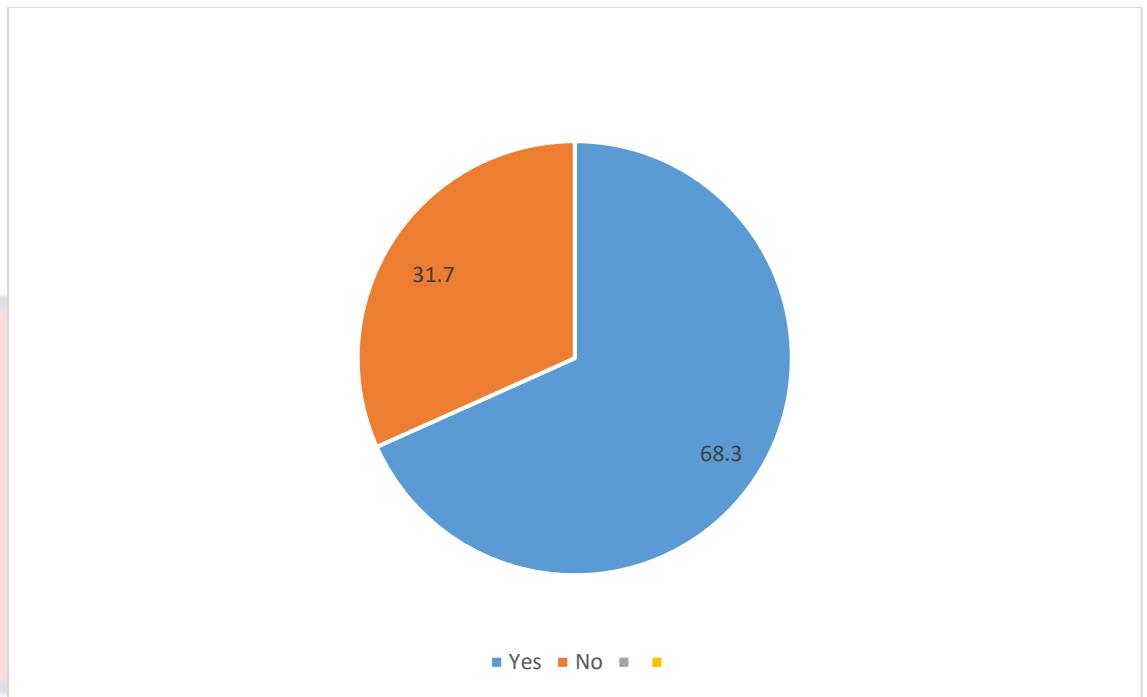


Figure 9: Young Girls' Initiation Status.

Source: Field Work, July-August 2020

Again, the high respondents in the rite among the females could be the fact that *Dipo* is one of the major criteria for selecting someone to occupy the position of a chief or queen-mother in Yilo. Thus, it emerged from the key informant interviews that a candidate whose mother or sister had not undergone the *Dipo* rite would not have the opportunity to occupy any royal positions in the community such as a chief or queen-mother, despite his/her strong royal ancestry. During the period of the survey, there was news in one of the communities about the disqualification of the candidature of a young man from a royal family in Yilo-Krobo who was highly tipped to succeed his late paternal uncle. Thus, being the oldest among his brothers, he was the preferred choice of the members of the royal family to be crowned the new *Asafoatse* (chief) in his village after the demise of their beloved *Asafoatse*. But the elders discovered that though his mother had undergone the rite in the past, none of his sisters had

done it and he too has refused to perform the *Dipo* rite for his own daughters due to his faith in his Christian religion. Based on this brief background check, the elders concluded that the young man is unclean, and disrespectful for his failure to adhere to the cherished custom of the people he intended to lead.

As such, *Dipo* rite is not just an ordinary tradition that a Krobo woman should take lightly. This is because, through the key informant interviews, it emerged that *Dipo* is a tradition given to them by their forefathers. As a treasured custom, it demands that every Krobo woman should pass through it in her lifetime to cleanse herself since a Krobo woman who fails to perform it, will be followed by curses. This is captured in a statement by one opinion leader:

A brother of mine did not perform the rite for his daughter and the daughter is abroad and has met a man who's shown great interest in marrying her. But she always feels that the man's words have remained mere promise for a long time. So, she came down to see the *Dipo* priest for his prayers. After that (prayers), now everything has been smooth for her and she's enjoying her marriage. So, we shouldn't toy with tradition, because the consequences will follow the offender (**Opinion Leader, Okpe-Betsi**).

Another opinion leader enumerated some of the problems likely to befall a woman who fails to undergo the rite:

In fact, it's a taboo if you don't go through that rite as a Krobo woman. They can only allow you as a child, but the very moment you'll start flirting around and unfortunately you take seed, you'll be banished as it used to be the case in the past. Your own peers will just be telling your boyfriends that you've not gone through the *dipo* and for that matter, you're a bad luck girl. Moreover, naturally, such people too don't have the comfort of marriage, and no one will allow you into his house. So, the only thing that is especially in Somanya here is to go (back) to your village and live there. And even in the village, if they get to know that this is the reason why you've come to stay in the village,

you'll not feel comfortable, because nobody will respect you (**An Elder, Sra**).

The Origin of *Dipo* and its Historical Importance in the Community

The Story of Two Rivals Regarding the Origin of Dipo

According to an oral tradition among Krobo, in the pre-colonial days, a man married two women. One of the women gave birth to only boys whereas the other woman brought forth only girls. In those days, given birth to a male-child was a great honour not only for the parents, but for the community since males were needed to go to war. As a result, the male children were celebrated, but nothing was done for the other woman who gave birth to only females. The woman whose daughters were not celebrated presented her worries to her husband, but no solution was found. As a bitter woman, she further made her concerns known to an elderly person in the community called Nana *Kloweki*.

Eventually, Nana *Kloweki* and her elders came out with a proposal that was highly endorsed by a respectable old man in the society at that time by name *Korle Akpankwaa* and *Dipo* initiation thus came into existence. According to the proposal, when any of her daughters experienced her first menstruation, she would be kept in a secret room for some time and given pertinent traditional education mainly on how to prepare her as a good and adorable wife and mother. Then, the old women in the community would take the girl to the riverside and bathe her and be assisted to sit on a stone specially mounted for her for the occasion. Then after successfully going through the initiation process, a day would be set aside to celebrate the girl. The father and the community would shower her with gifts and the old women present would sing for her: "Today,

our daughter has reached the menstruation age and has been bathed at the river side”. This celebration later became known as *Dipo*.

Coming of Age Celebration for the Only Daughter

The second account of that borne some semblance of the first narration has it that in the past, two women were married to a noble man in the community (Huber, 1993). The oral history has it that one of them gave birth to boys and she was the delight of the elders in the community. The fact is that male children were as important to the family as to the community. The other woman delayed in giving birth and when she finally conceived and delivered, it was a female. The latter said to herself that since her rival has taken all the glory, she would celebrate her daughter when she reached her menarche. When the time finally came, she adorned her daughter who had remained a virgin with an expensive *Dumas* cloth and beads around her neck to match and marked her body with dots of white clay. She called over to her friends and other folks in the community to come and witness her daughter’s beauty. She then asked her daughter to dance to the admiration of the visitors.

According to this narration, it so happened that the girl’s dressing and the kind of dancing skills she exhibited on that day attracted those present to the extent that they also vowed to do same for their young daughters. As time went by, the community resolved that it is a disgrace for a young girl to conceive before the ceremony is performed for her. The girl would be banished from society for offending the community and ancestors. Finally, this celebration became what is known today as *Dipo*.

Nana Kloweki's Informal Training School for Young Girls

In contrast to the previous accounts, the third account though acknowledges the fact that *Dipo* was instituted by Nana Kloweki, it however, underscores the fact that the rite was mainly introduced to serve as an informal vocational school to train young girls in domestic science prior to their marriage. Thus, according to another oral history of the Krobo, during the Dangme's migration from Judah in Israel, through to Notsie in Northern Togo, they met an old lady who took delight in them. This old lady decided to accompany them to wherever they would settle. Finally, the people of Krobo named the old lady Nana *Kloweki* and she accompanied them until they got to the top of the Krobo hills in Gold Coast (now Ghana) and made it their abode.

While on top of the hills, Nana *Kloweki* established a shrine known as *Dipo* shrine. In fact, it was not a shrine per say, but it was an informal vocational school where the young girls were trained in domestic science. The purpose of the vocational school was to train young girls who have reached the marriageable age for marriage. The underlying principle of the rite was like other womanhood rites existing in other societies in Africa. The girls' initiation ritual known as *Olufuko* in Namibia, for instance, is used by initiation leaders to teach young girls how to be good wives and respectful adults (Kuoppala, 2016).

This means that usually at 12 years old onwards, a young girl in Krobo was sent to Nana *Kloweki's* shrine to commence the training. During which period, the young girl had not known a man until she comes out of that school. Nana Kloweki started training the young ones in cookery, sweeping, how to care for young ones, knitting and all female chores as well as how to be good

and respectful wives for a period of about three years. According to the narration, on successful completion of the training, there's a graduation for the young girls. As part of the graduation, certificates were issued to them in the form of cicatrization inscriptions on some parts of their bodies (Huber, 1993; Steegstra, 2005).

Perceptions of Old Adults towards the Introduction of *Dipo* Rite in the Community

During the key informant interviews, the views of older adults were solicited regarding the introduction of *Dipo* rite and the effectiveness of the punishments meted out to young girls who break the rules governing the rite in contemporary times. Two groups emerged with divergent worldviews towards the introduction of *Dipo* and its effects on sexual behaviour of young people. This observation is like the study by Nhlekisana (2017) in Botswana where modernity has created tension between the old and new generations regarding the performance of! Xoo female initiation of Zutshwa of Western Botswana. The views of one group that appeared to be against observing *Dipo* rites in contemporary times (devout Christians/Muslims), claimed that modernization has eroded the values of *Dipo*, and it should be scrapped (Abbey et al., 2021; Ostrow, 2011). According to the group, the *Dipo* rite was constructed to perpetuate the patriarchal edifice of traditional societies as the laid down punishments and social condemnation was much greater for females than for males. This school of thought also claim that most of the performance characterizing *Dipo* is not based on Christian doctrine (Teyegaga, 1985), because The Lord who created all things has made everything cleaned. Hence, there is no need for a mere human being to decree that one must be cleansed by

another human being before he/she can succeed in life. A female participant questioned:

This is because the Lord who created all things said that He's made everything clean, so why is it that a mere human being has decreed that you've to clean yourself before you'll succeed in life? (**Old Lady, Labor**).

This group further argued that the claim that *Dipo* promotes chastity among young girls is a mirage. Rather, they claimed that a young girl's chastity depends on her good upbringing and strong moral attitude. An un-initiated lady summarized it in the statement below:

A female's chastity depends on the good training her parents would give her when she's growing up. It's that training that would see her through life. My parents really brought us up in a God-fearing way and have also transferred the same training to my kids. For me, I married my late husband as a virgin and we're married for a long time until he passed away. My other younger sisters and daughters all married as virgins and are happily staying with their husbands and children (**A Female Participant, Labor**).

Some of them also explained that the rite is occult and fetish. As a result, those who pass through it never prosper in life. A participant who was initiated at early stage of her life claimed that in her family, the woman who was not initiated is now the breadwinner and the most prosperous member of the family. Her statement is captured below:

Honestly, I wouldn't have done it (*Dipo*) if I wasn't forced to undergo the rite at age 4. I now know that it is spiritual. In my family, a cousin of mine runaway prior to the time of her initiation, because she'd conceived. Though she lost the pregnancy, she later got married and has given birth. She's now staying in Akosombo and is our breadwinner (**A Female Participant, Somanya**).

In contrast, the other group that appears to be in support of the rite (conservatives/traditionalists) and its associated punishments, expressed that *Dipo* was a good thing handed to them by their forefathers (Ostrow, 2011). This is because, unlike the female genital mutilation (FGM), where initiates experience excruciating cutting or removal of their clitoris (Selby, 2008), *Dipo* simply means the training of a young girl to become more responsible and adorable woman. In a statement below, an opinion leader compared the processes between *Dipo* and FGM and highlighted the need for the continuous celebration of *Dipo* womanhood rite:

You see, (Dipo) it's not like the FGM where they circumcised innocent girl child. This act is not good, because when a (female) child is circumcised, she'll not have sexual feelings. It's very difficult for her to be satisfied in bed. Since they know that it is bad practice, they want to stop it. But Dipo is different ... it doesn't spoil anything. The Dipo is like come and let's train you how to serve your husband, is it wrong? No. Supposing you've come to marry my daughter and the mother didn't teach her how to cook, you take her away and she can't cook for you, will you be happy with her? **(An Opinion Leader, Ogome).**

Other supporters believe that like the other SSA traditional societies (Munthali & Zulu, 2007), *Dipo* was instituted by their ancestors to among, other things, mark their transition from childhood to adulthood. Besides, it gives the young girls identity as Krobo women (Abbey et al., 2021; Boakye, 2010). Some key informants opined thus:

The reason why it (Dipo) was instituted is that it gave Krobos identity. Yes, identity. Within the communities of nations, they don't want the Krobo heritage to get missing, so they gave them identity through this Dipo **(An Elder, Somanya).**

If you're in the society and you say you're not going to do it, you're like a Jew who doesn't follow Moses' identity that he's given to the people (of Israel). One of the identities (among

Krobos) is to circumcise the male. This (circumcision) makes the male to enter Tegble (Secret) society that if there's war, they can go. The females don't go to war, but they've to undergo *Dipo* to clean themselves (**An Opinion Leader, Somanya**).

Moreover, womanhood rites are used to basically train young girls to fight against immorality in the society, such as early sexual initiation and its associated problems confronting young people (Hevi-Yiboe, 2003). This is because the norms and rules governing womanhood rites such as *Dipo* rite are effective and deterrent enough to discourage young people from engaging in early sexual activity (Amos, 2013). Thus, aside that the young girl would be expelled from the community, the man who got her pregnant is also not spared of the punishments (Amos, 2013; Huber, 1993; Steegstra, 2005). It emerged from the surveys that nowadays, the young man will be fined heavily and asked to perform the *Dipo* rite for the girl and marry her. Similar finding was made by a study among the Krobo, and it was reported that nowadays, aside that some parents would not allow their daughter to remain in their house if she conceived prior to her initiation, the man responsible for her pregnancy is made to pay for all the expenses of her purification rite (Lartey, 2014).

Presently, though the rite has experienced some modifications, the elders underlined that the punishments associated with *Dipo* are strictly observed in the community. A key informant narrated that in recent times, a young lady from a royal family in Yilo, got pregnant before her initiation. As her parents were key adherents of the principles of the *Dipo* rite, she was subsequently banished from her family house. This was how he explained the incident:

I've noticed that today, the same punishment is still prevalent in our community. Not long ago, a lady from a royal family got pregnant before her initiation. Her mother built a house for her behind Sra to live there. It means that as a punishment, she's been sacked from her family's house to stay at another place, though she's still on the Krobo land, but she can't come to the family (house) and drink water. Though such punishments were very drastic in the olden days, when the defaulters were expelled from the Krobo land entirely. In the olden days too, they'd take a burning firewood and used it to expel her, then a gunshot would be fired to bid the girl a final farewell from the Krobo land. However, in the case of this lady, though she wasn't treated like this, the chief at that time, had wanted to go to her family house to personally expel her. However, her mother intervened and pleaded on her (daughter's) behalf to spare her, because she's preparing a house for her daughter to go and stay there. So, as soon as the house was ready, she was sent to live there. After she'd left, they purified the family house with a white fowl, but the use of firewood and gunshots were not performed. The problem is that she can't visit her family house, but any of her family members can visit her if the person so desired (**A Traditionalist, Okpe-Betesi**).

Another traditionalist confirmed the statement above and threw more light on some of the punishments that govern the *Dipo* rite in the sentences below:

You'd be expelled from the area. You'd not be expected to come to the Krobo land again. Right now (today), in my house if my daughter has not been initiated and becomes pregnant, she's no right to come into my house to drink water (**A Traditionalist, Ogome**).

From the above narratives, it can be deduced that the punishments associated with *Dipo* rites are strictly observed, especially among the conservatives/traditionalists. This confirmed Steegstra's (2005) findings that nowadays, only a few traditionalists' homes will allow their daughter to remain in their family if she conceives prior to her initiation.

Summary of Chapter

The results from the survey were used to discuss the background characteristics of participants, the origins and the historical importance of *Dipo* rite as celebrated by the people of Krobo in this chapter. The chapter concluded with a discussion on the perceptions of old adults towards the introduction of *Dipo* rite where two groups emerged with divergent views. While one school of thought perceived the introduction of the rite as barbaric and un-Christian and should be stopped, the other school of thought perceived it as a good thing handed to them by their forefathers to basically fight against immorality in the society, such as early sexual initiation and its associated problems confronting young people. Having discussed the background characteristics of participants and the origins of *Dipo* womanhood rite, the ensuing chapter focuses on the sexual behaviour of young girls according to their female initiation status.



CHAPTER FIVE

FEMALE INITIATION CATEGORIES AND SEXUAL BEHAVIOUR

Introduction

The chapter discusses the initiation status of young girls that was categorized as early-initiates; late-initiates; and un-initiates and their sexual behaviour. This is discussed in light of whether they have ever had sex and some of the common factors that expose young girls to early sexual conduct. With the aid of logistic regression applications, the chapter further demonstrates some of the factors that exposed young girls to early sexual debut in the community.

Female Initiation Categories and Sexual Behaviour

Early Initiated

In the late 1990s, the queenmother of Yilo-Krobo advocated eight years as the minimum age of initiation for girls (Steegstra, 2005). This was largely influenced by the fact that parents fear that their daughters can get pregnant and banish from the society since the availability of nutritious food has made the girls to reach early puberty and can, therefore, involve in pre-*Dipo* sex (Narh, 2017). Nowadays, because of monetary gains on the part of the priests/priestesses who man the shrines, some parents have influenced the system to involve their daughters below the age of 4 years or less in the initiation to avoid shame (Huber, 1993; Langmagne et al., 2018; Narh, 2017; Shroeder & Danquah, 2000). A Caregiver explained that since the initiation of toddlers is a deviation from the old structure where the initiation was strictly performed for mature girls, the elders are therefore, embarking on measures to discontinue the practice. The Caregiver disclosed this in the statement below:

Those who come to me for the initiation are all mature girls. No underage girl has ever come to me for the initiation, because the elders of the town worry us when we perform the Dipo for the very young girls. I agree with the elders since the initiation of toddlers is a deviation from the former times when only matured girls went through the rites (**A CareGiver, Ogome**).

In this study, young girls who were initiated below the age of 12 years old were considered as early initiates and they constituted 61 (21.5%) of the respondents. The key informant interviews and discussions with young people showed that the young girls who were initiated under 12 years old were referred to as early initiated. Below are some of the reasons given by participants regarding why some parents are motivated to opt for early initiation for their daughters in contemporary times.

Motivating Factors for Early-Initiation

Christian/Muslim Parents

The current study observed that those who had early initiation mostly belong to parents who have converted into Christian/Muslim Faith but have not entirely dismissed their traditional heritage (Ostrow, 2011; Wilson, 1995). A Pastor gave a description on why some pastors have chosen to adopt early initiation for their daughters in the sentences below:

Some also bring their (infant) daughters to be initiated as early as possible so that no one will notice that pastors also partake in Dipo. The fact is that Dipo is like a tradition that if you don't perform it, curses will follow you wherever you go until you've done it (**An Elder, Okpe-Beteshe**).

Another pastor in the community confirmed the earlier statement and further threw light on the behaviour of some pastors regarding the initiation of their daughters in the following words:

No, those who do dipo and attend our Church are recognized. Because even some men of God, will take their daughters to a far place or to another community to perform the dipo for them. Because it demoralizes many people to see that a committed Christian is also involved in dipo. So this is the hypocrisy among some Christian leaders and others. But most of those initiates are very young and are under the care and control of their parents (**A Pastor, Somanya**).

The above statements are indications that some of the Christians who participate in the rite, initiate their daughters at a very young age and sometimes under disguise. This act further confirmed the common notion among the indigenes that some of the early-initiated were forced to undergo the rites at the time they were too young to give consent. Consequently, they passed through the rite at the time they were too young to give consent or comprehend the essence of the rite. A young lady clarified:

I was forced to do it (Dipo initiation), but I wanted to do it at the age of 20 (**Young girl, 24, Urban**).

Fear of Boycotting the Initiation at Old Age

The study discovered that some parents are motivated to opt for early initiation, because of the fear that when the daughters grow up, they will rebel against the rite (Sackey, 2008/2009). A young girl who was initiated as young as 4 years shared her view on the issue under discussion in these words:

If I were to be initiated today, I wouldn't have done it, because I'm now a Christian and seen that the initiation is spiritual (**A Young Girl 21, Urban**).

The above statement is evidence that some young girls were prepared to refuse the initiation if they were left to grow up and decide for themselves. But they could not resist since they were exposed to the initiation at the time, they were too young to comprehend the essence of what they were going through.

Traditional Demand

Moreover, other parents, though, are not enthused about the tradition due to their personal, professional, or religious beliefs, they do not resist it when a relative decides to initiate their daughters. This is how a young lady narrated it:

Some of (early) initiated girls are usually initiated by their Aunties or Uncles, because the father will insist that the rite is a fetish. Yet they don't refuse it when a family member is doing it for their daughters (**A Young Girl, 18, Rural**).

Thus, even though they maybe Christians/Muslims, they dare not resist the initiation, because they know the value of the rite in their society (Ostrow, 2011). They know that the initiation is done to satisfy the traditional demands of their society (Rooyen & Hartell, 2010). Also, it boosts their chances of realizing their dream if they want to contest for a royal position in the community. Another participant shared his experience to buttress the young girl's statement above. He narrated that even though as a member of a royal family, he was strongly against the *Dipo* rite initially, because his dream was to mount the pulpit and preach the Gospel in future. However, he never opposed it whenever his elder sister took the initiative to initiate his daughters when they reached the age of 9 or 10 years. As the newly enstooled *Asafoatse* (chief) in his village, he has now understood the meaning and traditional importance of the *Dipo* rite of his people. Moreover, he now appreciates his sister's efforts and foresight in the initiation of his daughters, because all those were considered before he assumed his new position. He explained:

I feel proud that they've (daughters) all passed through the rite all by my sister's initiative. It really helped in their up-bringing

and hitherto, the fear I used to have that *Dipo* is a fetish is no more (**An Opinion Leader, Okpe-Beteshi**).

This finding corroborated a study by Ostrow (2011) that today, whereas some Christians have entirely refused to observe the rituals, bulk of them continue to attach countless importance to the *Dipo* celebration. Wilson (1995) concurred with Ostrow (2011) and gave a historical account to support the fact that some Krobo indigenes were seen to belong to the two worldviews: Christianity and Traditionalist (Christraditionals). According to the author, around the 1880s, some converted Krobo began to support some old customary practices of the Krobo such as *Dipo*.

Migration Purpose

A time came when travelling to Abidjan, Cote D'Ivoire came into vogue (Anarfi, 1990; 1992), especially for most women in the community who went there to work and bring back home money and other properties (Asampong et al., 2013). Most of the time, these women wanted their young girls to accompany them on the journey. Hence, they would hurriedly perform the rite for little kids as young as 5 years old or less to basically fulfill the cultural demand and travel with them. An elder explained:

In the olden days, young girls would enter the *Dipo* from 16 years upwards. What has changed is that today, a 5-year-old child who doesn't know anything is initiated. What brought about this is that it got to a time when these young ones were traveling to Abidjan and working there and bringing home many things. So parents, especially the mothers also decided to allow their daughters to travel there and bring home properties. So, a girl of about 5, 6, 7, 8 years old is hurriedly performed the rite on her and sent her outside to go and work and bring money home (**An Elder, Sra**).

To Avoid Shame

Others opined that they opted for early initiation to avoid shame. Thus, though they understand and appreciate the rite, they loathe seeing the nakedness of their daughters at old age before the public. A young girl who was initiated at 4 years old reported:

“The early initiation was intended not to expose our nakedness to the public” (**Young girl, 19, urban**).

This observation is consistent with Shroeder and Danquah (2000: 60) that girls who go through the rite at that tender age are “innocent and not ashamed of their nakedness”. Against this background, most of these girls who were initiated as toddlers may be too young to comprehend the essence of the rite, which is mainly to educate and prepare young girls for marriage (Huber, 1993). The implication is that some of the early initiated expressed the joy that they have fulfilled a cultural requirement of their society and that they have been cleansed to give birth and stay in their family house. Yet, aside from the fact that most of them have limited knowledge about what they went through during their initiation, most of them also have a laidback attitude towards the *Dipo* rituals.

Late Initiated

In the pre-colonial days, the initiation was done for matured girls between 14 and 20 years old (Agra & Gbadegbe, 2014; Anarfi, 2003; Huber, 1993; Steegstra, 2005). The current study subscribes to age 12 years and over for late initiated category. This is not only because I found that age as not too different from the former times, but it is also considered as young girls who have remained pure and can be given trainings that could help them in future

when they marry. The age group designated as late-initiates formed 130 (45.8%) of the participants.

Motivation for Late-Initiation

Mark of Maturity



Figure 10: A Portrait of Some Late-Initiates with their Caretaker at Ogome, 2020.

Courtesy: A Dipo Caretaker at Ogome.

As shown in Figure 10, it is believed that the late-initiated young girls are mature enough, have also experienced menstruation and will be able to understand and appreciate the process of the initiation. An informant recounted how his grandmother literally forced his younger sister's breasts to go back, because she was quite young at 11 years old, and her breasts had started bulging out. This practice is called *Nyokpam* (ie. a practice where herbs are applied on

the breast of a young girl who is developing breast at young age to remain flat). They believed that a girl should at least grow to about 12 years old before her breast begins to come out and pass through the initiation or wait until she is 14 or 16 years old.

Epitome of Morality

The initiation is performed for young girls who have remained chaste to sit on the sacred stone, dress elegantly (Narh, 2017) and be announced to the world that they are pure and have reached the marriageable age (Odonkor, 1971). In view of this, young girls who conceived before the rite was performed for them were regarded as outcasts and were banished from Yilo-Krobo (Anarfi, 2003; Huber, 1993). But nowadays, the participants reported that it is mostly the individual homes who do the punishment by asking the recalcitrant daughter to stay away from the family house. A traditionalist expatiated on this issue in the sentences below:

Nowadays, we don't banish, but the (individual) families would do the punishment. That's why (Dipo) is still popular in our land **(A Traditionalist, Ogome).**

Worthy to note, however, is the fact that like most traditional societies in SSA (Munthali & Zulu, 2007), most of those who passed through the *Dipo* initiation at maturity argued that the rite is a good thing to ever happen to them and there is nothing spiritual attached to it. As such, they have no cause to regret their initiation, because it has taught them many useful things in life. During the survey, a young girl explained thus:

“It will help you when you get married, because I'm a good wife because of the training I went through during my 'dipo' **(Young girl, 24, rural).**”

A Revered Culture

Most of the late initiated accept the fact that *Dipo* initiation is a good thing and should be left to be performed for young girls in the community. They believe that it is their culture that is celebrated to, among other things, mark their transition from childhood to adulthood (Agra & Gbadegbe, 2014). Besides, their parents also appreciate it and encourage them to pass through it since it has some benefits for the initiates (Munthali & Zulu, 2007). A key informant opined thus:

The benefits of *dipo* is that it allows the women to respect their husbands who will also love and adore them in return. *Dipo* calls for a cooperation in marriage in the sense that they'll assist their husbands in the upkeep of their children. And if a man runs away from the marriage and dumps the children on the woman, because of *dipo*, even though it'll be tedious, they're able to manage because of the training they'd had from *dipo* (**An Elder, Sra**).

This finding is consistent with what was observed among the Limpopo group of South Africa by Maluleke and Troskie (2003) that the initiates believe that the “Vukhomba” initiation rite is useful, because it is a cultural practice that prepares girls for acceptable behaviour in their culture.

Un-initiated

In the past, young girls who were matured enough were supposed to undergo the initiation to cleanse themselves, yet there was no punishment prescribed for those who were not initiated (Huber, 1993; Munthali et al., 2018). Currently, some parents/guardians see it as normal if they do not initiate their daughters, eventhough in some cases, such girls are mocked at by their peers who see them as children irrespective of their age at experiencing first sex (Arnfred, 2010; Munthali et al., 2018). In this study, about 93 (32.7%) of the

participants were un-initiated and had no intention to undergo the initiation at the time of the survey. It emerged from the survey that most of the parents who had not performed the *Dipo* for their daughters in the Municipality are mainly Pastors, Christians/Muslims and some inhabitants at Labor, a suburb of Somanya. This is even though those at Labor community originally belonged to traditional homes in Yilo-Krobo but have decided to sever themselves from anything that has to do with *Dipo* and other traditional rites.

Reasons for not Initiating.

Dipo is Spiritual, Fetish and Unforgiven

It emanated from the key informants' interviews that parents who do not want to initiate their daughters do so because they claim that the rite look so spiritual, fetish and unforgiven. Consequently, devout and committed Christians do not want to be associated with the rites. A pastor explained the reason why he is not interested in *Dipo* celebration. According to him, as a young man in a traditional home, he witnessed a case where two young girls who were due for the initiation refused it and ran away. Later, they regretted their action and returned to the house to plead for forgiveness, but the elders in the house did not listen to them. They went ahead to punish them and charged them to produce goats to pacify the gods. The elders rationalized their action on the grounds that the girls had desecrated the house that housed the family stool. As a result, the Pastor expressed that he does not see the need to be part of a practice that does not forgive.

Religion

Moreover, because they have accepted the Christian faith, some of the young girls have resolved to boycott the initiation when they are old enough and

can decide for themselves. They remain defiant even at the point of being thrown out from their homes. Another pastor recounted the experience of a Christian young lady who was thrown out from her family's house. This happened in 2008 when the young girl was in a Senior High School and had baptized and confirmed as a Christian. Then her father later insisted that she should prepare herself to undergo the *Dipo*, but she refused. The father kept pestering her with his request, but she remained adamant. Her behaviour angered the father, and he threw the young lady out from his house until she ended up in the Pastor's house. Now even as a qualified trained teacher, she is still staying with the Pastor and his family.

The Labor Experience

Another elderly woman who grew up in a Christian home at Labor, a suburb of Somanya, also gave a brief history regarding why most inhabitants at Labor have refused to perform the *Dipo*. According to her account, it was her grandfather who after his convention into the Presbyterian Faith, vowed to separate himself and his generation from any idol worship, including *Dipo* rite. To make his dream come true, he acquired a vast virgin land at Labor and decided that henceforth, anyone who would not perform the *Dipo* rite and was expelled from her family house, would be given a parcel of the land to develop. As a result, most families at Labor perceived *Dipo* celebration as fetish and outmoded and have since refused to initiate their daughters. One respondent from Labor shared her understanding of the rite as follows:

“Yes, it's full of fetish. This is because where they'll send you during the celebration is a fetish (place). It is this fetish (priestess) who'll perform the *Dipo* for you until you're sent to sit on the stone. And that stone, what's under it?” (**Old Lady, Labor**).

Parents/Guardians' Lack of Interest in Dipo

Another female participant also gave a vivid account of how she and her sisters have completely lost interest in the rite. According to her, the grandfather who was totally against the *Dipo* practice in the community, was the reason why they never involved themselves in the celebration. Thus, when she and her sisters were growing up, the grandfather never allowed them to take a glimpse at the *Dipo* procession even though one of the sacred stones was located near their house. She narrated:

No, please. I've never witnessed the initiation. Eei! How could I with my grandfather around? When they were even passing-by and we tried to follow the procession, my grandfather would cane us severely when we returned. Even when we're attracted by their songs and come out to watch them, my grandfather would lash us when we go back to the house (**An Old Lady, Labor**).

Moreover, the grandfather, who she described as a strong and a disciplinarian, single-handedly fought the organizers of the *Dipo* rite ceremony to change their route. The reason is that one of the sacred stones was located near their house. Thus, it was shorter and easier to access the sacred stone through the route that passed in front of their house. However, her grandfather got infuriated whenever the young girls were passing in costume that almost revealed their nakedness with huge crowd including males, following them amidst singing and dancing. According to her, the grandfather fought them until they changed the route.

In those days when my grandfather was alive, they dared not use this road to where the stone was located. The stone is located down there, and this road is shorter to get there. But as the girls were moving, a lot of people would be following them amidst singing and shouting that usually infuriated my grandfather. They used to do that on a Sunday (**An Old Lady, Labor**).

From the foregoing discussion, it can be deduced that the un-initiated young girls have refused to participate in the *Dipo* rite, because they believe that the *Dipo* celebration is fetish and occult and should be abolished. They further blame the spike in HIV/AIDS prevalence in the area on the *Dipo* initiation (Agra & Gbadegbe, 2014; Langmagne et al., 2018). Hence, this category of un-initiated young girls believe that the rite no longer serves any useful purpose and must be scrapped. This observation was also shared by Maluleke and Troskie (2003) that the un-initiates perceived “Vukhomba” initiation as evil and dangerous practice, and it should be abolished.

Knowledge of Punishments and *Dipo* Participation among Young Girls

Some previous studies undertaken in Yilo-Krobo and other neighbouring communities on the practice of *Dipo* have indicated that the rite as it is being performed today, is a pale shadow of its former days when the rite and the ethical norms governing it were strictly observed (Anarfi, 2003; Langmagne et al., 2018). Considering this, the study proceeds to understand the knowledge of the different initiation categories of young girls regarding the norms and ethics governing the rite and the reason why they participated in the initiation or otherwise. This was done against the backdrop that a good knowledge and participation in the *Dipo*, is an indication that the rite is relevant and has a brighter future. The distribution of their responses is presented in Table (14).

Table 14: Percentage of Young Girls who have Heard and Participated in Dipo Rituals by Background Characteristics.

Background Characteristic	Knowledge of Present Punishment				P-Value	Participated in <i>Dipo</i>				P-Value
	No	%	Yes	%		No	%	Yes	%	
Initiation Status					0.000					0.000
Early-Initiation	30	25.9	31	18.5		0	0.0	61	31.9	
Late-Initiation	26	22.4	104	61.9		0	0.0	130	68.1	
Un-Initiated	60	51.7	33	19.6		93	100.0	0	0.0	
Total	116	100.0	168	100.0		93	100.0	191	100.0	
Locality					0.000					0.000
Urban	78	67.2	71	42.3		65	72.2	84	43.3	
Rural	38	32.8	97	57.7		25	27.8	110	56.7	
Total	116	100.0	168	100.0		90	100.0	194	100.0	
Marital Status					0.711					0.298
Single	88	75.9	108	64.2		69	76.7	127	65.4	
Married	16	13.8	28	16.7		13	14.4	31	16.0	
Consensual Union	7	6.0	24	14.3		5	5.6	26	13.4	
Divorced	1	0.9	3	1.8		0	0.0	4	2.1	
Separated	4	3.4	5	3.0		3	3.3	6	3.1	
Total	116	100.0	168	100.0		90	100.0	194	100.0	
Age					0.650					0.076
15-19	58	50.0	68	40.5		50	55.6	76	39.2	
20-24	58	50.0	100	59.5		40	44.4	118	60.8	
Total	116	100.0	168	100.0		90	100.0	194	100.0	
Religion					0.003					0.003
Christian	106	91.3	149	88.7		86	95.6	172	88.6	
Muslim	3	2.6	1	0.5		4	4.4	0	0.0	
Traditionalist	1	0.9	10	6.0		0	0.0	11	5.7	
No-Religion	5	4.3	8	4.8		0	0.0	11	5.7	
Rastafarian	1	0.9	0	0.0		0	0.0	0	0.0	
Total	116	100.0	168	100.0		90	100.0	194	100.0	
Migration					0.623					0.643
No	53	45.7	90	53.6		49	54.4	94	48.5	
Yes	63	54.3	78	46.4		41	45.6	100	51.5	
Total	116	100.0	168	100.0		90	100.0	194	100.0	
HouseHold Size					0.171					0.814
0-3	15	12.9	18	10.7		12	13.3	21	10.8	
4-6	59	50.9	99	58.9		46	51.1	112	57.8	
7-10+	42	36.2	51	30.4		32	35.6	61	31.4	
Total	116	100.0	168	100.0		90	100.0	194	100.0	
SES					0.000					0.034
Rich	17	14.9	19	11.2		18	20.0	18	9.3	
Average	78	68.4	135	79.4		57	63.3	156	80.4	
Poor	19	16.7	16	9.4		15	16.7	20	10.3	

Table 14: Cont'd

Total	114	100.0	170	100.0	90	100.0	194	100.0	
Household Type				0.643					0.913
Nuclear	76	65.5	111	66.1	62	68.9	125	64.4	
Extended	33	28.5	50	29.8	24	26.7	59	30.4	
Single-Parent	7	6.0	7	4.1	4	4.4	10	5.2	
Total	116	100.0	168	100.0	90	100.0	194	100.0	
Household Head Relationship				0.897					0.361
Father	66	56.8	88	52.4	52	57.8	102	52.7	
Mother	21	18.0	23	13.7	15	16.7	29	14.9	
Aunt/Uncle	5	4.3	12	7.1	2	2.2	15	7.7	
Grand-Parent	11	9.4	19	11.3	11	12.2	19	9.8	
Self	2	1.7	1	0.6	0	0.0	3	1.5	
Stepparent	3	2.9	4	2.4	1	1.1	6	3.1	
Spouse	8	6.9	21	12.5	9	10.0	20	10.3	
Total	116	100.0	168	100.0	90	100.0	194	100.0	
Employment Status				0.490					0.002
Unemployed	17	14.7	23	13.7	7	7.8	31	16.0	
Self-Employed	45	38.8	82	48.8	30	33.3	105	54.1	
Salary-Worker	5	4.3	5	3.0	5	5.6	3	1.5	
Apprentice	7	6.0	16	9.5	4	4.4	17	8.8	
N/A	42	36.2	42	25.9	44	48.9	38	19.6	
Total	116	100.0	168	100.0	90	100.0	194	100.0	
Education Status				0.102					0.002
No-Formal Educ	2	1.7	6	3.6	0	0.0	8	4.1	
Primary	14	12.1	24	14.3	6	6.7	32	16.5	
JHS	49	42.3	63	37.5	39	43.3	73	37.6	
SHS	39	33.6	69	41.0	34	37.8	74	38.2	
Tertiary	12	10.3	6	3.6	11	12.2	7	3.6	
Total	116	100.0	168	100.0	90	100.0	194	100.0	

Source: Field Work, July-August 2020

The P-value in Table (14) indicates that initiation status, locality, religion, and SES were significantly related with knowledge of *Dipo* punishments in the present times. The findings depict that both the early-initiated and un-initiated girls have inadequate knowledge of the punishments associated with the rite (18.5% and 19.6%) respectively. An uninitiated young girl clarified why she lacks knowledge about *Dipo* initiation processes in the following words:

My father has warned me not to have anything to do with dipo, because he's a staunch Christian/Presbyter (**Young girl, 18, urban**).

Moreover, a young girl who was initiated as young as 5 years old also expressed that she does not know about the punishments. This is because, she was initiated at the time she did not have any idea about the initiation ceremony and has also not witnessed a case whereby a person has been punished for breaking the rules of the rite. The young girl put it succinctly:

I was initiated as a child and didn't know what was going on. I think there is no punishment, because no one has been punished in this community for a long time now (**Young girl, 15, rural**).

Another young girl from the urban area also emphasized that she has no knowledge of the punishments associated with *Dipo* in the following sentence:

No, I don't know the punishments involved, because we are Christians and don't have anything to do with (Dipo) initiation (**Young girl, 18, urban**).

Probably, the inadequate knowledge about the processes of the rite among the un-initiated girls (Maluleke & Troskie, 2003) is the reason why they deceptively perceived *Dipo* initiation as evil and dangerous practice, and they want it to be abolished. Some early-initiated girls too are not adequately informed about the rites, because they passed through the initiation against their consent. Or they had their initiation at the time they did not understand what they were going through. On the other hand, more than two-thirds (68.1%) of girls who experienced late-initiation have indepth knowledge about the initiation and the punishments associated with it. A young girl expressed:

There are some punishments attached to it. I know that those who broke the rules got stuck on the Dipo stone and were humiliated, stigmatized, and banished from the town (**Young girl, 19, urban**)

Some of them also explained that their in-depth knowledge about the rules governing the *Dipo* initiation was the reason why they are morally strong.

One young girl explained thus:

I was told that in the past, a family member was banished from this town and so I should be careful not to follow her footsteps while growing up (**Young girl, 21, rural**).

Another young girl who probably went through the *Dipo* at mature age, also recounted that because she was afraid of the punishments associated with the rite, she kept her virginity. She maintained:

I went through the *Dipo* successfully, because I was afraid of my uncle and other family members. Because I know that the young girl who got pregnant before the initiation, would be beaten, and insulted by her parents/guardians and might not even get a better man to marry (**Young girl, 21, rural**).

The young girls who are aware of the punishments, mentioned banishment/expelled, forced to leave family house; insult by parents/family members, verbal warning, stigmatization, and peers shunning the company of offenders as some of the key punishments meted out to offenders. Worthy to note, however, is the fact that most late initiated have adequate knowledge about the rite. This is because, the study observed that most often, parents who are in support of the rite or have gone through the initiation themselves, explained the do's and don't's of the initiation to them before encouraging their daughters to go through the initiation. A key informant posited:

With my last daughter (ie. my youngest daughter), I sought her permission, she's in I think JHS 3 by then, I said I wouldn't like the rites to be done for her while she's young. Because I wanted her to grow up so that she'll understand why the rites is being done for her. So, I asked her, do you want the rites to be done for you? I explained to her that this is our culture and explained the

implications involved, and she agreed to have it (**Opinion Leader, Plau**).

Moreover, some of the parents usually informed their daughters about some of the potential gains they stand to enjoy for passing through the *Dipo*.

This include the fact that initiated women are often the most preferred choice of Krobo young men as wives. A traditionalist opined:

There're some un-initiated women in town and no one wants to marry them, they've been rejected by the men. So, if you want to go through that then it's your own cup of tea. I won't allow my son to go and marry someone who's not been initiated... no...no...no... I'll never agree (**A Traditionalist, Ogome**).

These findings corroborated similar studies undertaken in Yilo-Krobo and neighbouring communities (Huber, 1993; Steegstra, 2005; Ostrow, 2011) which reported that nowadays, most members from the conservative or traditionalist families have indepth knowledge on the punishments associated with getting pregnant before undergoing the initiation. The fact is that, today, most non-Christian parents will not allow their daughter to remain in their house if the girl conceives prior to her initiation since she's regarded as an outcast (Huber, 1993; Steegstra, 2005). Moreover, they prefer their sons to marry an initiated Krobo girl since it is believed that young girls who have objected to the rite, are unclean and carry curses on them (Sackey, 2001; Schroeder & Danquah, 2000; Steegsra, 2005).

The P-value in Table (14) further indicates that initiation status, locality, religion, SES, and education, were significantly related with participation in *Dipo* rite. The findings depict that while greater proportion of young girls in urban areas (72.2%) had not been initiated, more than half (56.7%) of those in

rural areas had done so at the time of the survey. A similar study in Swaziland (now Eswatini) also reported that young girls in rural areas attach great importance to their traditional customs and rite, which they promptly participate (Rooyen & Hartell 2010). This could mean that children in rural areas, especially within the framework of developing countries, are argued to have brought up to attach or develop stronger social bonds towards conventional behaviours than their counterparts from urban areas (Askun & Ataca, 2007; Lyerly & Skipper, 1981).

Like what has been reported by previous studies (Agra & Gbadegbe, 2014; Ostrow, 2011), the findings further show that a significant proportion of young girls regardless the educational level, have passed through the initiation. This indicates that the rite is popular among the indigenes because it is seen as a cultural practice that gives the people of Krobo a unique identity (Boakye, 2010). Put simply, the *Dipo* rite makes the Krobo different and special from other ethnic groups in Ghana and beyond. Moreover, the proportion who have heard and participated in the *Dipo* rituals by their household size, educational level and SES also give credence to the fact that the ritual remains popular among the contemporary young people in the community.

These findings appear to mirror previous studies that have reported similar trends in other societies in Africa. For instance, a study by Maluleke and Troskie (2003), observed that though both the initiated and un-initiated have different opinions of the *Vukhomba* rite, the celebration usually involves the entire community including the Christians and non-Christians, old and young adults, educated and non-educated, as well as the initiated and non-initiated. Some earlier scholarships on *Dipo* initiation rite in Ghana, have also suggested

that the rite is popular among the Krobo people (Abbey et al., 2021; Lartey 2014; Ostrow 2011). For instance, as part of her study among the Manya-Krobo, Ostrow (2011) observed that some of the Christians and Traditionalists have in-depth knowledge about the rite and have also participated in it.

Ever Had Sex

In most societies in Africa, womanhood rite, such as *Dipo*, *Akpeme* and *umcwasho* are performed for young girls mainly to restrain them from engaging in sex prior to their marriage (Exploring Africa, 2022; Huber, 1993; Odonkor, 1971). As a result, pre-marital sexual activity is considered a taboo and frowned upon in these societies that are known to be strict and conservative (Rooyen & Hartell, 2010). Among the Krobo for instance, some of the punishments meted out to young girls who conceived before their initiation in the past included banishment, stigmatization, and expulsion from the community (Anarfi, 2003; Huber, 1993; Steegstra, 2005). As the Krobo continue to observe *Dipo* initiation rite with the punishments associated with it (Steegsra, 2005), one would have expected that young girls would have maintained their virginity until marriage. In lieu of this, the current study attempted to investigate the sexual behaviour of young girls in light of their initiation status. This is to understand which category of the young girls are more likely to be exposed to sexual activity prior to marriage. The results are displayed in Figure (11).

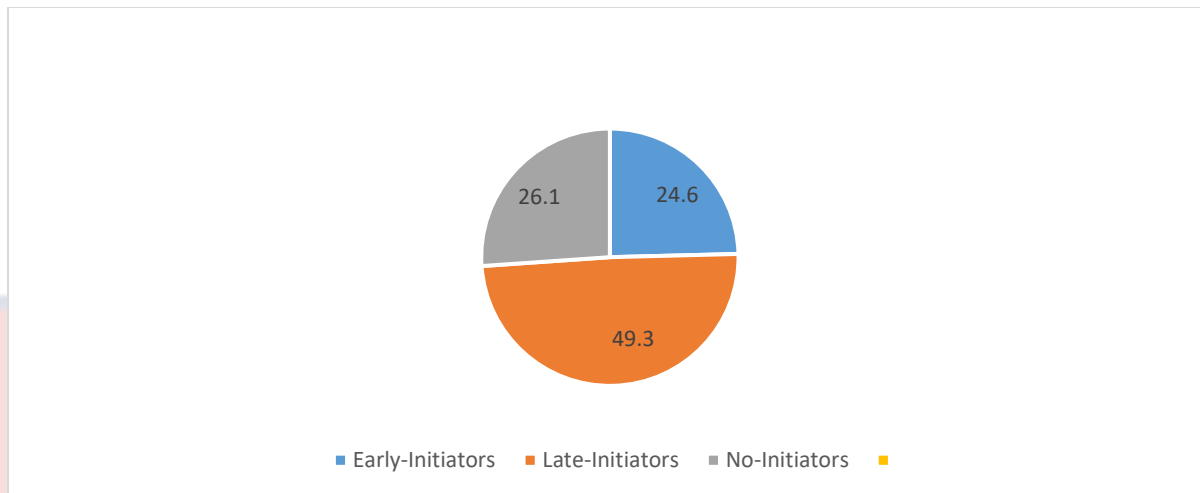


Figure 11: Sexual Behaviour of Young Girls by Category of Initiation. Source: Field Work, July-August 2020

The results as presented in Figure (11) indicate that out of 284 young female respondents in the study, 207 (72.9%) of them reported that they have ever engaged in sex prior to marriage and 77 (27.1%) of them reported in the negative at the time of the survey. Figure 11 further depicts that close to half (49.3%) of late-initiated young girls were exposed to sexual activity at the time of the survey. The results are not surprising, because during the survey, some of the late-initiated disclosed that they broke their virginity after their initiation with the men they are married to or intend to marry in future. The un-initiated followed but were slightly ahead of the early initiated (26.1% compared with 24.6%) in terms of exposure to sex.

Table (15): Young Girls who had Sex with More than One Sexual Partner by Category of Initiation

Response	Early-Initiation		Late-Initiation		Un-initiated		Total	P-Value
	Freq.	Percent	Freq.	Percent	Freq.	Percent		
No	11	19.6	63	66.3	16	28.6	90	0.000
Yes	45	80.4	32	33.7	40	71.4	117	
Total	56	100.0	95	100.0	56	100.0	207	

Source: Field Work, July-August 2020

Furthermore, having sexual intercourse with many sexual partners was used as a proxy to determine which of the categories are likely to be exposed to promiscuity as well as sexual and reproductive health (SRH) problems. Previous scholars have revealed that those who engaged in sexual intercourse with multiple sexual partners are more likely to have experienced early sexual debut at the time they were not married or too young to negotiate safe sex (MGCSP, 2018; Sandfort et al. 2008). The chi-square test results indicate a significant association (P-value <0.000) between initiation category of young girls and multiple sexual partners. The results in Table 15 show that early-initiated and un-initiated categories are more likely to have had sex with multiple sexual partners prior to marriage (80.4% and 71.4% respectively) compared with late-initiated category (33.7%).

Furthermore, the results in Table 15 give credence to the fact that late-initiated young girls are more likely to be exposed to safe sex. Thus, as depicted, about two-thirds (66.3%) of late-initiated have not had sex with more than one partner. The suggestion is that though those who were initiated at later age have been exposed to sex prior to marriage but are more likely to delay their sexual debut until they were matured enough or were fully convinced that their partner is serious with the relationship. Nevertheless, it is refreshing to note that only a smaller proportion of early-initiated and un-initiated young girls have been exposed to sexual activities prior to marriage. Yet, the concern has to do with the fact that most of them might have had sex with many sexual partners prior to marriage, which can have adverse effects on their SRH. A traditionalist made the following observation to prove that early-initiated and un-initiated girls are likely to be promiscuous:

A friend of mine recently told me that he overheard a phone conversation between a young girl, and her boyfriend at the other end. The girl was threatening the boy to pronounce certain words on a condom to mean that anytime the later will use condom to have sex with another girl apart from her, his manhood should be stuck inside the girl's private part. My problem is that, since the girl wants her boyfriend to use the condom to only have sex with her, it implies that she's promiscuous. My friend said that he later reported the incident to the girl's mother, but the mother didn't do anything about the matter. So, he concluded that the mother too was in support of her daughter's promiscuous behaviour. The girl will be around 15, 16 years old, but has not passed through the *Dipo*. Those who're initiated at infancy and don't have parents who'll guide them well after the initiation are also practicing the same lifestyle.

The literature indicates that having many sexual partners prior to marriage coupled with low condom use among young girls exposes them to numerous negative sexual and reproductive health issues such as the risk of STDs including HIV and AIDS and teenage pregnancy (Abdulai et al., 2017; GSS et al., 2015; Sommer, 2011). In addition, it predisposes them to adverse socio-economic and reproductive health issues, such as truncated education, and unplanned pregnancies (Maranhao et al. 2016).

Against this background, a key informant explained that teenage pregnancy and other sexual reproductive health problems associated with early sex will be a thing of the past, if the initiation is strictly observed for young girls at the time they are matured enough. He stated thus:

It (*Dipo*) can stop a whole lot of things, including sexual immorality in our society today. This is because (the) fear is there. The fear of never getting proper marriage and other calamities. So, to avoid these problems, you better stay well and listen to your parents and wait until you pass through the *Dipo* and you're okay (A Traditionalist, Ogome).

This finding is significant and encouraging since some of the young girls who experienced late initiation delayed their sexual debut until they were matured enough or have met a responsible man. Empirical evidence suggests that young girls who delay their first sex until they are married or are matured enough and can negotiate safe sex (Burke et al., 2018).

Logistic Regression on Exposure to Sexual Activities Prior to Marriage

Table 16 presents the Binary Logistic Regression results of the test relationship between ever had sex prior to marriage and socio-demographic characteristics of young girls. The application of the Binary Logistic regression is useful because the dependent variable (ever had sex prior to marriage) has only two possible outcomes (Yes/No). In this model with a pseudo R^2 of 0.358, implying that the model has explained about 35 percent of the variance in young girls who have ever had sex prior to marriage.

Table 16: Binary logistic regression predicting Ever had Sex among young girls by Background Characteristics.

Initiate Sex	Odds Ratio	P-value	[95% Conf.	Interval]
Dipo initiation				
Done Dipo (R)				
Not Done Dipo	0.153	0.002	0.047	0.490
Attachment to parents				
Sometimes (R)				
Very often	0.471	0.070	0.209	1.063
Commitment and involvement of Dipo				
Not committed at all (R)				
Committed	0.345	0.120	0.090	1.319
Very committed	0.343	0.161	0.077	1.531
Puberty rule beliefs				
Disagree (R)				
Agree	0.487	0.272	0.135	1.756
Knowledge of puberty rite				
No (R)				
Yes	1.415	0.628	0.347	5.774

Table 16 Cont'd

Age of respondents				
15-19 (R)				
20-24	11.846	0.000	4.899	28.645
Religion of Respondents				
Christian (R)				
Other religion	0.678	0.548	0.191	2.408
Education of Respondents				
Primary (R)				
Junior High School	0.626	0.517	0.152	2.580
Senior High School	0.226	0.035	0.057	0.898
Tertiary	0.042	0.001	0.006	0.275
Migration Status				
No (R)				
Yes	1.173	0.683	0.545	2.522
Have best friend				
No (R)				
Yes	1.340	0.468	0.607	2.956
Household type				
Nuclear (R)				
Extended	1.775	0.265	0.647	4.867
Single-Parent	0.884	0.895	0.142	5.501
Household size				
0-3 members (R)				
4-6 members	1.141	0.807	0.395	3.292
7-10 members	1.449	0.575	0.396	5.293
locality of respondents				
Urban (R)				
Rural	0.754	0.468	0.352	1.616
Relationship to household head				
Father (R)				
Mother	1.453	0.464	0.535	3.946
Uncle/Aunty	0.572	0.484	0.119	2.738
Grand Parents	1.673	0.464	0.422	6.629
other family members	4.277	0.083	0.829	22.074
_cons	8.567	0.099	0.665	110.329

Source: Field Work, July-August 2020

R = Reference Category P-value = 0.000 Pseudo R2 = 0.3385 Cut of Value = 0.05%

From Table 16, the variables that have significant association with ever had sex were *Dipo* initiation, age of respondent, and educational levels. These have respective odd ratios: 0.153, 11.846, 0.226 in Senior High School, and 0.042 in Tertiary level of education. This implies that those young girls who have not undergone *Dipo* rites are 0.153 times less likely to engage in sex prior to marriage compared with their initiated counterparts. The result is not surprising, because previous scholarly works in the area have observed that the initiation gives license to those who have undergone *Dipo* to engage in sex since it symbolizes that they are no longer children (Langmagne et al., 2018). Moreover, previous studies have shown that un-initiated young girls may be afraid to engage in early sex prior to marriage since they are regarded as not old enough irrespective of their age to engage in sex (Arnfred, 2010; Munthali et al., 2018). A young woman explained why the initiated young girls are prone to promiscuity in the sentences below:

They believed that one can have sex after the initiation and so they start to engage in sexual activity immediately after the initiation is done for them (**A Female Participant, Somanya**).

Besides, the regression also indicates that respondents aged 20-24 years old are about 11 times as likely as those aged 15-19 years old to have had sex. This finding seems to corroborate a study by Bengesai et al. (2018), which reports that majority of the respondents in Cape Town, South Africa have had their first sexual exposure between the ages of 15 and 17 years. The implication is that by the age 20-24 years old, most of the young girls in this study might have completed school or passed through the *Dipo* initiation and therefore, feel they are matured enough to engage in sex even when they are not married. Regarding educational level, participants who are still in Senior High School or

have attained Senior High School are 0.226 less likely to have engaged in sex compared with those with Primary school. Similarly, young girls with Tertiary education are 0.042 less likely to have had sex compared to those with Primary School level. The finding resonates with the second construct of the Social Control Theory (SCT), which emphasizes that people with commitment are less likely to engage in deviant acts. This finding is to be expected, especially with the introduction of comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) in senior high schools in Ghana. The CSE is aimed to equip young people with relevant information on life skills and to empower them to abstain or delay sexual debut (Awusabo-Asare et al., 2017; Erkut et al., 2012; Tenkorang et al., 2020), while they remained committed to their studies. The finding further seems to agree with the assumption that girls' education is necessary especially from the perspective of developing countries where among other things, they are less likely to be married as children (Somani, 2017; Suen, 2013).

Age at First Sex

This section discusses the age at which young girls engaged in sex in the community and the results are displayed in Table (17).

Table 17: Age at First Sex of Young Girls Prior to Marriage by Background Characteristics in Percentage.

Variable	Less than 10-15 Years		16-24 Years		P-Value
	Yes	Percent	Yes	Percent	
Initiation Status					0.000
Early Initiates	34	43.6	17	13.2	
Late Initiates	14	17.9	87	67.4	
Un-Initiates	30	38.5	25	19.4	
Total	78	100.0	129	100.0	
Parents Attached To Dipo					0.000
Yes	19	27.1	95	69.4	
No	43	61.5	25	18.2	
DK/CT	8	11.4	17	12.4	
Total	70	100.0	137	100.0	
Knowledge Of Dipo					0.174
Yes	74	93.7	125	97.7	
No	5	6.3	3	2.3	
Total	79	100.0	128	100.0	
Religion					0.000
Christian	79	100.0	108	84.4	
Other Religion	0	0.00	20	15.6	
Total	79	100.0	128	100.0	
Education					0.005
Primary	11	13.9	31	24.2	
JHS	34	43.0	51	39.8	
SHS	30	38.0	40	31.3	
Tertiary	4	5.1	6	4.7	
Total	79	100.0	128	100.0	
Migration Status					0.149
Yes	43	54.4	67	60.9	
No	36	45.6	43	39.1	
Total	79	100.0	110	100.0	
Best Friend					0.836
Yes	52	65.8	79	61.7	
No	27	34.2	49	38.3	
Total	79	100.0	128	100.0	
Locality					0.000
Urban	56	70.9	56	43.8	
Rural	23	29.1	72	56.2	
Total	79	100.0	128	100.0	

Source: Field Work, July-August 2020

The median age at which young girls initiate first sexual activities was 15 years old. This is lower when compared to a previous study among other young girls in Ghana where 18 years was reported as the median age (Awusabo-Asare et al., 2017) and a similar study in Nigeria where the median age at first sexual initiation for female undergraduates was 20 years (Odimegwu & Adedini 2013). In Table (17). It is observed from the chi-square test that there is a strong correlation (P-value <0.000) between initiation status, parents attached to *Dipo*, religion, education, locality, and age at first sexual experience among young girls. It was revealed that the early-initiated were more (43.6%) likely to engage in early sex (ie. below 16 years). This finding is in line with previous works that the early initiation of young girls has weakened the value of the initiation to contain early sexual debut (Anarfi, 2003; Ostrow, 2011). The un-initiated category followed closely (38.5%) and the late initiated recorded the least (17.9%). A young man further explained the reason why the early-initiated young girls are likely to engage in early sex:

Because those who are initiated at early age think their children will be accepted by her family even if the man responsible for the pregnancy has not performed the necessary marriage rite **(Young boy, 19, urban)**.

However, the opposite was true for those who will engage in sex at the time they are matured enough (ie. 16 years+). Thus, more than two-thirds (67.4%) of late-initiated young girls will delay their sexual debut until they have reached maturity, followed by un-initiated (19.4%) and early initiated (13.2%).

The Table (17) further indicates that more young girls with conservative parents/guardians who are in support of *Dipo* (ie. parents/guardians attached to *Dipo*) are more likely to delay their sexual debut than those whose

parents/guardians are not in support of the rite in the community (69.4% compared with 18.2%) respectively. This supports Jensen and Brownfield (1983) finding that young people who are attached to straight or conservative parents are more likely to delay their sexual debut or to conform to the acceptable norms of their society. As highlighted in the conceptual framework, the finding implies that most of the young girls whose parents/guardians are conservatives/traditionalists or in support of the rite are often encouraged to undergo *Dipo* at matured age, thereby able to delay their sexual debut until the time they are married or old enough to negotiate safe sex. Similar trend was observed for Religion as none of the young girls from traditional/non-religious families reported to have engaged in early sexual debut. This also seems to suggest that traditional families often ensure that their daughters are initiated at old age before they are exposed to sexual activities (Becker, 2004).

In addition, while only about 4 out of every 10 (43.8%) young girls in the urban community engaged in late sexual debut, more than half (56.2%) of the young girls did same in the rural community. At the same time, the study finds that those living in urban areas were more than twice as much as those living in rural communities to have engaged in early sexual debut (70.9% compared with 29.1%) respectively. The suggestion is that the urbanization status of Somanya is encouraging anonymity, making it very challenging to find out individuals who engage in non-spousal and other high-risk sexual encounters (Benefo, 2008; Bishai et al., 2006) in a community that is quickly losing its traditional values than homogenous rural areas (Karacan & Bektas, 2016; Lysterly & Skipper, 1981). In terms of education, it is observed that more young girls in the JHS level (43.0%) had initiated early sexual debut, followed

by those in SHS (38.0%) than those whose highest educational level was primary school (13.9%). This finding could suggest that those with primary school education from rural communities especially are likely to have more time to undergo the initiation at mature age and could as a result, be raised and trained in their tradition as part of *Dipo* rituals. In other words, with a penchant to successfully undergo the *Dipo* at mature age, the young girls would develop stronger attachment with their parents and other female family members who often caution them against pre-*Dipo* sex. They would therefore be occupied with this relationship with their parents and other family members than to spend time with friends or involved in other frivolous activities. Consequently, *Dipo* as an old traditional practice continues to have impact on regulating sexual behaviour among young girls in the study communities.

A closer observation at Table (17) further revealed that the likelihood of young girls attached to best friends to engage in early sexual debut is greater (65.8%) than those without (34.2%). This raises a lot of SRH concerns considering that myriad studies have reported that most young people often succumb to pressure from peers to engage in indiscriminate sexual conduct (Cherie & Berhane, 2012; Potard et al., 2008; Selikow et al., 2009). Hence, programmes are needed to help young girls to resist peer pressure, especially during the COVID-19 outbreak as they continue to stay at home.

Moreover, the findings from the Table (17) suggest that exposure to pre-marital sexual activity among young people is widespread in the Municipality. This reinforces findings from previous studies in Yilo-Krobo (Langmagne et al., 2018; Osafo et al., 2013) that also reported that sexual activity and its associated SRH issues and HIV and AIDS is rampant in the Municipality. The

implication is that programme contents and deliveries aim at eliminating early sexual debut and its adverse effect on young girls in the communities should consider the early initiates and those attached to deviant peers, especially.

Logistic Regression Predicting Early Sexual Debut of Young Girls and Background Characteristics

In the era of high prevalence rate of STDs, including HIV and AIDS among young people in Sub-Sahara Africa (Sommer, 2011), conventional wisdom has it that the practice of *Dipo* and its associated punishments would scare young people from promiscuity. However, earlier studies have reported that the Yilo-Krobo Municipality has consistently remained one of the highest areas with HIV and AIDS prevalence rates in Ghana with a substantial proportion among the young people in the Municipality and Eastern Region as a whole (GSS et al., 2015; Langmagne et al. 2018). The current study, therefore, attempted to investigate some of the factors that expose young females to engage in early sex prior to marriage. This behaviour is critical since it has sexual and reproductive health (SRH) implications.

Table 18 presents the Binary Logistic Regression of the test relationship between early sexual debut and socio-demographic background characteristics of young girls. The application of the Binary Logistic regression is useful because the dependent variable (had sex at 15 years or less) has only two possible outcomes (Yes/No). The results in Table 18 shows that the *Dipo* initiation, and levels of commitment and involvement were the significant predictors of early sexual initiation among young girls. Thus, after regressing *Dipo* initiation on early sexual debut, the results revealed a positive relationship between those variables.

Table 18: Binary Logistic Regression Predicting Early Sexual Debut by Background Characteristics.

Early sex initiation	Odds Ratio	P-value	[95% Confidential Level	Interval]
Dipo initiation				
Early Dipo (R)				
Late Dipo	0.044	0.000	0.011	0.182
Attachment to parents				
Sometimes (R)				
Very often	0.222	0.064	0.045	1.090
Commitment and involvement of Dipo				
Not committed at all (R)				
Committed	0.135	0.020	0.025	0.725
Very committed	0.038	0.005	0.004	0.381
Puberty rule beliefs				
Disagree (R)				
Agree	2.089	0.424	0.343	12.716
Age of respondents				
15-19 (R)				
20-24	1.631	0.475	0.179	2.230
Education of Respondents				
Primary (R)				
Junior High School	3.593	0.093	0.809	15.963
Senior High School	2.776	0.195	0.593	12.992
Tertiary	1.377	0.854	0.046	41.465
Migration Status				
No (R)				
Yes	0.384	0.133	0.111	1.337
Have best friend				
No (R)				
Yes	1.723	0.397	0.489	6.071
Household type				
Nuclear (R)				
Extended	0.125	0.018	0.022	0.698
Single-Parent	0.409	0.489	0.032	5.161
Household size				
0-3 members (R)				
4-6 members	1.263	0.792	0.222	7.177
7-10 members	1.398	0.749	0.180	10.842

Table 18: Cont'd

Locality of Respondents				
Urban (R)				
Rural	0.631	0.407	0.212	1.874
Relationship to household head				
Father (R)				
Mother	0.248	0.129	0.041	1.502
Uncle/Aunty	4.859	0.129	0.631	37.415
Grand Parents	2.371	0.426	0.283	19.838
Other family members	0.924	0.912	0.229	3.728
Constant	14.458	0.049	1.007	207.593

Source: Field Work, July-August 2020

R = Reference Category P-value = 0.000 Pseudo R² = 0.453 Cut of Value = 0.05%

The results revealed that young girls who were initiated at old age were 0.044 times less likely than those initiated early to have indulge in early sexual debut. This observation was confirmed by a key informant that the early-initiated girls from non-conservative parents/guardians, especially are more likely to engage in early sexual debut prior to marriage. He opined thus:

Well, the initiation of the toddlers is the problem. It's the cause for the early sex menace and teenage pregnancy going on in this community. Because most parents tend to leave their daughters to their own fate after performing the Dipo for them in their young age. But if the Dipo has not been done for them, their parents tend to control their behaviour very well since they don't want their daughters to bring any disgrace and shame on them **(A Traditionalist, Okpe-Betesi).**

The reason why the early-initiated young girls are likely to engage in early sexual debut could be due to the common notion and empirical evidence that suggest that once the initiation has been performed, a young girl can engage in sex at any time she wishes and would not be sanctioned, even if she conceived

outside properly sanctioned marriage (Agra & Gbadegbe, 2014; Langmagne et al., 2018).

The results in Table (18) further shows that commitment and involvement in *Dipo* activities also have a significant relationship with early sexual debut. Thus, those who were very committed or involved in *Dipo* activities in their community are 0.038 times less likely than those who are not committed/involved in *Dipo* activities to engage in early sexual debut. Further, those who are committed to or involved in *Dipo* activities in their community are also 0.135 times less likely than those who are not committed/involved in *Dipo* activities to engage in early sexual debut. The findings agree with previous scholarly works that involved young girls 15-24 years old in Nigeria who strongly participate in or are committed to conventional behaviours such as religious activities, beliefs and practices are more likely to delay early sexual debut than their counterparts who were not religious (Odimegwu 2005; Somefun, 2019).

From the Table 18 attachments to parents also appeared to be an important predictor of engaging in early sexual activity, however, it is not statistically significant. This contradicts with Hirschi's (1969) theoretical prediction that there is a significant relationship between attachments to parents regardless their behaviours and beliefs and the likelihood to negate deviant behaviour. It is also inconsistent with an empirical study that reports a significant correlation between those who lack parental/guardian attachment and their likelihood to initiate early sexual debut (Peltzer & Pengpid, 2015). The result could be an indication that some of the young girls are attached to parents/guardians who are non-conservatives or not strict about conventional

behaviours in the community and are therefore, relaxed as far as their children's sexual behaviour is concerned. However, the finding may be another good strategy to control pre-marital sexual activities and its associated SRH problems among young girls in the study communities.

Table 18 also revealed that though not significant, young girls with belief that the punishments associated with *Dipo* womanhood rite are fair and necessary, were 2.089 times more likely to initiate early sexual debut. The finding contradicts with Odimegwu (2005) that strong belief in conventional behaviours such as religious activities among young people delays early sexual debut. This finding may probably indicate that belief in the fairness of the rite and the associated punishments alone are not enough to deter young girls from engaging in early sexual debut. But, there are other individual, family and environmental factors such as family structure (Defo & Dimbuene, 2012; Peres et al., 2008), media exposure and pornographic information on the internet (Shakirudeen & Barakat, 2017), Poverty (Laddunuri, 2013; Silas, 2013), religion (Somefun, 2019), migration status (Saggurti et al., 2011) and peer pressure (Potard et al., 2008), which may also play important role to influence a young girl's exposure to early sexual activity. This finding is consistent with the fourth construct of SCT which discusses how people's beliefs influence their behaviour.

Findings from the logistics regression analysis further shows that age of participants has a weak relationship with early sexual initiation among young girls. Thus, after regressing age on early sexual activities, the results revealed that girls aged 20-24 years old were 1.631 more likely to have been exposed to early sexual intercourse compared with young girls within the age group 15-19

years. This agrees with previous studies that most young girls might have broken their virginity by the age of 20 years old (Bengesai et al. 2018). It emerged from the key informant interviews that in the last 15 years, the members of the Traditional Council have embarked on measures to discourage early sexual debut in the community. Among them include measures to discourage early-initiation of young girls in the community, which is probably yielding positive results. Thus, owing to this intervention, many young girls (15-19 years) are being exposed to late initiation, which in turn, delays their sexual debut than those aged 20-24 years old.

In addition, Table (18) acknowledged educational levels as correlates of early sexual debut as young girls who have attained Junior High School, Senior High School and tertiary education are respectively 3.593, 2.776 and 1.377 more likely than those who have attained primary education to initiate early sexual debut. This could suggest that young girls, regardless of their educational level, are likely to initiate early sexual activity if they are exposed to early-initiation. The findings further revealed that unmarried young girls who have ever stayed outside their community for more than a year and had returned to their community, were 0.384 times as likely as their non-migrant counterparts to initiate early first sex. This finding of the current study is inconsistent with a study by Mberu and White (2011) that migrants aged 15-24 years in Nigeria have higher propensity to early sexual initiation, because of the common believe that migration removes socio-cultural restrictions placed on young people who are away from home (Brockerhoff & Biddlecom, 1999). Nonetheless, it was observed that some of them who were not initiated, were aware of the importance of chastity in their community before leaving the community. As a

result, they vowed to return to the community to undergo the *Dipo* successfully to please their parents and significant others. Again, during the survey, it was revealed that most of the return migrants stayed with their parents/guardians, or family members (75.5%) and only few of them (24.5%) stayed with friends, strangers, or on their own (in rented or uncompleted houses). It could mean that those family members were fully aware of the importance of *Dipo* back in their community and had restricted the girls' sexual encounters prior to their initiation to avoid shame and other curses.

Moreover, though not significant, young girls who have best friends emerged as an important factor of exposing them to early sexual initiation. Table (18) reveals that young girls who have best friends were 1.723 more likely than the young girls without best friends to be exposed to early sexual debut. This finding is consistent with previous studies that include young girls that they are likely to be pressured by their peers to engage in early sexual activity (Cherie & Berhane, 2012; Potard et al., 2008; Selikow et al., 2009).

Summary of Chapter

The chapter discussed the initiation status of young girls that was categorized as early-initiates; late-initiates; and un-initiated and their sexual behaviour. While the early-initiators referred to young girls who passed through the rite below 12 years old, the late-initiators were those who initiated between 12 and 24 years old. The un-initiators on the other hand, were the young girls who had not passed through the initiation and have no intention to undergo the initiation during the time of the survey. It was observed that most of the young girls from each category have been exposed to sexual activity prior to the survey. The logistic regression applications on the other hand, further

demonstrated some of the factors that exposed young girls to early sexual debut in the community. The next chapter, therefore, discusses the relevance of observing *Dipo* womanhood rite and its effectiveness to control early sexual debut among young people in contemporary times.



CHAPTER SIX

RELEVANCE OF DIPO

Introduction

The chapter discusses the relevance of *Dipo* initiation regarding whether young girls consider *Dipo* celebration in general as an effective measure to control early sexual debut in contemporary times. The chapter seeks to situate the initiation rite in perspective as to whether it is an idol worship or a social identity as well as the relevance of some activities marking the ceremony. The chapter further discusses whether the initiated young girls have regretted their initiation, as well as which category (ie. initiated or un-initiated) of young girls are popularly considered as marriage materials for young men. Information on this issue was mainly gathered from the key informant interviews.

Relevance of *Dipo*

Relevance of Dipo to Control Early Sexual Debut

During the survey, young girls were specifically asked to indicate whether they consider *Dipo* celebration in general as an effective measure to control early sexual debut in contemporary times, and the responses are displayed in Table (19).

Table 19: Percentage of Respondents who Said *Dipo* is Relevant or Otherwise by Initiation Category

Variable	No	Percent	Yes	Percent	DK/ CT	Percent	P- Value
Early Initiators	30	31.6	29	18.1	2	6.9	0.000
Late Initiators	21	22.1	108	67.5	1	3.4	
Un-initiators	44	46.3	23	14.4	26	89.7	
Total	95	100.0	160	100.0	29	100.0	

Source: Field Work, July-August 2020

In general, the chi square test results in Table 19 indicate a significant association ($p < 0.000$) between relevance of *Dipo* or otherwise and initiation category of young girls. The results indicate that late-initiated are more likely to believe that *Dipo* initiation is relevant to control early sexual behaviour of young people. Segregated data reveals that almost half (46.3%) of the un-initiated indicated that the celebration of *Dipo* has lost its value, and it is irrelevant to control early sexual behaviour among young people in contemporary times. The finding agrees with a similar study that reported that those who have not been initiated view *Dipo* celebration as no longer effective and must be scrapped (Ostrow, 2011). They expatriated that *Dipo* is not the solution to chastity, but the character and behaviour of the individual counts. The argument among the opponents of the rite is that there are some initiated girls in the community who are morally weak and some un-initiated girls who are morally strong. This is followed by the Early-initiators (31.6%), and Late-initiators formed 22.1%. On the other hand, more than two-thirds (67.5%) of Late-initiators and fewer proportion (14.4%) of the un-initiators supported the celebration of *Dipo* on the account that it is relevant in averting early sexual behaviour. During the survey, the Late initiated expressed that they were taught at the *Dipo* hut about the importance of being chaste until marriage.

The result is like extant literature that elderly women in the community teach the initiates issues concerning women and lessons about life, personal grooming and to value their virginity (Amos, 2013; Rooyen & Hartell, 2010). This has helped them to control their sexual desire until they have come of age. Moreover, almost nine out of ten (89.7%) young girls in the Municipality who have not been initiated reported that they have no idea or can't tell whether *Dipo*

is relevant or not. Similar study by Maluleke and Troskie (2003) also highlights that young girls who have not been initiated, have limited knowledge about the rite and have subsequently insisted that *Dipo* should be scrapped. It could also mean that they are either not interested in the debate or don't even know about the *Dipo* practice in the community.

Similarly, there was a mixed reaction from the key informants regarding the efficacy of the practice. The supporters of the initiation viewed *Dipo* as very useful and are craving for it to be made compulsory for every young girl in the community. They were of the view that since the rite was instituted to check the young girls against promiscuity and teenage pregnancy, they would wish that it is performed for the girls when they are 15 years old and above. They believed that if this age is accepted, it will help the young girls to delay their sexual debut. This is because, most of them will be afraid to get pregnant before their initiation. Moreover, they are convinced that the practice can help fight against HIV and AIDS incidence and other SRH problems in the community and Ghana as a whole. The reason is that through the moral and sexual education they received at the *Dipo* camp, the young girls are empowered to delay their first sex until they are married or negotiate safe sex with their sexual partners.

In a sharp contrast, those against the rite maintained that parental guidance, God fearing, good moral training and personal decision are the effective antidote to chastity. An un-initiated young lady shared how her personal decision to stay chaste until she had come of age was fulfilled. She recounted that even though her parents died at the time she was very young and could have easily fell to the sexual demands from men in the face of acute poverty and hardships. To make things worse, her formative years were mainly

spent in the homes of non-family members often far away from her village and family members. However, amid all these unfortunate situations, she took a personal decision to preserve her virginity. To achieve her goal, she vowed to stay away from friends whom she thought could influence her negatively and not to engage herself in any immoral lifestyle that would incur the wrath of her guardians. Having taken these personal decisions, she was able to preserve her chastity until the time she had fully established herself as a hairdresser and had started living on her own.

Dipo: An Idol Worship or Celebration of Social Identity

During the survey, two groups with divergent opinions regarding the modern celebration of the *Dipo* rite emerged. One group, made up of mostly Christians/Muslims were of the strong believe that the celebration is no longer relevant, it is an idol worship and must be scrapped. The other group, mostly the Traditionalists and some Christians (Christrationalists), also believe that it is a celebration of social identity, it is very useful and must be celebrated. Considering this, the current study sought to draw a line between these beliefs.

Thus, those who don't believe in the *Dipo* rite and have rejected it, see it as fetish and heathen (Steggstra, 2005). This group believed that between them and the initiated ones, they are the ones that God has blessed in all aspects of life. This is because their marriages are always successful while that of the initiated ones are not. According to them, those initiated ones often turn around to blame themselves for allowing the *Dipo* to be performed for them. Besides, they have been able to build their own houses and the initiated ones who had criticized them for been uncleaned, come to ask them for money.

Moreover, the opponents of the initiation buttressed their position with further concerns that are summarized under these themes:

- Why should every initiate have to sit on a particular stone?
- What's under the stone that initiates must sit on before they are declared as a fully matured woman?
- Is it a force to sit on the stone?
- What is the role of the small boy who must visit the girls at night before the girls are declared cleaned?
- Why do they shave the hair of initiates?

The supporters of the rite were of the view that *Dipo* is not fetish as some people have alleged. They expressed that some of the pastors in the community mount their pulpit and convince their members not to participate in the initiation, because it is a pagan institution. An informant threw light on this and further intimated why *Dipo* is important to be observed:

The Christian Faith had wanted to (coughs) wipe away the *Dipo*, but we said no way. Because that makes one a Krobo... so they can't challenge it. It has polished our ladies in a way (**A Traditionalist, Ogame**).

Further, the supporters of *Dipo* explained that in the olden days, there was nothing like “pray for me” (pastors) as we have them in abundance today. What they had were the fetish priests/priestesses whom the individuals as well as the elders in the society often consulted before a major project was undertaken for the benefit of all in the community. The belief was that the blessings and endorsement by the fetish priest/priestess of a project or a decision by the elders, often made it sacred and revered by the people. Hence, *Dipo* went through a similar process before it was introduced.

Furthermore, like the initiation ceremonies in Malawi (Munthali et al., 2018), the elders explained that some activities marking the celebration have undergone modifications. Yet, most of the activities and the essence of the rite have been retained (Lartey, 2014). This finding was supported by a statement from an elder that though the Council of Elders in the community have met and modified some aspects of the events marking the celebration, some of the activities have also remained untouchable:

No, it has not devalued it in any way. It happened that the Council (of elders) sat on it and decided that it's not good to use for instance, the animal (intestine) around the head of the initiate as a veil and the other things were modified. But the custom itself remains unchanged (**An Elder, Ogome**).

Unfortunately, those aspects of the rite that have been preserved by the elders have been labelled as spiritual and fetish by some Christians. Considering this, those who support the rituals demonstrated that there is nothing spiritual or fetish about the *Dipo* celebration, but it is just a celebration of their social identity. An opinion leader was emphatic on this issue:

In fact, it's not fetish. Though sometimes they said that they're going to the shrine, the significance of the shrine is that if you're pregnant and you go there (shrine), it'd reject you because they've sacrificed fowls on it. But it's our ancestral thing, so we cannot do away with it (**Opinion Leader, Somanya**).

From the statement above, the opinion leader has admitted that fowls and the blood of animals have been sacrificed on the sacred stone making it appear like a god in the eyes of some Christians. Yet, the implication is that the rite is not an idol worship since those sacrifices are only meant to revere and perpetuate the practice since its benefits are overwhelming. Another elder further gave an account to dispel the common notion among the opponents that

there are amulets and charms hidden under the sacred stone. He illustrated that one of his family members who is a Muslim had challenged *Dipo* celebration as a pagan worship. Out of curiosity, he bought a plot of land very close to the site of a *Dipo* stone in one of the communities in Somanya. He intentionally dug deeper near the stone site to satisfy his curiosity. However, after spending a lot of time and resources in digging, he did not see anything fetish around the site of the *Dipo* shrine. Eventually, he has become a crusader of *Dipo* celebration and has since been performing *Dipo* for his daughters and relatives.

To further consolidate the relevance of the rite in contemporary times and dispel the erroneous impression the opponents have about *Dipo*, the supporters of the rites have attempted to respond to some of the concerns raised by the opponents. This is discussed under themes such as why some activities marking the rites have been preserved and others modified, and the offices/personalities involved in the celebration.

Some Preserved Events and their Relevance

Sitting on the Dipo Stone

To climax the *Dipo* ceremony, initiates are taken to the sacred stone (*Tegbete*) where the old ladies lower the body of each initiate on the sacred stone three times with these words: “*sit-stand, sit-stand, sit-stand. I make you a Krobo woman*” (*hisi-tesi, hisi-tesi, hisi-tesi. I pee mo Kloyo*) (Narh, 2017, p.94). The stone is believed to be pure and holy and only young virgin girls are qualified to sit on it (Exploring Africa, 2022). As a result, it is expected that any of the initiates who is pregnant or has committed abortion prior to her initiation would be detected when her body is lowered on the sacred stone and would be punished together with the man responsible for the pregnancy (Huber, 1993; Odonkor,

1971; Steegstra, 2005). Nowadays, this practice has been preserved, because of its relevance to the success of the ceremony. Thus, the sitting on the *Dipo* Stone is important not only because it is a mechanism to ascertain the faithfulness of the young girl, but also as a means of maintaining “sexual order” (Nnazor & Robinson, 2016, p.157) in a society where the virginity of women is recognized as a social value (Glozah & Lawani, 2014).

Initiates Costume

When marching to the stone shrine, the old ladies fastened initiates with a piece of red cloth (*subue*) underneath a long white loin cloth. The red cloth symbolizes their procreation or menstruation, while the white one also signifies their “purity and originality” (Narh, 2017, p.95). The loin cloth is worn between their legs and knotted to their waist beads (Ibid, pp.94-95) in a way that reveals some parts of their naked body. The half-nakedness of the *Dipo* initiates further indicates that they are sexually pure; hence are not shy to expose their nakedness. The initiates are dressed in beads of different colours on their legs, wrist, and waist to signify their “queenly investiture” (Ibid, p.95). The significance of the initiates’ costume is like what pertains among the Swazi initiates where they wear tassels hanging on their back to show their virginity (Rooyen & Hartell, 2010).

Moreover, according to oral history, an elderly woman would be leading the young girls on bare-feet and none of them is supposed to wear a hat or footwear. They would march in silence in a group with a green leaf tightly fixed in between their mouth. Each of the initiates will be holding a long walking stick in her hand, which aids them in their walking. The walking stick was also meant to make the girl look special and graceful on that occasion, because it is intended

to portray her as a matured woman who had reached the age of marriage. All these activities have been kept. This has contributed significantly to the success of the celebration, considering that the practice prepares young girls for marriage (Glozah & Lawani, 2014).

The Presence of a Small Boy at the Initiation

Through the key informants' interviews, it was confirmed that small boys are involved at certain stage of the rite. This performance normally happens at the tail end of the rituals when the initiates are made to lie in supine position. Then at midnight, a small boy is put on top of each initiate as they lie in supine position. This activity is not spiritual, but it is meant to pronounce blessings on the initiates by calling on the gods to bless their womb with these words: 'From this day onwards, if you meet any man, let it be fruitful, let your womb be fruitful'. This aspect of the ceremony is very important for the young girls, considering the importance of childbearing in the Ghanaian social milieu (Ofosu-Budu & Hanninen, 2020). Thus, in-laws often subjected married women to all kinds of abusive and ill-treatments (Ofosu-Budu & Hanninen, 2020), especially when she failed to show signs of getting pregnant after about six (6) months or a year into her marriage.

A Visit to the Priest/Priestess

Prior to the commencement of the initiation, the young girls are taken to see the priests/priestesses of *Kloweki* (Ostrow, 2011). However, this activity is not meant to perform any charms for the initiates. Rather, since the community seeks successful marriage for its members, this event is meant to consult about the initiate's marriage and how it would flourish (ibid). Then after a successful consultation with the gods, the priest/priestess would touch and mark each

initiate with *Kyiren* (white clay) (Lartey, 2014). Similar study among the *Yao* of Malawi, reports that before the initiated are taken to the initiation camp, they go to see the chief who will sprinkle flour on them (Munthali et al., 2018). This activity is observed as a qualification for young girls to participate in the initiation and for protection from the ancestors and the gods throughout the period of initiation (Lartey, 2014; Munthali et al., 2018; Ostrow, 2011).

Prohibitions on Photographs at the Shrine

The oral history of Krobo indicates that usually, activities at the sacred shrine are sacred. As such, it is not given any publicity both in the traditional and social media. Hence, it is forbidden to cover the proceedings or take pictures of any of the activities that is performed at the sacred shrine. They explained that this practice is not done to worship gods. Rather, it is a solemn occasion of venerating the ancestors as they just replicate what happened at the time their ancestors observed the rite on the Mountain.

Some Modified Activities and their Relevance

The Black Goat

According to oral history, in the past, each of the initiates got a black castrated he-goat from her father to appreciate her for remaining chaste. The black he-goat touches the initiate's forehead three times to wish her safe journey to the site of the sacred stone and back. They would then slaughter the goat and sprinkle its blood on her feet (Odonkor, 1971). This activity is believed to take away every misfortune that will harm an initiate's future conception. Then the girl's father would give her some pesewas, which is equivalent to about GHc100 today. This is because, before they sit on the sacred stone, initiates are required to pay tax to the priest or priestess in charge of the sacred stone to maintain

him/herself and put the shrine in good shape (Huber, 1993; Narh, 2017). The father would tell the girl to bring back honour and the girls will sing *ha* tunes as they march to and from the sacred stone (Huber, 1993).

Nowadays, perhaps due to economic constraints, the black castrated he-goat for the ceremony is purchased by the priest and the initiates pay for it later (Narh, 2017). The goat is slaughtered, and the blood is used to wash the feet of the initiates. In the past, the intestines of the goat were removed and blown like a balloon (Odonkor, 1971) and after the girl had returned from the stone site, the blown intestine was used as a hat on her head and used part of it to decorate her. This, according to the elders, is to portray the initiate as a Krobo royal since they cherish plump and fleshy women. But today, since only one goat is used for the ceremony, it is impossible to share the intestine among the many initiates. Consequently, the calico (white cloth) the young girls wear as part of their costume to the sacred stone is used to decorate them (Narh, 2017, p.93).

The Dipo Stone

Unlike in the past, the *Dipo* stone (*Tegbete*) or *Dipo-Te*, is now found in many places in Yilo-Krobo. This may be due to population increase, and the fact that localities are separated by forests inhabited by roan antelopes and other dangerous reptiles. Hence it is dangerous to assemble all the initiates at one location to sit on one sacred stone to climax the initiation. It emerged from the key informant interviews that presently, Yilo-Krobo is segmented into Six (6) divisions namely Okpe, Bonya, Ogome, Bunase, Plau and Nyewe and each of this is made up of a cluster of clans. As a result, the *Dipo* stone, which used to be a big one granitic stone while they were dwelling on top of the Mountain (Huber, 1993), is now owned by most of the clans in the community. For

instance, the Okpe, the biggest division in terms of population in Yilo-Krobo, has Seven (7) clans (Wekpeti, Okpe-Piem, Okpe-Lowe, Gbekomanya, Adjikpo-Adumam, Nakuyo-Ledje and Betesi) and each owns a sacred stone meant for the *Dipo* initiation. Each *Tegbete* was erected with a piece of the original granitic stone from the Krobo Mountain (Huber,1993) and are under the supervision of a *Dipo* Priest (*Dipo Wono*). Thus, without the knowledge and approval by the *Dipo* Priest, a stone mounted would be rendered ineffective for the purpose of initiation in Yilo (Huber, 1993; Lartey, 2014; Narh, 2017; Steegstra, 2005). After visiting the sacred stone or *Tegbete* to climax the occasion, the *Dipo* priest will fire gunshots to bring the *Dipo* ceremony to an end (Narh, 2017).

Carrying of Initiates

After the girls have successfully undergone the test and have descended from the shrine, they are not allowed to walk or do anything (Ostrow, 2011). This is parallel to what Nhlekisana (2017) observed of the *!Xoo* girls initiation rite of Zutshwa, Botswana where everything is done for the girl by a caretaker. All this while, some men are positioned nearby since men are forbidden to enter the stone shrine. Hence, as soon as they come out from the sacred shrine, any man present will gladly carry any of the initiates shoulder high to the house of the old woman/caretaker without a fee (Narh, 2017). The carrying of the newly initiates is done in a hurry to signify that the Akans (their old enemies) are coming after them, so “run, run, run” (Ibid, 2017, p.94) with the girls to the house safely. As a result, the running takes place amidst firing of gun shots (muskets), dancing and rejoicing from the crowd following them from behind. Later in the evening, the girls will continue to sing the melodious *ha* songs for

successfully passing the test at the sacred stone. In the past, young men such as initiates' brothers, fiancé, and male friends were the only people allowed to carry the newly initiates. According to the elders interviewed, nowadays, perhaps to make the initiation process more attractive to all and sundry, women including the newly initiated mothers and sisters are involved in this activity.

The Body Marks

Another activity characterizing the rite involves body marks that are given to the initiates (Agra & Gbadegbe, 2014; Mate Kole, 1955) by the elders as identity. Thus, the elders would use blades to open some tiny spaces on some recommended parts of the initiate's body. According to oral account, the elders would burn beans and grind it and use it to fill the open spaces. Once the wound was healed, it would become indelible marks on the body of the initiates. The first body marks were given on the wrist of the initiates. The belief is that marriage is tedious, because as a wife, one is expected to sweep immediately after she wakes up from the bed. The first mark they would administer was what they called *bemi-bo* (ie. sweeping mark). These marks appeared three times three between the thumb and the wrist of the initiates.

Another body marks were given at the downside of the initiate's waist (*aplamde*) and another one on the downside on her belly (*yisi wombo*) (Steegstra, 2005). With the waist marks, the significance is that no man apart from the initiate's husband should see her body lower than that mark. Simply put, the mark is the end of the initiate's body where any man can see, but beneath it is reserved for her husband. Steegstra (2005, p.209) refers to this mark as 'marriage taboo marks', because it indicates that only the husband is allowed to touch her waist. The elders interviewed maintained that the mark on the belly is

a wake-up call that the initiates were expected to be hardened. This is because, it takes only a courageous and hardened woman to endure the pains of labour. According to them, it has been realized that nowadays, some young girls dislike body marks, because it is painful.

Current anecdotal evidence indicates that this activity is no longer compulsory. The reason is that the process of administering the marks on their body is not only excruciating but can also be an avenue for spreading HIV and AIDS. This is possible, especially if the razor and other sharp objects used for the body marks are not hygienically sterilized or treated. Instead, the elders insist that the Queen mother of Yilo, has for the past 15 years, started registering successful initiates and issuing them with certificates. So, on the last day of the initiation, the initiates would troop to the Queen mother's Palace at Sra to be registered and issued with certificates with their names neatly embossed on it amid jubilation and fanfares. The certificates and pictures of the initiates serve as proof of their initiation whenever someone challenges them. However, initiates who still want the body marks are done for them on request. An elder described thus:

Yes, these days it's not compulsory for the initiates to have those marks on their body and that's why some of them take pictures for keeping. But some of them too like the tribal marks and we do it for them when they request it. For instance, this my daughter is in her twenties, had her initiation a couple of years ago and she requested for the mark, and we did it for her. So, the tribal marks are on her body (**A Lady Caregiver, Ogame**).

One opinion leader demonstrated that the body marks are still cherished by some young girls who undergo the initiation. According to him, a lady friend at Agormanya, a village near Somanya, insisted on the body marks to be

administered on her body after her initiation. This happened at the time the lady was attending a training school in Kumasi where some of her colleagues in school had picked up a quarrel with her. They insulted her of been a Krobo woman who has lost her identity, because there were no tribal marks on her body even though she claimed to have been initiated. She was so much distressed by those words that when she went back home, she told her father to do the body marks for her before she would return to school.

The parents heeded her request, and the body marks were done for her since she had already passed through the initiation. This young lady, according to him, went back to school, and proudly showed the marks to those colleagues who had previously insulted her. She boasted: “I’m a tutored and educated Krobo woman – a Krobo woman who’s been culturally educated”. This portrays how some young girls still cherish body marks. However, the Paramount Queen-mother is using some modern technologies like certificates and pictures of the initiates, to address the case of the other girls who do not want the body marks.

The Shaving of Initiate’s Hair

As part of the rituals, the hair of young initiates are shaved (Amos, 2013; Lartey, 2014; Steegstra, 2005), but it is not intended for any spiritual or fetish purpose. The belief is that until the *Dipo* is performed for the young girls, they are regarded as unclean (Odonkor, 1971). As a result, initiates are shaved and sent to any of the rivers in the area such as the *Onuma* or *Sradoo* Rivers in Yilo-Krobo for the older women to bath and smear them with sheabutter as part of the cleansing ceremony (Amos, 2013). But current anecdotal evidence indicates

that this practice is now flexible as those who do not want their hair to be shaved, can pay some money to spare their hair.

Relevance of some Offices/Personalities Involved in Dipo Activities

The Dipo Priest (Dipo Wono)

Perhaps one of the important offices in the celebration of *Dipo* in Yilo-Krobo is the *Dipo Priest's (Dipo Wono)* office. The oral history has it that each year, the *Dipo Priest* has to designate which of the stones should initiate their members first and which will follow next until the last stone. As a convention, the Yilo-Krobo (Somanya) including Ogome, Abokobi, Sra, Okpe, Sawyer etc. would lead in the initiation before Manya (Odumase) would follow. When all the stones are done with the initiation, the *Dipo Priest* would pour libation to end it officially in Yilo to allow Manya to start. The reason perhaps has to do with the conviction that the Yilo descended from the Krobo Hills ahead of Manya (Odonkor, 1971). It was gathered from the interviews that since the processes are similar in both places, parents in Yilo may decide to initiate their daughters in Manya and vice versa depending on their readiness for the initiation. Moreover, it is the *Dipo Priest* who oversees that a girl who conceives before her initiation is duly banished from Yilo. Thus, the *Dipo Priest* is the head of all those who “sweep away” the curses that a girl brings to the community by overseeing that the right purification is performed before the chief would even step out to continue his daily agenda.

Elderly Women/Dipo Experts

The initiates are sent to the house of elderly women/*Dipo* experts or *Dipo* guardians (Lartey, 2014) who oversee the initiation and are confined there for about a year. Similar study among the Igbos in Nigeria also reported that

initiates are sent to the initiation house, which is under the supervision of a responsible and elderly women in the community, and this is where they learn issues concerning women and lessons about life and personal grooming (Amos, 2013). But nowadays, the initiates' confinement lasts for about four days (kasapafmonline.com 2020). While at the expert women's place, the initiates will put some leaves in a water pot and boil. The guardians usually use the boiled water to wash the initiates in turns throughout their stay there in her place. These expert women are qualified to hold the caretakers' position in the community by virtue of being widowed, have remained in stable marriage (Huber, 1993; Narh, 2017) and have also been initiated. The philosophy underneath this qualification, according to the elders, is that framers of the womanhood rite want the young initiates to learn from their good examples and enjoy successful marriage in future. It is believed that the old lady's spirit would be transmitted into the initiate as the former assists in lowering the initiate's body on the sacred stone. Hence, the old lady must be someone with a good spirit so that the initiate would possess her spirit of ideal woman after the initiation. These expert women are normally the ones who teach the initiates the *klama* dance, how to sweep and care for their husbands and family members when they married (Huber, 1993).

Typically, when they arrived at the *Dipo* house, the guardians would shave the lower part of each of the initiate's hair. Then the initiates are provided with a single reddish bead (called *le*) to wear to replace any other beads on their body (Odonkor, 1971). They are also refrained from wearing any footwear throughout the rituals. Then on a Sunday, a sheep procured for the occasion by the guardian or priestess, would be slaughtered for the initiates. Then they

would dress the initiates and send them to where the stone shrine is located. The Krobo oral history has it that in case an initiate is pregnant, it will be detected (in the house) by the old lady before they are taken to the stone shrine. This is because, there's a roan antelope (*bo*) skin laid on the ground in the old lady's home and she would lead each initiate to step on it three times to test their virginity and to ascertain their faithfulness (Narh, 2017). The belief is that any girl who is pregnant prior to the initiation would go crazy when she stands on the skin of the animal (Narh, 2017). Subsequently, the pregnant girl will be expelled from the group (Odonkor, 1971), while the other initiates will go ahead with the process. This brings a disgrace to the girl and her parents. Among the *Ovambo* community of Namibia, a girl who got pregnant prior to her *Olufuko* initiation, does not only bring a disgrace to her family, but she is sometimes burned to death for her action (Kuoppala, 2016).

Regretted the Initiation

Opinions were sought from the initiated young girls on whether they regretted the initiation. It was gathered from their responses that most of them have not regretted their initiation. They, however, supported the fact that the initiation is necessary, because it has helped them in various ways. Among them is the fact that while they have passed through the rites to satisfy the cultural demands of their society such as upholding chastity, it has also shaped them to be good and adorable wives to their preferred Krobo men. Above all, some of them also expressed the view that the rite has really taught them many things in life such as the importance of preserving their chastity until they have been married. This result is like another study in Malawi where it was reported that young people participated in the initiation for many good reasons. This include

the need to respect elders in the society and the fact that they are seen as grown ups to read *chitabu* (Quran) at the Mosque (Munthali et al., 2018). In lieu of this, it can be concluded that the rite has helped most of them to control their sexual desires as they were growing up. Some of the participants expressed their views:

I've not regretted it, because it has helped me maintain my virginity (**Young girl, 18, rural**).

For me it's really helped me because it teaches me to be humble and submissive to my husband (**Young girl, 22, urban**).

From the foregoing discussion, it can be concluded that observing *Dipo* is relevant in our current dispensation. This is largely because, while the initiates are taught the importance of being chaste until marriage, the punishments associated with it also help to promote chastity among young girls. The results are consistent with previous scholarships that *Dipo* womanhood rites is relevant and should be re-visited to address issues of risky sexual behaviour among young people in the community and Ghana as a whole (Sackey, 2001; Schroeder & Danquah, 2006).

Relevance of *Dipo* in Selection of a Spouse

During the key informant interviews, the issue of which initiation category of young women would parents prefer for their sons for marriage, became an issue for discussion. Without mincing words, most parents expressed the desire for their sons to marry a Krobo woman who has passed through the initiation. They believed that those women are cleansed and very good marriage materials. Some of them would go to the extent of influencing their son's

decision of picking a woman who has undergone the rituals for a wife, and they supported their position with these statements:

A typical Krobo (man) who understands (the custom) will not marry a Krobo girl who's not performed the rites. Yes, in a way, they've been conscientized. I for one maybe because of my education or my religion, I will not mind if any of my sons will go to marry a (non-Krobo) girl who's not had the rites. I wouldn't mind. But if he's going to marry a Krobo (girl), I'll encourage him to get somebody who's had the rites done for her (**Opinion Leader, Plau**).

Yes, I will prefer that if they want to marry a Krobo girl, then they should go in for the one who's been initiated. But should they want to marry from another ethnic group, that one I've no option because I know some ethnic groups in Ghana also have their own similar customs and traditions that they also observe. For instance, if you're an Ashanti girl and you pass through Bragoro, is similar to having performed *Dipo* among the Krobos (**A Traditionalist, Okpe-Betesi**).

Others expressed the fact that for refusing to undergo the *Dipo*, the un-initiated girls have incurred the wrath of the gods and ancestors. Hence, any man who marries them will be followed by curses. Some of the Churches in the community are fully aware of this belief and would therefore, refrain from blessing a marriage where the woman has not been initiated since they know that such marriages would soon hit a rock. The elders expressed that it is necessary for every Krobo woman to undergo the *Dipo* initiation. According to an account to clarify this, an elder disclosed that in the past, a Hausa man from Lagos, Nigeria married a very beautiful and well-endowed un-initiated Krobo woman. The man was a successful businessman who traded in gold. Soon after his marriage, he was arrested for the first time in his life at one of the border towns and incarcerated. When he got back his freedom, he went to consult to

understand why he was hit by such a misfortune. He was informed that the woman he is married to is a taboo woman and, he quickly sought for divorce. A

Key Informant expatiated on this:

There're many families in Somanya who say they'll not undergo the *Dipo*. But any man who marries them will be followed by curses. So, it's advisable for them to do it (*Dipo*) and be a Krobo (woman), because many a time when such women go to marry, they don't succeed (**A Key Informant, Somanya**).

A young man also indicated that his preference for a choice of a wife in future has already been influenced by his parents' unalloyed love for initiated girls. This is because, he knows that his parents will not take it lightly with him if he goes ahead to marry an un-initiated woman from Krobo. As a result, he's very careful in his selection of a wife in the community. This finding echo earlier studies among the Krobo that reported that even parents who don't performed *Dipo* for their daughters, will still prefer their sons to marry an initiated Krobo girl because it is believed that young girls who have objected the rite are unclean and carry curses on them (Sackey, 2001; Schroeder & Danquah, 2000; Steegsra, 2005).

Relevance of *Dipo* to Address HIV and AIDS Prevalence

Though the HIV and AIDS prevalence in Ghana is less than one percent among the young people (1.5% and 0.2% young women and men respectively) compared with the national level of 2,0 percent, more efforts and programmes are needed to bring it further down, if not to eradicate it (GSS et al., 2015). This not withstanding, available statistics indicate that Yilo-Krobo has consistently remained one of the areas with the highest HIV and AIDS prevalence in Ghana (Osafo et al., 2013; Langmagne et al., 2018). In view of this, recent literature

and documentary reports have advocated the resuscitation of *Dipo* and other female initiation rites in Ghana to be included in the fight against HIV and AIDS prevalence among young people (GNA, 2018; Otecfm, 2018; Schroeder & Danquah, 2000).

Considering this, the opponents have argued that *Dipo* has no effect on young girls' sexual behaviour, but it is rather due to the good upbringing, personal and good moral attitude of the individual. This school of thought buttressed their position with the claim that the rite is insignificant and must be discouraged, especially in the era of COVID-19 where public gathering, including *Dipo* celebration has been restricted (kasapafmonline.com 2020). It is also seen as a conduit for contracting HIV and AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). This is derived from the common notion that once the initiation has been performed, the young girl sees herself as a grown-up woman. She can, therefore, engage in sex at any time she wishes and would not be sanctioned even if she conceives outside properly sanctioned marriage (Agra & Gbadegbe, 2014; Langmagne et al., 2018). A participant confirmed this:

Even it may surprise you that the dipo also gives the young girls the chance to start these immoral lives. Because they know that they've now been customarily legalized to have relationships. So, girls about 12, 13 or 14 years, when they know that the dipo has been performed for them, they start (sexual activity). So many of them have experienced teenage pregnancies, because they're free (A Pastor, Somanya).

Another participant supported the earlier statement and added that:

When you pass through the *Dipo*, it means you're cleansed, and your children will belong to your (father's) family. Even if the woman is not properly married, the children can still come to her father's house (**An Elder, Ogome**).

Some of the statements above seem to suggest that like matrilineal societies (Djamba, 2003; Tenkorang & Adjei, 2014), children born out of wedlock in patrilineal societies are considered automatic members of the patrilineage. But this may not be applicable to patrilineal societies (Broude, 1975) where certain rituals need to be strictly observed before such children are recognized as members of their mothers' family. It was gathered from the key informants that among the Krobos, an outdooring ceremony known as *Lamuermi* is performed for the newly born child to be given a name and assumed membership of the mother's family. In other words, it is through this ceremony that the *yobi* (a woman's child), would become the property of his/her mother. As part of the ceremony, an elderly old woman would secure the arm of the newborn child with a raffia fiber string locally called *Hlowe*. If it is a male child, the string is tied on the right arm and, on the left if it is a female child. Then, later when the genitor wants to claim ownership of his child, he will perform another ceremony known as *Lapomi*. The *Lapomi* rite is meant to cut the *Hlowe* string tied around the arm of the child by the mother's family (Steegstra, 2005) during the *lamuermi* ceremony. After this ceremony, the genitor or biological father would have the right to claim back the child and rename him/her according to his preferred name or by his family's name.

The supporters on the other hand, revealed that the *Dipo* occasion is rather used to teach the initiates about the importance of being chaste until

marriage by the expert women while they were at *Dipo* camp. As a result, many of the initiated girls can control their sexual desire until they have come of age or are married. Hence, they are convinced that the practice can help fight against HIV and AIDS incidence and other sexual and reproductive health (SRH) problems in the community and Ghana as a whole. The only caveat is that it should be restricted to the celebration of matured girls as was done in the pre-colonial days since most of them would be afraid to get pregnant before their initiation (Huber, 1993; Odonkor, 1971). In addition, through the moral and sexual education they received at the *Dipo* camp, the interviews revealed that young girls are empowered to negotiate safe sex with their sexual partners. This was how a participant explained it:

I strongly believe that *dipo* is very very good. It can be used to reduce pre-marital sexual activities and teenage pregnancy and everything, because there're restrictions. In the past especially, because the young girl had not gone through the *dipo*, no man could tempt her. No... no... no... she'd not even allow you (man). So, the question of prostitution or (sexual) immorality was totally out in those days (**An Elder, Sra**).

Besides, because of the punitive measures associated with the *Dipo* ceremony in the community, some of the young girls are challenged to protect their virginity to go through the ceremony successfully. An elder explained:

Yes, because they still do it for those who're virgins. If you conceive, they'll never do it for you. If you bring it forth and the whole world knows about it, that one they'll not do it for you (**An Elder, Somanya**).

In the past when the initiation was strictly limited to matured girls (Mate Kole, 1955), some older adults shared their experiences on how *Dipo* empowered them to remain chaste until they were done with the rite:

In the former days the initiators were grown up women. You can see some of us with our breast fallen. But we feared that if I conceived, I would be expelled. So, the question is why do I have to go away from my mother and father to go (and stay) elsewhere? Because by force they'd throw you away from the area if you conceive before the initiation (**A Female Participant, Ogome**).

Again, when an old lady was asked whether she had sex before her initiation, this was her answer:

(Giggles). Eeiii... I did my (Dipo) initiation when I was very old – about 20 or 21 years old. But I was still a virgin at the time I did it. After my initiation, it even took me quite some time before I met and married my husband (**An Elderly Woman, Ogome**).

A young man concurred with the above statements and further explained that the punishments and stigmatization associated with *Dipo* also empowers young girls in contemporary times to avoid pre-marital sex. He expressed thus:

But what I've seen is that if you allow the girl to be matured before it's performed for her, she's always afraid to entertain men. If a man proposes to her, she'll refuse since she's afraid to get pregnant before the initiation. She's seen that all the girls in this community are undergoing *Dipo*, so she too is determined to initiate to please her parents (**A Young Man, 17, Ogome**).

Moreover, a traditionalist denied vehemently that the initiation of young girls in the community is the leading cause of HIV/AIDS and teenage pregnancy cases in the community as it's been alleged by the opponents of the rite. He expressed thus:

No, I don't agree with them. It's the influence of television eg. if they watch the tele and see some people kissing, they're tempted to practice it. So, it's not the cause of the initiation. Because, for instance, in the olden days when there's no television, were the young girls behaving like that? Again, in the olden days when there was no television, there were no armed robberies and other social vices. Most of these vices were copied from viewing the television and the influence of some foreigners (**A Traditionalist, Ogome**).

The above statements have revealed that *Dipo* rite has remained relevant both in the past and contemporary times. This is partly because it does not only promote morality among young girls, but it also encourages young girls to delay sexual debut until they are mature enough or married. The implication is that *Dipo* womanhood rite is a very significant practice that can help reduce, if not to eradicate HIV/AIDS cases in the Municipality (Schroeder & Danquah, 2000).

Relevance of *Dipo* to Promote Social Cohesion and Tourism

The opponents in the survey, believe that the *Dipo* rite does not promote social cohesion as being trumpeted by the supporters. But they claimed that the occasion is rather used to negatively project the indigenous people as barbaric and pagans (Anarfi, 2003). Their position is informed by the fact that some performances characterizing the celebration of the rite is vicious, occult and not based on Christian/Muslim dogma. These included exposure of greater portion of initiates' naked body to the public and the pouring of libation (Odonkor, 1971; Teyegaga, 1985). An elder who was not enthused about the initiators costume espoused:

They'd take you to the Somanya market and they'd expose your breast for the men who're interested in you (**An Old Man, Somanya**).

Another participant also said that part of the reason why she doesn't want anything to do with the ceremony is their dressing. According to her, on the day that the young and innocent girls are marching to the sacred stone, they are fastened with costume in such a provocative way that it can be a recipe for rape. Thus, the costume exposes them almost naked to the full glare of the people, including men around. She put it thus:

You'd see the initiates almost naked with their protruding breast with only small piece of cloth hanging from their waist (**A Female Participant, Labor**).

The supporters of the rite in the survey, on the other hand, clarified that *Dipo*, like many Africa traditional societies, makes them unique to the outside world. It also nurtures the initiates as ideal Krobo women to assume their proper role in their family and community (Boakye 2010). In addition, aside that it is a traditional school for the girls to learn about the values set by their society (Glozah & Lawani, 2014), it also brings them together to celebrate and enjoy some of their traditional music and food. An elder reminisced some of the delicious traditional meal served them on the occasion:

What's goat meat and fufu during the celebration? In the past, everybody would be given goat meat and pounding fufu was common (**An Elder, Sra**).

Besides, *Dipo* like other womanhood rites in some African societies (Maluleke & Troskie, 2003), it offers young girls the opportunity to learn about their reproductive health issues from old women who are not their natal mothers. Moreover, the position of supporters of the rite is informed by the fact that it is an occasion used to promote unity among the various stakeholders in the community. According to the elders, the *Dipo* is an occasion that brings the chiefs, queen-mothers, and the elders together to plan the agenda and explore avenues to leverage projects to enhance developments in the community. Additionally, the young initiates, indigenous people, the chiefs, queen-mothers, and the elders in the community, seized the singular opportunity offered them by the occasion to display their beautiful and rich costumes, culture and relics to the admiration of the massive crowd present and the global world at large.

More importantly, it also emerged from the interviews that the occasion is used to invite some distinguished guests, including members of the Municipal Assembly and government officials to grace the occasion. The presence of Government officials does not only make the occasion colourful and eventful, but they also deliver speeches that usually border on the development agenda of the community. An elder revealed thus:

Anytime there's such an occasion, we invite the government officials and they come down to grace it. Some people do come from different parts of the country to witness the occasion and the White men also come to grace the occasion (**A Traditional Leader, Ogome**).

A young man also reiterated on the fact that a huge number of tourists swarm the community during the occasion to catch a glimpse of the ceremony:

The Whites usually attend in their numbers to take pictures on the occasion. They're attracted by the beautiful costumes the initiates wear on the occasion (**A Young man, 17, Ogome**).

The occasion is, therefore, lively, and productive. This is because the tourists as well as the visitors who come to witness the event, do patronize the local products, and sponsor some developmental agenda in the community. Hence, the *Dipo* womanhood rite is relevant since the occasion can not only promote social cohesion, but also boost tourism that will ensure to the benefit of all the people in the Municipality and the country.

Relevance of Sustaining *Dipo* Womanhood Rite

During the interviews, some Christians and opponents of the *Dipo* womanhood rites have labelled the practice as occult and an idol worship that should be scrapped. This, coupled with the fact that the celebration has struggled to maintain the level of interest the community attached to it in the past, makes the future continuation of the practice doubtful. According to them, some

parents/guardians have declared their intention not to initiate their daughters, because they claim that the practice is fetish and should not be sustained. A pastor maintained thus:

In the past, when you heard the story, it was customary, traditional and fetish, because it's the fetish priests/priestesses who laid down the programme and everything. As a result, many Christians are boycotting it or not getting involved (**A Pastor, Somanya**).

Another pastor further explained that some Christians feel discouraged about the way the rite is performed. They feel that some aspects of the celebration is fetish and not based on Christian principles. Hence, as a devout Christian who understands the teachings of Christ, should not get involved with the *Dipo* celebration. He maintained thus:

But we feel that if you're committed and dedicated Christian, you don't have to (be involved). Because you don't have to add anything fetish or traditional thing as part of your life. Because you know Christ and you are worshipping Him. So, you don't have to taint yourself with any cultural something (**A Pastor, Somanya**).

Others too have deviated from the values attached to the rite by choosing to initiate young girls below 5 years old instead of teens as was required in the past. An elder intimated thus:

This girl, (pointing to a girl less than 4 years old lying on his lap during the interview) is my grand-daughter, I'll want her to grow before the rite is performed for her. But if her parents want to do it for her whilst she's still young, I wouldn't have much to say (**An Opinion Leader, Plau**).

As a result, they claimed that the rite is not a solution to chastity since those who are initiated early are also believed to be exposed to early sex (Anarfi, 2003). This is derived from the common notion that once the initiation has been

performed, the young girl sees that she's no longer a child. She can, therefore, engage in sex at any time she wishes and would not be sanctioned even if she conceives outside properly sanctioned marriage (Agra & Gbadegbe 2014; Langmagne et al. 2018). Considering this, the opponents are of the view that the rite has outlived its usefulness and must be scrapped.

The supporters of the rite on the other hand, have assured of its sustainability in the community. An elder, who is a Christian and an ardent supporter of the initiation (Christraditional), claimed that *Dipo* should be sustained, because of the enormous benefits it accrued to both the initiated and the community. Thus, aside that it makes Krobo unique among the rest of the ethnic groups in Ghana and beyond, the training and other things taught at the *Dipo* house also empower some of the initiated girls to remain virgins until marriage or are matured enough (Glozah & Lawani, 2014) to negotiate safe sex.

A Christraditonal also confirmed that some Churches in the community do recognize *Dipo* initiation among its members in the community. Thus, despite the criticisms levelled against the rite by a section of Christians, some of them too maintained that the rite is relevant and should be sustained. To reinforce this point, recently the Methodist Church in Kumasi, Ghana, performed *Bragoro* initiation rite for a 16-year-old girl who was a virgin. This was meant to encourage others in the Church to cherish their virginity and lead morally upright lives (ghananewsagency, 2018). In line with this, an elder explained how the *Dipo* womanhood rite is perceived by some Churches in the Yilo-Krobo Municipality:

For Catholics when you do it (Dipo), you go to the Church and then they'll sprinkle the Holy Water on you. I'm a Catholic and we do it, but the Presbyterian Churches they don't do it. The Catholic after the Dipo custom is done (for you), they'll accept

you into the Church and sprinkle the Holy Water on you that you've gone through the necessary rituals. It's Catholic alone who do it, but the other Protestant Churches don't do it (**An Elder, Somanya**).

Moreover, most of the elders interviewed are keen to ensure that the celebration of *Dipo* is perpetuated in Yilo-Krobo society where most of the men prefer to marry virgin women. This was how another elder expressed it:

As a chief, I've to protect my custom and tradition. That's my belief. You can't change me. I was born into it and my children too will pass through it. That's why I said its (*Dipo*) part and parcel of us. You can't change it till the end of the world. In Krobo now, we can't change it (*Dipo*) and nothing can force us to change it (**A Traditionalist, Ogome**).

More importantly, perhaps, is the fact that some young people were seen to have strong commitment to the celebration of the rite as they always play a key role in the celebration to ensure that it always ends well. A young man of 17 years old for instance, declared that *Dipo* was handed to them by their forefathers and as their elders of today have managed to sustain it, they will also do likewise when the occasion presents itself. He vowed thus:

Oh, yes. I strongly believe that *Dipo* will last forever. Because the young generation likes the celebration since it's handed down to us by our forefathers and we also must sustain it (**A Young Man, 17, Ogome**).

Moreover, it's not only the young people who want the celebration to be sustained, but also some people who, by virtue of their position in the society, are believed to be critics of the celebration, are seen to be interested in its sustenance. The reason is that they are also aware of the benefits associated with *Dipo* celebration to the Municipality. This finding agrees with a study by

Ostrow (2011) that both the non-Christians and Christians agreed that *Dipo* is good at least on the grounds that it prepares young girls for Krobo womanhood and the fact that it encourages some of them to uphold chastity until marriage. In the study, some of the pastors did not only advocate sustenance of *Dipo* rite, but also outlined strategies to ensure a unified front among all and sundry as far as the celebration of *Dipo* is concerned. A pastor intimated:

I think if the society will come together and acknowledge that it's a customary something for the family and maybe we could have brought the people involved together so that we share. When we share, we'd give out certain things that involve the benefits and many things. We can also debate this and talk about it so that they can remove some of these spiritual things out from it (A Pastor, Somanya).

From the foregoing discussion, it can be deduced that there is a brighter future as far as the celebration of the *Dipo* rite is concerned, because of its enormous benefits. However, the elders and other stakeholders should do well to address the valid concerns raised by the opponents of the rite to achieve a consensus during the celebration.

Summary of Chapter

The chapter discussed the relevance of *Dipo* initiation regarding whether young girls consider *Dipo* celebration in general as an effective measure to control early sexual debut in contemporary times. In attempting to situate the initiation rite in perspective, it was observed that some aspects of the rite that have been preserved by the elders have been labelled as spiritual and fetish by the opponents of the rite. The chapter further explained that while some of the activities characterizing the rite have been modified to keep it more relevant, others too have been left untouched as a means of revering their ancestors and

replicating how it was observed during the days of their ancestors on the Mountain. Hence, the *Dipo* rite celebration is not an idol worship, but rather an occasion to celebrate their social identity. The chapter further observed that the rite is not only relevant in the selection of spouse by young men and in the promotion of tourism, but it is also relevant in addressing SRH issues like HIV/AIDS that is widespread in the community. The next chapter discusses the role of *Dipo* as a social mechanism against early sexual debut that occurs at the time the young girl is not married.



CHAPTER SEVEN

THE MEDIATING ROLE AND SOCIAL CONTROL MECHANISMS OF *DIPPO* AGAINST EARLY SEXUAL DEBUT

Introduction

The current chapter discusses the mediating role and social control mechanisms of *Dippo* initiation rite on sexual behaviour among young people in the study communities. The chapter first examines how background variables such as location, religion, SES, marital status, level of education, and household living arrangements affect the *Dippo* initiation status resulting in age at sexual debut of young girls. This is followed by a discussion of *Dippo* womanhood rite as a social control mechanism on sexual debut among young girls. The aim is to gain a deeper understanding of its effect on the interplay of the background characteristics and sexual behaviour of young girls in the study communities.

The Mediating Role of *Dippo* on the Relationship between Background Characteristics and Age at Sexual Debut

At the time of the survey, most young girls were found idling about as schools had closed in the Municipality due to the novel COVID-19 pandemic. In view of the adage that “the devil finds work for the idle hands”, it is not surprising to see that some of them had broken their virginity at the time of the survey. Table 20 displays the responses of respondents whether they have been initiated or not and the age at which they were first exposed to sexual activity prior to marriage by their background characteristics.

Table 20. Association between Socio-Economic, Demographic, Household, Dipo Initiation Status and Sexual Debut.

Background Characteristics	Had Sex between 10 and 15 Years Old			
	Un-initiated	Percent	Initiated	Percent
Age				
15-19	15	44.1	20	41.7
20-24	19	55.9	28	58.3
Location				
Urban	27	79.4	30	62.5
Rural	7	20.6	18	37.5
Religion				
Christian	34	100.0	48	100.0
Muslim				
Traditionalist				
No-Religion				
Marital Status				
Single	26	76.5	32	66.7
Married	5	14.7	9	18.7
Consensual union	2	5.8	5	10.4
Divorced			1	2.1
Separated	1	2.9	1	2.1
Education				
No Formal Edu.	3	8.8	2	4.2
Primary	15	44.2	6	12.5
JHS	13	38.2	21	43.7
SHS	-	-	18	37.5
Tertiary	3	8.8	1	2.1
Migration				
No	16	47.0	20	41.7
Yes	18	53.0	28	58.3
Household size				
0-3	2	5.8	6	12.5
4-6	16	47.1	29	60.4
7-10	16	47.1	13	27.1
Employment				
Unemployed	3	8.8	17	35.4
Business/trading	8	23.5	4	11.8
Sewing/tailoring	1	2.9	3	6.3
Farming	2	5.9		
Apprenticeship	1	2.9	7	14.6
Petty trading	5	14.7	5	10.4
Public servant	2	5.9	1	2.1
Self-employed			4	11.8

Table 20. Cont'd

N/A	12	35.4	7	14.6
SES				
Rich	5	14.7	2	4.2
Average	21	61.8	40	83.3
Poor	8	23.5	6	12.5
Household type				
Nuclear	18	53.0	33	68.7
Extended	13	38.2	12	25.0
Single parent	3	8.8	3	6.3
Relationship Head				
Father	17	50	24	50.0
Mother	6	17.7	5	10.4
Uncle/Aunty	1	2.9	5	10.4
Grand parents	6	17.7	4	8.3
Self	-	-	2	4.2
Stepparents	1	2.9	3	6.3
Spouse	3	8.8	5	10.4
Parent/s attached				
Dipo				
No	29	85.3	14	29.2
Yes	3	8.8	18	37.5
DK/CT	2	5.9	16	33.3
Peers attached				
Dipo				
No	22	64.8	16	33.3
Yes	1	2.9	14	29.2
DK/CT	1	2.9	4	8.3
N/A	10	29.4	14	29.2
TOTAL	34	100.0	48	100.0

Source: Field Work, July-August 2020

Regarding age of participants, Table 20 illustrates that young girls aged 15-19 years who have not been initiated are slightly ahead of their initiated counterparts (44.1% compared with 41.7%) to engage in early sexual initiation. The implication is that both the un-initiated and the initiated young girls aged between 15 and 24 years have been exposed to sexual activity. However, the latter recorded less, because most of them probably intend to safeguard their virginity until they are mature enough or married. But the opposite was true for the young girls aged 20-24 years (55.9% compared with 58.3%). Probably, those who were exposed to early initiation feel they are old enough to engage in sex (Langmagne et al., 2018). Similarly, location of participants shows that those in urban areas who have not been initiated and have had sex before their sixteenth birthday, were more than the initiated ones (79.4% compared with 20.6%). This result is similar to another study in Nigeria where pre-marital sex among respondents including young girls aged 15-24 in urban areas were more prevalent among those from non-traditional backgrounds compared with their counterparts from traditional families (Feyisetan & Pebley, 1999). However, in rural areas, more than one-third (37.5%) of the initiated girls have initiated early sex than their un-initiated counterparts (20.6%). This finding may be due to the homogenous nature of the rural areas. Thus, while the initiated girls feel that their initiation has given them the license to engage in sex (Anarfi, 2003; Langmagne et al., 2018), the un-initiated girls are careful or afraid to engage in early sex prior to marriage since most traditional societies regard them as children irrespective of their age (Munthali et al., 2018).

In case of religion, only some young girls from Christian background had engaged in early sexual activity. These could mostly be the young girls from

parents or families who are not in support of *the Dipo* rite and are therefore, not subjected under any cultural restrictions that ensures chastity until marriage. Anecdotal evidence has it that in the absence of any cultural restrictions placed on sexual behaviour, the young girls are believed to be free to engage in pre-marital sex. It is, therefore, not surprising that an overwhelming proportion (85.3%) of un-initiated young girls whose parents/guardians are non-conservatives have engaged in early sexual activity, compared with young girls who have been initiated (29.2%). Nonetheless, the opposite was the case for those from conservative families or who support *Dipo* womanhood rite and its associated punishments (37.5% against 8.8%) for initiated and un-initiated respectively. Similar trend was observed for peers. Probably, this confirms the common notion that some parents tend to leave their daughters to their own fate after performing the *Dipo* for them as little kids. But they tend to be strict on them if the *Dipo* has not been done for them to avoid disgrace and shame from the community.

About marital status, the Table (20) further indicates that more un-initiated girls engaged in early sexual activity than the initiated young girls (76.5% compared with 66.7%). This could also be because most of the late initiators, especially avoided early sexual debut until their initiation was completed. Besides, un-initiated non-migrants are more likely to have engaged in early sexual activity than their initiated counterparts (47.0% compared with 41.7%). This is expected, because the un-initiated are not under cultural restrictions and could therefore, engage in early sex. However, the opposite was observed for their migration history as more initiated return migrants (58.3%) have had early sex than the un-initiated girls (53.0%). It was observed that most

of the return migrants stayed with their parents or family members. Hence, it could mean that these family members are very aware of the ethical norms governing *Dipo* back in their community and therefore, tend to be very strict on the sexual behaviour of the un-initiated ones. It may turn out that some of them may pass through the initiation at mature age. A traditionalist clarified:

In this town, what I've observed is that those who're initiated at mature age are normally those who're brought from other towns and villages to be initiated here. Those initiates are normally brought from faraway places like Sefwi, Obuasi (both in Ghana) and they're well brought up to undergo the initiation. For instance, an Aunty of mine in Dunkwah, has called me to say that she'll like to bring her daughters who're well brought up and matured for the next initiation season (**A Traditionalist, Okpe-Betsi**).

Copious existing literature on socio-economic status of parents and early sexual intercourse, have found that family socio-economic status are important determinants of young girls' exposure to early sexual intercourse (Dupere et al., 2008; Pilgrim et al., 2014). However, perhaps due to the control function of *Dipo* womanhood rite, initiated girls from rich (4.2%) and poor families (12.5%) compared with the un-initiated girls from rich (14.7%) and poor families (23.5%) have engaged in early sexual activity. Consistent with social control theory, the results indicate that girls who are committed/involved, belief in principles of *Dipo* and belong to conservative parents are equally vulnerable to early sexual debut. Notwithstanding, they are more likely to refrain from such behaviour until they are done with the initiation, because they think about what their behaviour may cost them and their significant others. Many a time those who violate the rules governing *Dipo* celebration and their family members are stigmatized and usually the bride price presented to the girl's family is reduced

(Broude, 1975; Mair, 1969). This finding also agrees with Hirschi's (1969) prediction that young people who are involved/committed in acquiring good reputation or moral virtue in the community, may be prevented from engaging in early sex prior to marriage since it can cost them all the investments. Above all, those who believe in the principles of *Dipo* are less likely to violate them (Hirschi, 1969).

Delayed First Sex due to *Dipo*.

Conventional acumen would suggest that with the institution of *Dipo* and the norms associated with it to regulate sexual conduct in the study communities, young adults who have comprehensive knowledge or have participated in the rite, would be expected to refrain from sex until they were matured enough or were married. As a result, young girls whose sexual debut occurred at the time they were matured enough were targeted to understand whether the punitive measures associated with *Dipo* womanhood rite were the motivation factors. In other words, participants were asked whether *Dipo* was the reason they delayed their sexual debut until they had attained 16 years and above. Their responses are presented in Figure (12).

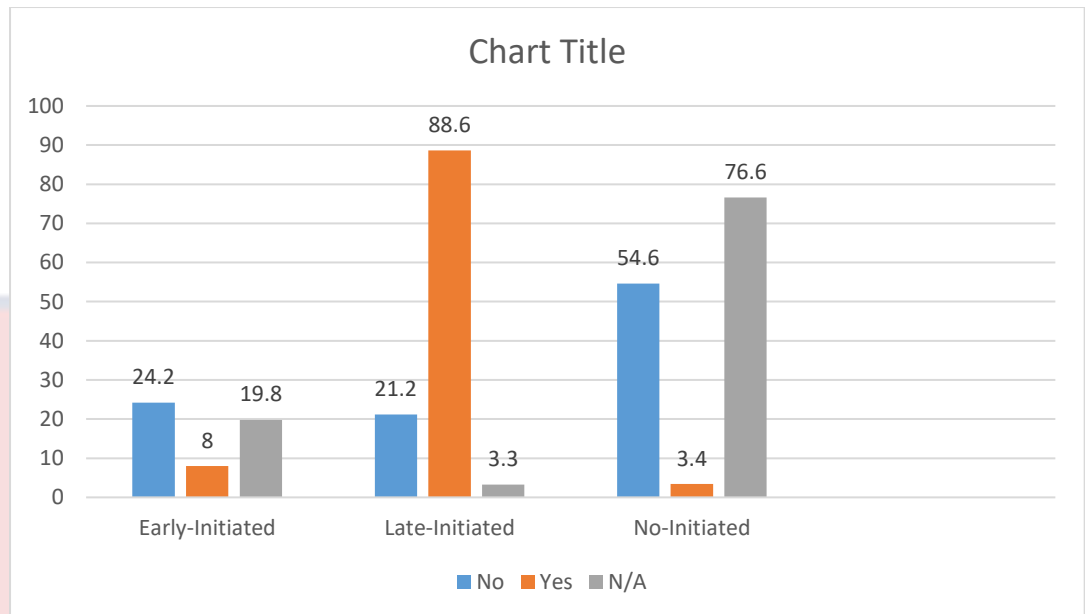


Figure 12: Percentage of Relationship between Dipo and Delayed First Sex by Initiation Category. Source: Field Work, July-August 2020

The results in Figure (12) indicated that while an overwhelming majority of young people (96.6%) who had ever passed through the *Dipo* initiation believed the rite had helped them to delay their sexual debut, only a small proportion of the un-initiated (3.4%) see the initiation in the same lenses. The results, therefore, suggest that *Dipo* initiation has helped the majority of young girls in the Municipality who have passed through the rite to delay their first sexual debut until they were 16 years old and above. This finding is consistent with the study by Maluleke and Troskie (2003) that *Vukhomba* female initiation rite is important, because those who have been initiated reported that it has encouraged them to maintain their virginity until marriage. It is also similar to a study of *Umcwasho* initiation among the Swazi young girls where some of the young girls who passed through it as virgins were as old as 22 years (Rooyen & Hartell, 2010).

Further segregation of Figure (12) depicted that close to 9 out of 10 (88.6%) young girls who have delayed their sexual debut due to *Dipo* initiation were in the Late-initiated category. This behaviour may be due to two main reasons. First, most young girls want to avoid the punishments associated with getting pregnant prior to the initiation. Second, while initiates are in the *Dipo* house, the elderly women taught them many things including the need for them to remain chaste until marriage, which most late-initiators understand and put it into practice after their initiation.

As expected, more than half of the un-initiators (54.6%) indicated that some factors other than *Dipo* initiation accounted for their delayed sexual debut. These factors may include religion, strict parental control, and personal reasons. As a result, the majority of the un-initiated young girls (76.6%) did not see any need for the initiation as far as the timing of their sexual debut is concerned. A Muslim young woman succinctly put it thus:

I was educated well on sexual abstinence by my parents. My religion also put the fear of Allah in us (**A Young girl, 24, urban**).

Nevertheless, few of the young girls (3.4%) who had not been initiated at the time of the survey, had delayed their sexual debut. This could be because those from rural areas, especially were afraid that they will easily be found out due to its homogenous nature and stigmatized. However, others were of the view that their religion and strict parental guidance were the restraining factors.

Association Between Background Characteristics, Early and Late Sexual Debut

A myriad of literature has studied some of the socioeconomic factors that are likely to delay the early sexual debut among young people in Africa by looking at a single factor. For instance, a study by Deptula et al. (2010) has

looked at the strong quality relationship between parents and young girls and lower levels of early sexual initiation. Another study has also looked at commitment and involvement (Somefun, 2019) and belief (Odimegwu, 2005) and early sexual debut. Defo and Dimbuene (2012) have focused on family structure and early sexual debut, while another study has advocated resuscitation of womanhood rites to stem the tide of promiscuity among young people (Adjei et al., 2002; Nerquaye-Tetteh, 1996; Schroeder & Danquah, 2000).

As these factors have shown to have significantly averted early sexual debut among young people, the current study found it useful to group all these factors to understand which of them is more likely to delay early sexual debut among young people. This will deepen the understanding of the mediating role of *Dipo* on the relationship between individual socio-demographic, economic, household, and other characteristics, and sexual debut in contemporary times. The multinomial logistic regression was applied, because the dependent variable was nominal with more than one category, while the independent variable also had more than two categorical variables. The results are presented in Table (21).

Table 21: Multinomial Logistic Regression on Association between Background Characteristics, Early and Late Sexual Activity

Background Characteristics	Early sexual debut vrs Never had sex				Late sexual debut vrs Never had sex			
	Coef.	P<z	[95% Conf.	Interval	Coef.	P<z	[95% Conf.	Interval
Initiated Status								
Early Initiated (R)								
Late Initiated	-2.110	0.000	-3.143	-1.077	-0.678	0.273	-1.890	0.535
Attachment to parents								
Sometimes (R)								
Very often	-0.948	0.060	-1.936	0.041	0.375	0.417	-0.531	1.280
Commitment and involvement of Dipo								
Not committed at all (R)								
Committed	-2.037	0.006	-3.497	-0.577	-0.081	0.922	-1.702	1.540
Very committed	-3.800	0.000	-5.861	-1.739	-0.414	0.647	-2.188	1.359
Puberty rule beliefs								
Disagree (R)								
Agree	0.609	0.390	-0.780	1.997	0.975	0.217	-0.571	2.521
Knowledge of puberty rite								
No (R)								
Yes	-0.534	0.555	-2.307	1.239	-0.523	0.549	-2.233	1.187
Age of respondents								
15-19 (R)								
20-24	-0.805	0.071	-1.679	0.068	-2.782	0.000	-3.746	-1.819
Religion of Respondents								
Christian (R)								
Other religion	-13.523	0.978	-967.299	940.252	-0.002	0.998	-1.390	1.387
Education of Respondents								

Primary (R)								
Junior High School	0.546	0.345	-0.588	1.681	0.535	0.473	-0.924	1.994
Senior High School	0.630	0.296	-0.551	1.810	1.524	0.037	0.092	2.957
Tertiary	-0.166	0.855	-1.949	1.617	2.840	0.005	0.848	4.832
Migration Status								
No (R)								
Yes	-0.290	0.488	-1.109	0.529	-0.304	0.490	-1.165	0.558
Have best friend								
No (R)								
Yes	-0.074	0.855	-0.863	0.716	-0.269	0.536	-1.123	0.585
Household type								
Nuclear (R)								
Extended	-0.731	0.170	-1.775	0.313	-0.891	0.120	-2.013	0.231
Single-Parent	0.289	0.752	-1.505	2.082	0.251	0.811	-1.810	2.312
Household size								
0-3 members (R)								
4-6 members								
7-10 members	0.542	0.375	-0.655	1.738	0.107	0.857	-1.053	1.266
	0.955	0.193	-0.483	2.393	0.191	0.795	-1.249	1.631
locality of respondents								
Urban (R)								
Rural	-0.214	0.611	-1.036	0.608	0.170	0.692	-0.670	1.011
Relationship to household head								
Father (R)								
Mother	-0.984	0.099	-2.152	0.185	-0.754	0.179	-1.852	0.345
Uncle/Aunty	1.179	0.138	-0.378	2.735	1.010	0.250	-0.712	2.731
Grand arents	0.278	0.703	-1.153	1.709	-0.438	0.568	-1.942	1.066
other family members	-0.290	0.591	-1.348	0.768	-1.476	0.088	-3.172	0.221
_cons	2.795	0.045	0.059	5.530	0.104	0.945	-2.837	3.044

Source: Field Work, July-August 2020

R = Reference Category P-value = 0.000 Pseudo R2 = 0.358 Cut of Value = 0.05%

A critical observation of Table (21) reveals that the independent variables which significantly delay early sexual debut among young girls were late-initiated of *Dipo* and commitment and involvement variables. These variables have coefficient values of -2.110 for initiated and -2.032 and -3.800 for commitment/involvement and very committed/very much involved in *Dipo* celebration respectively. This implies that young girls in the late-initiated category, an increase in the phenomenon, is associated with -2.110 more likelihood not to engage in early sexual conduct respectively compared with early-initiated category. This is expected, because studies have found that if girls are initiated early, they tend to be exposed to early sexual behaviour (Anarfi, 2003; Langmagne et al., 2018) than the late initiated. This finding is in line with the first construct of SCT which emphasizes the important role of family influencing and steering the choices of their members from deviant behaviours since it shows the role of family attachment in ensuring that yet-to-be-initiated girls avoid early premarital sex to go through *Dipo* successfully. Similarly, young girls who are either committed/involved or very committed/very much involved in *Dipo* activities, a unit increase in the phenomenon, is associated with -2.032 and -3.800 more likelihood not to be exposed to early sexual debut respectively compared with those who are not committed/involved. The results indicate that young girls who are committed to successfully undergoing the initiation or are involved in *Dipo* activities are more likely to delay sexual debut, because they know of the dire consequences of getting pregnant prior to the initiation.

Regarding late sexual debut, the significant variable was age of respondent. Thus, it showed that an increase in the phenomenon, is associated

with -2.782 more likelihood of young girls aged 20-24 years not to have late sexual debut compared with those aged 15-19 years old. This could be because young girls (15-19 years old) are able to delay their sexual debut since the Queen-mother has recently introduced some measures to discourage early *Dipo* initiation. Or, perhaps, most of the 20-24 years old who have initiated early sexual debut prior to marriage are either those who had early *Dipo* initiation or belong to the un-initiated category.

Timing of First Sexual Encounter

Further, the present study attempts to understand the significance or otherwise of *Dipo* in addressing early sexual behaviour issues among young people. Participants were asked to indicate whether the timing of their first sexual experience occurred before or after their *Dipo* initiation. The results are presented in Figure (13).

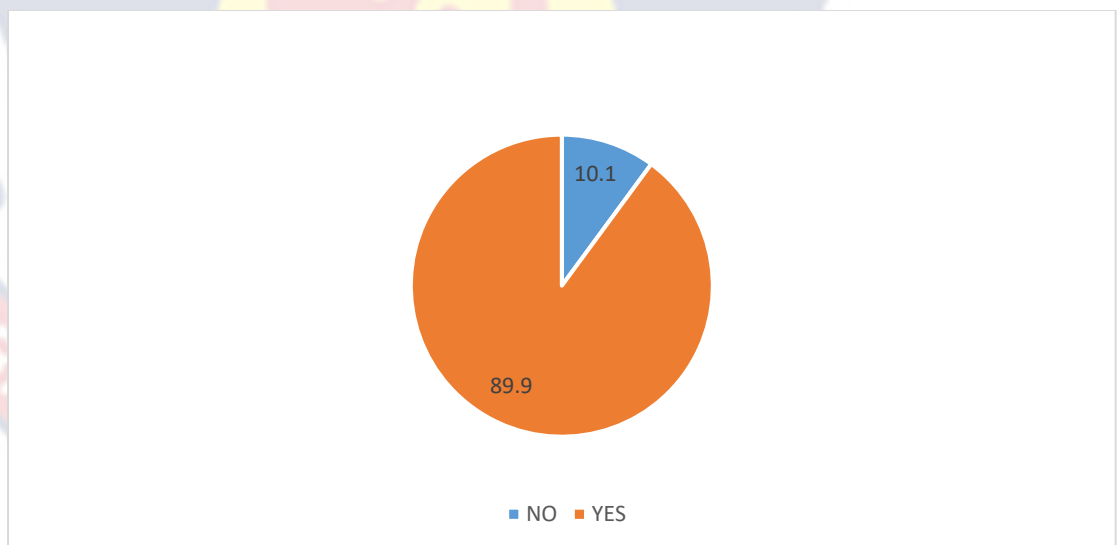


Figure 13: Percentage of Late-Initiated Young Girls Who Participated in *Dipo* and Timing of their First Sexual initiation by Background Characteristics.

Source: Field Work, July-August 2020

Figure (13) indicated that quite a few of the late initiated (10.1%) were exposed to sexual activity prior to their initiation. Probably, they might have had sex at the blind side of their parents/guardians and friends, which did not also result in pregnancy. As a result, they were able to go through the initiation afterwards without any punishment or stigma. This is how a key informant illustrated it:

If it's not known that you're dating, it's okay. But if you conceived and the whole world knows about it, that one they'll not do it for you (**An Elder, 90, Somanya**).

Nevertheless, almost 9 out of 10 (89.9%) Late-initiated young girls reported that they passed through the *Dipo* initiation before engaging in sex for the first time. A young girl illustrated thus:

They do it for those who're virgins but will never do it for someone who is pregnant or has given birth (**Young Girl, 18, Rural**).

Another participant stated that some of the young girls didn't want to engage in sex before their initiation, because they didn't want to disappoint their parents. Or they didn't want to get pregnant and be expelled from their family house. This was how one of the young girls put it:

Because my uncle would have expelled me from the (family) house if I had gotten pregnant before my initiation (**Young girl, 24, Rural**).

This shows that *Dipo* as a relevant cultural practice does not only mediate between young girl's background characteristics and their sexual debut, but it also imposes strong control power over their sexual activity in that it provides an outline for timing of sexual activities. Thus, as a conservative

society, the *Dipo* rules prohibit young girls from engaging in pre-marital sex. This is largely because young girls are expected to undergo the *Dipo* rituals and maintain a high level of sexual morality until they are married (Glozah & Lawani, 2014; Sackey, 2001). Thus, often, those who are caught having sex without been initiated, were punished (Huber, 1993; Steegsra, 2005). It was gathered that parents are the ones who usually inflict the punishment on their daughters, and later decide on whether to initiate them or not. According to the key informants, some of the punishments usually meted out to violators of the rules of acceptable behaviours in the community included insults, beating, verbal warning, denying them food, or the young girl is forced to leave the family house especially if she is found to be pregnant prior to her initiation.

This finding confirmed previous studies that *Dipo* rite is a relevant cultural practice and should be resuscitated to play an important role in controlling the sexual desire of young girls (Schroeder & Danquah, 2000). The fact is that according to the elders, it affords most parents/families the opportunity to discuss moral virtues with the young girls. Thus, more often, mothers who have performed the rite discuss and encourage their daughters to do same. They told their daughters about some of the potential gains they stand to enjoy if they successfully undergo the *Dipo*. This include the fact that initiated women are often seen as epitome of sexual morality and are also the most preferred choice of Krobo young men as wives.

***Dipo* Promotes Virginity**

As part of the investigating process to understand the regulatory role of *Dipo* initiation or otherwise, participants were asked to indicate the extent to which *Dipo* initiation rite can prohibit early sexual activity among unmarried

young people in the community. Of interest was the fact that the study targeted only young girls in the study communities who were virgins at the time of the survey to understand some of the contributing factors. Table (22) displayed their responses.

Table 22: Percentage of Relationship between *Dipo* and Virginitly by Initiation Category Status

VARIABLE	Early Initiated		Late Initiated		Un-Initiated		TOTAL
	FRE Q	PERCE NT	FREQ NT	PERCE NT	FREQ ENT	PERC ENT	
Still Young/In							
School/Apprentice	7	14.0	13	26.0	30	60.0	50
Yet to Initiate	0	0.0	0	0.0	7	100.0	7
Afraid of	4	10.3	20	51.3	15	38.5	39
Parent/Family							
Consequences	2	6.7	26	86.6	2	6.7	30
Dipo Taught me to							
Remain Chaste	3	33.3	0	0.0	6	66.7	9
Parents Give me all							
I Need	3	27.3	5	45.4	3	27.3	11
My Religion							
Forbids	2	14.3	4	28.6	8	57.1	14
Parents Taught me	5	33.3	3	20.0	7	46.7	15
to Remain Chaste							
Personal Decision							

Source: Field Work, July-August 2020

As observed in Table (22), about 60.0 percent of the un-initiated young girls attributed their virginity to being in school or in apprenticeship. In addition, close to four out of ten (38.5%) young girls from the un-initiated category were virgins due to their parents/family influence. Perhaps, those were from the devout Christian/Muslim homes where their parents are pastors/imams or from the nuclear families with both parents present. The literature indicates that young girls living with both parents are less susceptible to engaging in early sexual debut (Defo & Dimbuene, 2012; Kawai et al., 2008).

On the other hand, those who were virgins at the time of the survey and attributed it to the fear of punishment from their parents/family, showed that more than half (51.3%) of them were late initiated. More importantly, perhaps, was the fact that out of the 30 young girls who reported that their virginity was because of their initiation, an overwhelming majority (86.6%) of them were late initiated. This was how some of them shared their experience:

During the rite we were taught about chastity and its importance
(Young girl, 18, rural)

During my Dipo, I was taught to stay away from sexual relationships until marriage
(Young girl, 17, urban).

This finding runs counter to earlier reports that suggest that *Dipo* as it is performed currently is a catalyst for pre-marital sexual activities and teenage pregnancies in the community (Agra & Gbadegbe, 2014; Langmagne et al., 2018). The present study has revealed that the rite rather promotes chastity among a substantial proportion of the initiates until marriage or have come of age to negotiate safe sex. Specifically, the current study has contributed to the

literature that *Dipo* celebration is not only relevant in present times, but it also promotes virginity among young girls. An elder opined thus:

I strongly believe that *dipo* should be celebrated. It is very useful and can be used to reduce HIV/AIDS and teenage pregnancy and everything, because of the punitive measures attached to it (**An Elder, Sra**).

The fact is that the about-to-be-initiated girls are afraid to get pregnant before their initiation having witnessed how the other girls in the community had passed through the *Dipo*. As a result, they are also determined or committed to remain virgins to successfully go through the initiation to please their parents and significant others. The findings of this study is similar to a study among Swazi young girls, where virginity is a major condition for determining young girls' participation in the *Umcwasho* custom (Rooyen & Hartell, 2010). The reason is that as a strict and conservative society, the girl who becomes pregnant during her initiation does not only bring disgrace to her family, but she is also made to pay a heavy fine like paying an amount that is equivalent to the price of a cattle (ibid)

Ever Had Sex with Unmarried Girl

To further understand the control mechanism of *Dipo* rite regarding the sexual behaviour of young people in the community, a few young men (66) representing 18.9 percent aged between 15 and 24 years old were interrogated as to whether they have had sexual intercourse with unmarried young girls in the community. From Figure (14), it is observed that most of the young men interviewed (61.3%) have had sex with unmarried young girls in the community.

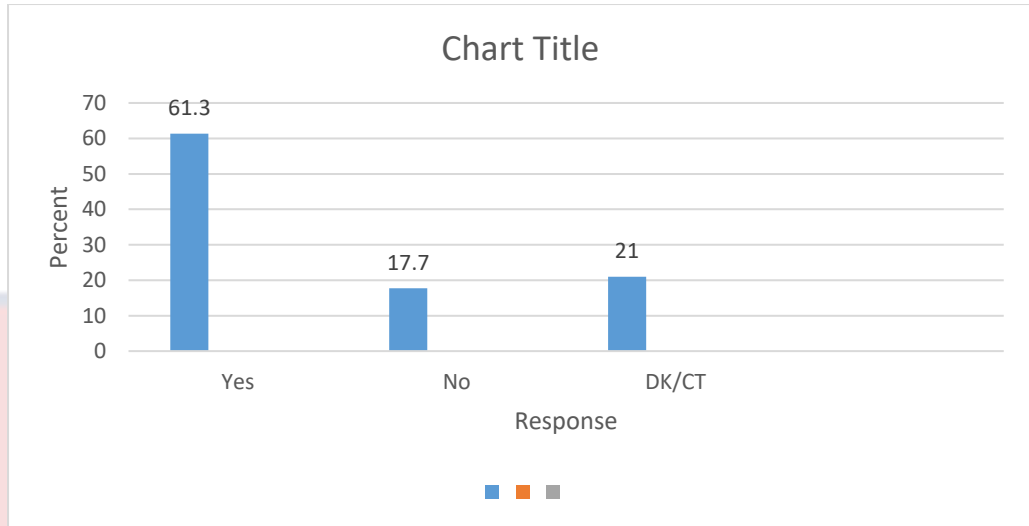


Figure 14: Percentage of Young Men who have had sex with Unmarried Young Women in the Community. Source: Field Work, July-August 2020

However, further interrogation regarding the initiation category of the young girls they have had sex with the results indicated that they had sex with young girls who have already been initiated. Thus, sex with already initiated young girls formed 61.5 percent, whereas those they were convinced that they would not go through the initiation formed 23.1 percent. On the other hand, those they knew were preparing for the initiation formed the least (12.8%) as presented in Figure (15).

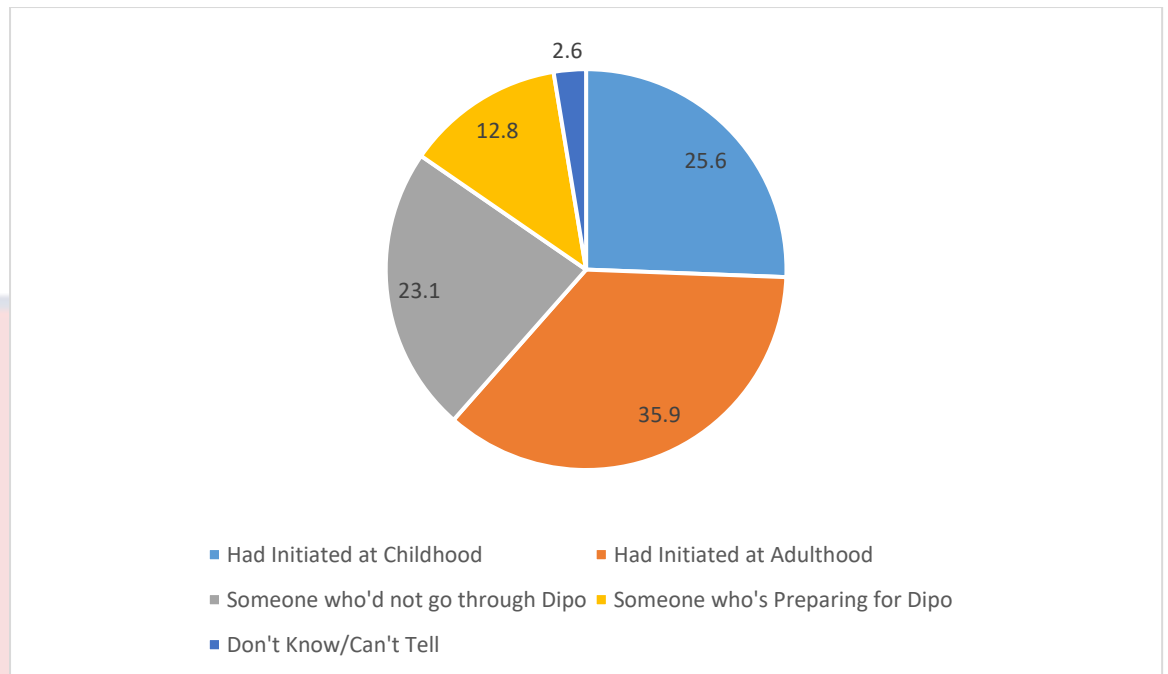


Figure 15: Percentage of Young Men who have had sex with Unmarried Young Women in the Community by their Initiation Status. Source: Field Work, July-August 2020

The implication is that most of the young men in the community are also aware that they would receive their share of the punishments associated with *Dipo* if they are found victims (Amos, 2013). An elder explained how most men were punished in the past in the following sentences:

(In the past), if you've not undergone the rite and you became pregnant, you'd be banned from society. The man (who impregnated the girl) would not be banned, but there'd be a curse on him. He's not to take any Krobo woman in his life. And many a time, because there's curse (on them), they don't live better lives (**An Elder, Somanya**).

One young man of 16 years old also recalled how he was cautioned by his parents not to have sex with a young girl who has not passed through the initiation. According to him, this happened at the time he was about 10 years

old and had involved in sex with a girl of his age and the incident was detected by his parents. He was caned and warned never to repeat that behaviour again. He revealed that though the girl was later initiated, nevertheless, the punishments by his parents have taught him a great lesson in life. He has vowed never to have any sexual relationship with any girl until he's married. Besides, because of the punitive measures associated with the *Dipo* ceremony in the community, some of the young girls have been using the rite as a decoy to reject love proposals from men they are not interested in them. A young man summarized it thus:

Exactly! They are afraid to propose to the girls who are yet to go through the initiation. So, what we do is if a guy is proposing to a girl in this community, he'll first try to know if the girl has been initiated. Even some of the girls if they know your intention is just to have sex with them and throw them away, will tell you that she's not been initiated and that alone will scare the guy away. But if you insist and get what you wanted from her and she becomes pregnant, the elders would find out from the girl if she told you initially that she's not been initiated. Because all these will be added to your charges and fined you (**Young Man, 17, Ogome**).

The present study has again contributed to the literature that *Dipo* does not only promote virginity among young girls, it also discourages young men from engaging in indiscriminate sex with un-married young girls in the community. Thus, the punishments associated with the ceremony are serving as a deterrent effect on both the young boys and girls as far as their sexual behaviour is concerned.

Young Men's Choice of Spouse

Varied opinions were assembled from young men concerning the preferred choice of a category of women they would like to date or marry. While some

of them indicated their choice for the un-initiated women, majority of them on the other hand, could not hide their admiration for women who have passed through the initiation. The Figure (16) indicated that out of 67 young men who answered the question, 49 (73.1%) were those who desire to date or marry an initiated woman and only 18 (26.9%) were those who like the un-initiated women as life-time partners.

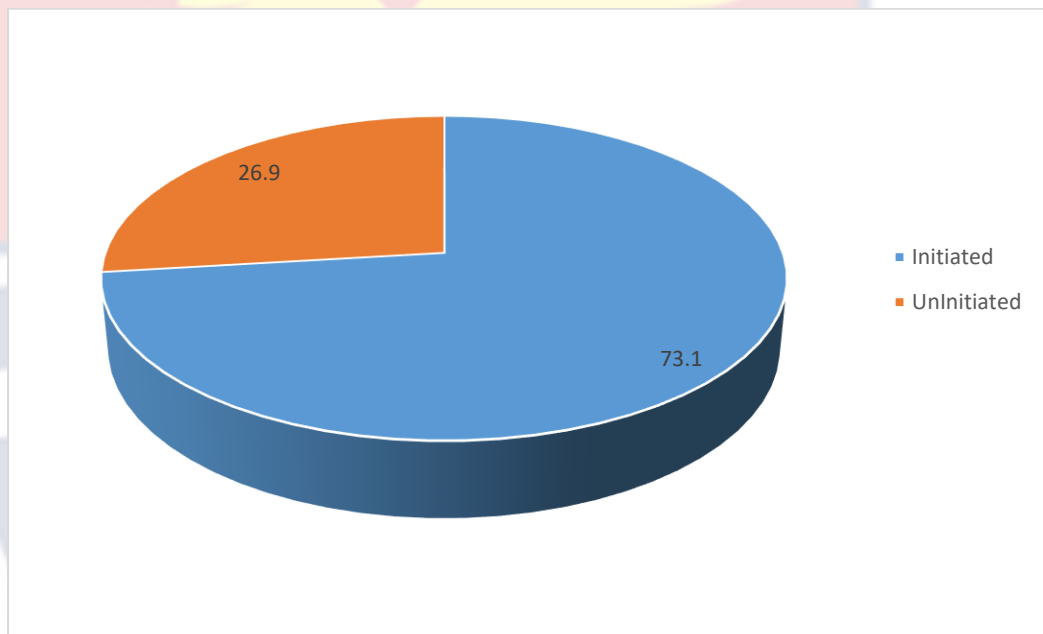


Figure 16: Percentage of Preference of Young Men Choice of Spouse by Category of Women. Source: Field Work, July-August 2020

The men who like the un-initiated women disclosed that most initiated girls get possessed by familiar spirits after the initiation. This is because, they strongly believe that the whole process they go through before they complete the initiation is fetish and spiritual, which can later affect them in life. During the key informant interviews, some of the opinion leaders who are against the initiation, were delighted that some young girls are not initiated. They confirmed that there are some Krobo men who are only interested in the un-

initiated girls. These young men usually approach the un-initiated girls with marriage proposals as one of them described it thus:

No, we never did the *Dipo*. But there're some men around here who're only interested in women who were not initiated. So, most of us here are married. They're all Krobo men from this town and when they come what they tell us is that they want a woman who's never undergone the *Dipo* to marry (**A Female Participant, labor**).

Moreover, some of the young men who prefer un-initiated young girls as wives, see the *Dipo* initiation as a mere formality. They believe that remaining chaste before the initiation is not due to the *Dipo* initiation. But are of the opinion that once a girl decides to engage in sexual activities before her initiation, nothing can stop her. This is because, the young girl can secretly engage in sex and still undergo the rite with ease.

Nonetheless, those who like the initiated women also insisted that aside that initiated women can remain chaste until marriage, they are also well trained and specially prepared for marriage. Thus, these young men believe that as men, they usually have busy schedules all the time and therefore, need women who are trained and well taught about the domestic science of marriage. Besides, they are poised to marry women who have been polished for the purpose of managing the house, caring for the husband, and cooking good and delicious dishes. An elder emphasized:

The (initiated) woman has been trained and polished for you the man. It's not now that you (the man) are coming to show the woman how to cook for you and wash her clothes. I don't have time for that. You see, as a woman you've to serve the house, so you're polished for that purpose and then you'll become marriageable and if you go to your marital home, no one worries you. You know your rights and the man will also love and cherish you (**An Elder, Ogome**).

Another elder agreed with the above statement and enumerated some of the benefits a young girl would gain when she submits herself for the initiation in the following sentences:

It is through *dipo* that you'll hear people saying "Se Krobo nii baa nua eduani ma wo, wo be ti se aduani no eye de papa (literary, if a Krobo woman cooks for you, you'll feel the real sweet taste of the food). Yes, (Initiated) Krobo women can really cook well (A Male Participant, Sra).

However, in this 21st Century where men and women are rubbing shoulders over everything, including education and labour force. This, coupled with the fact that non-governmental organizations (NGOs) as well as prominent individuals in the society are advocating for more inclusion of women to occupy high offices, the above statements and viewpoints of the elders seem to be re-echoing the ancient perception that women are only good for the kitchen (Zahari, 2014). In other words, women are only useful in preparing delicious and sumptuous food to feed their husbands and children. However, perhaps upon careful reflection over the statements, they seem to suggest that *Dipo* was also introduced as a valid mechanism for ensuring stability and tranquility at home.

Hypotheses Testing

The main objective of the current study was to assess the mediating role of *Dipo* on the relationship between individual socio-demographic, economic, household, and other characteristics, and sexual debut (early or late initiation of sex) of young girls in the 21st Century in Yilo-Krobo. To arrive at this conclusion, a set of *Dipo*-related variables known to be predictors of sexual initiation among young people (age at initiation, and initiation status of young

girls) were tested to find their relationship with early sexual initiation and exposure to sexual activity among young girls. Binary logistic regression was adopted to test the hypotheses.

H1: Early-initiated young girls are more likely to have an early sexual debut compared to late-initiated young girls.

The Binary regression analysis from Table (18) revealed a positive and significant relationship between late-initiation and early sexual debut. Thus, those who had late initiation were likely to delay their sexual debut compared with their counterparts who had early initiation. Consequently, hypothesis 1 which predicted that Early-initiated young girls are more likely to have an early sexual debut compared to late-initiated young girls was accepted by this study. This finding is in line with existing studies that infer that early sexual debut and its associated SRH were absent in the past when the *Dipo* was strictly performed for older adolescents to prepare them for marriage (Appiah-Sekyere, 2018; Sackey, 2001).

In this study, young girls who are involved in or committed to undergo the initiation at matured age, can delay their sexual debut until the time they are married or old enough to negotiate safe sex. Moreover, eventhough the prediction by Travis Hirschi (1969) that young people attached to parents/guardians irrespective of their viewpoints on traditional values, are more likely to turn to the acceptable behaviour of their society was not statistically significant. Nonetheless, the P-value statistical test indicates a strong relationship between young girls who are attached to straight parents/guardians and their likelihood to be aligned to the acceptable norm of behaviour of their society as indicated by Jensen and Brownfield (1983). In

other words, those attached to straight parents/guardians (ie. parents/guardians attached to *Dipo*) in Table (17) are likely to pass through the initiation at matured age, which would invariably expose them to first sex at the time they are married or old enough to negotiate safe sex.

H2: Un-initiated young girls are more likely to be exposed to sexual activity prior to marriage compared to the initiated young girls.

Furthermore, the binary regression analysis in Table (16) revealed another positive and significant relationship between the initiation status of young girls and exposure to sexual activity prior to marriage. However, those who have done the *Dipo* rituals are more likely to be exposed to sexual activity compared with their un-initiated counterparts. Subsequently, the hypothesis 2 which predicted that Un-initiated young girls are more likely to be exposed to sexual activity prior to marriage compared to the initiated young girls was not supported by the current study. This result, however, is inconsistent with the study by Shroeder and Danquah (2000) and Appiah-Sekyere (2018) that *Dipo* and other womanhood rites are traditional resources that can be re-visited to stem the tide of promiscuity and its associated SRH issues among young people in contemporary times. However, the finding supports the study by Munthali and Zulu (2007) that also reported that the young boys who undergo circumcision initiation ceremonies in Malawi are more likely to be sexually experienced than their counterparts who were not initiated.

The above outcome could be because some of the un-initiated girls from rural areas, especially do not only have belief in conventional behaviour of their society but are also afraid of the reprimand and ridicule they will be subjected to by the community. This is largely because, the community members often

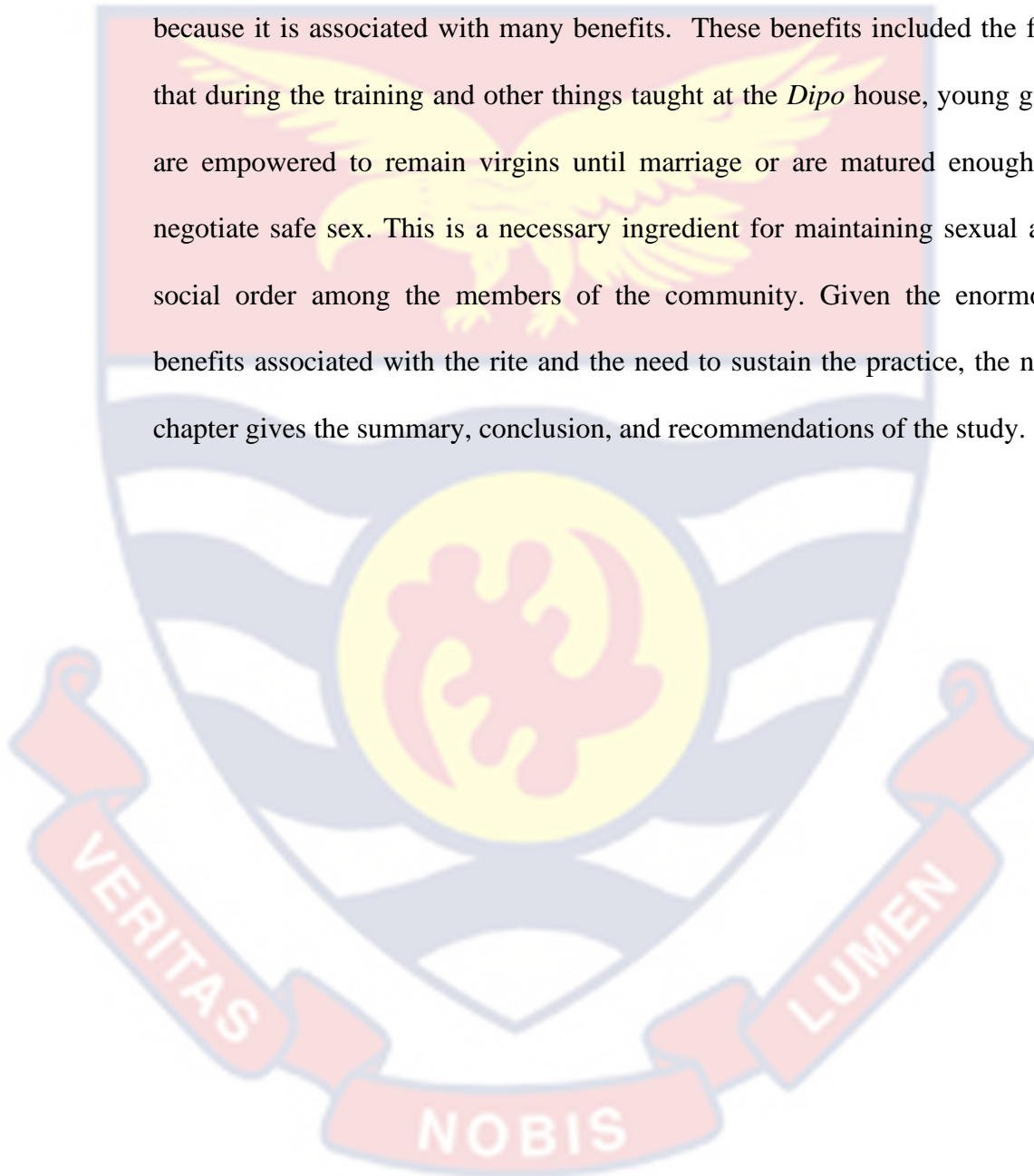
assume that un-initiators are not matured enough to engage in sexual activities (Becker, 2004; Kuoppala, 2018). The hypothesis, therefore, supports the tenets of social control theory that predicts that individuals who are less bonded to conventional society may be more likely to turn to illegitimate behaviour than those who are strongly bonded (Hirschi, 1969).

Summary of Chapter

The chapter has discussed the mediating and social control mechanism role of *Dipo* initiation rite of young girls against early sexual debut among young girls in the community. It was observed that though girls belonging to the early-initiated and un-initiated categories, are vulnerable to early sexual debut, the late-initiators are however, more likely to refrain from such behaviour. The reason is that they think about what their behaviour may cost them. This is because those who violate the ethical norms governing the rite are punished. Part of the punishment is that violaters are separated from their significant others to start a new life in another place where they are prevented from visiting their family house. The results have therefore, given us a deeper understanding of how the *Dipo* rite mediates the background characteristics such as age of initiation, locality, household size, household type, relationship with household head, SES, level of education, marital status, and early sexual debut among young girls.

Also, the results have revealed that the *Dipo* rite can be used to address some sexual and reproductive health issues, including STDs and HIV/AIDS, which are rife in the community among the young people. Thus, because of the punitive punishments associated with the rite, many young women are afraid to indulge in pre-marital sex. The young men are also afraid to have sex with

young women who are not initiated in the community for fear that they would be punished especially if it results in pregnancy. Furthermore, while one school of thought has labelled the *Dipo* practice as fetish, occult and must be scrapped, another school of thought has enumerated that the rite must be maintained, because it is associated with many benefits. These benefits included the fact that during the training and other things taught at the *Dipo* house, young girls are empowered to remain virgins until marriage or are matured enough to negotiate safe sex. This is a necessary ingredient for maintaining sexual and social order among the members of the community. Given the enormous benefits associated with the rite and the need to sustain the practice, the next chapter gives the summary, conclusion, and recommendations of the study.



CHAPTER EIGHT

SUMMARY OF MAJOR FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

In the last decade, there has been paucity of literature on the interface of womanhood rite and healthy sexual behaviour of young people. The few writers who have concentrated on the issue, only employed little empirical and theoretical evidence to establish cogent arguments on the issue (Narh, 2017). The present study, therefore, sought to fill this gap in knowledge. To achieve this, it categorized the young females according to initiation status (early initiated, late initiated, and un-initiated) to empirically understand their sexual behaviour in the community. While the study focused on the conceptual framework that depicts the avenues through which *Dipo* mediates socio-demographic variables and young girls' sexual debut, the social control theory propounded by Hirschi (1969) was also employed to guide the study.

The study used cross-sectional research design with sequential mixed research method whereby the qualitative was preceded quantitative data collection. The study administered 403 semi-structured questionnaires, but 350 (representing 86.8%) questionnaires were retrieved at the end of the day from respondents made up of 280 representing 81.0 percent young girls and 66 representing 19.0 percent young men aged 15-24 years in the study areas. Out of this, the late initiated young girl's category defined as those aged 12-24 accounted for 34.6 percent, the uninitiated accounted for 28.0 percent and the early initiated category also defined as those aged less than a 12 formed 19.4 percent of the retrieved questionnaires. The qualitative method that involved

key informant interviews, 16 old adults were interviewed. The field work, which lasted for one and half months (July 15 to August 30, 2020) took place in two communities, Somanya (urban) and Ogome (rural) both in the Yilo-Krobo Municipality.

The current chapter focuses on the summary of the key findings of the study alongside the objectives and hypotheses as presented in chapters four, five, six and seven. The conclusion and recommendations based on the data findings of the study are discussed under this chapter.

Summary of Major Findings

Historical Importance of Origin of Dipo

During the key informant interviews, it was gathered that different accounts have been offered for the origin of *Dipo*. These included the two rivals or a noble man who married two women, a coming-of-age celebration for a woman's only daughter, and a rite introduced by Nana Kloweki as an informal training school for young girls. All these accounts point to the fact that *Dipo* is not only meant to transit adolescents to womanhood, but also to celebrate women as the epitome of moral symbol. The underlying principle of the institution of the rite was to enable the community or initiation leaders to teach young girls how to be good wives and respectful adults to enable them to also instil good morals and discipline in their children.

Perceptions of Old Adults towards the Introduction of Dipo Rite in the Community

The study discussed the views of older adults regarding the introduction of *Dipo* rite and whether the punishments given to offenders of the rite are effective in contemporary times. Two groups emerged with different positions.

One group who are opposed to the celebration of *Dipo* indicated that the rite is not based on Christian doctrine. This is because, The Lord who created all things has made everything clean, so why should a mere human being decreed that one has to be cleansed by another human being before he/she can succeed in life.

They posited that the rite has outlived its usefulness and should therefore, be scrapped. The supporters of the rite on the other hand, believed that it was a good practice handed to them by their forefathers and should be maintained. This is largely because, *Dipo* was basically introduced to train young girls to become more responsible and adorable women. In addition, the punishments associated with the rite are severe enough to deter young people from engaging in early sexual debut prior to marriage.

Female Initiation Categories and Sexual Behaviour

The study categorized participants into three groups: these were the early initiates; late initiates; and un-initiates. The reason was to solicit information from participants who are aligned to each of the categories to understand their views towards the *Dipo* initiation rite and their sexual behaviour. In this context, young girls who were initiated below the age of 12 years were considered as early initiates. The current study observed that those who were initiated early mostly belong to parents who were initially from traditional homes and have converted into Christian/Muslim Faith but have not entirely dismissed their traditional heritage. As a result, most of the young girls who were initiated as toddlers have a laidback attitude towards the *Dipo* rituals.

In the pre-colonial days, the age of initiation was between 14 and 20 years old. However, the current study subscribes to 12 years and older as the age for late-initiated category. This is not only because I found that age as not

too different from the former times, but it is also considered as young girls who have remained pure and can be prepared for marriage. Young girls aged 12 years and above are therefore matured enough to be able to appreciate and understand the values of the rite. The late initiated accept the fact that *Dipo* initiation is a good thing and should be left to be performed for young girls in the community.

The un-initiated on the other hand, are mostly daughters of Pastors, Christians/Muslims and some people at Labor, a suburb of Somanya. The un-initiated believe that the *Dipo* celebration is fetish and occult and should be abolished. They further blame the spate of HIV and AIDS prevalence in the area on *Dipo* initiation. This category of young girls are of the view that the *Dipo* rite initiation is fetish and occult and it should be abolished. In the study, having sexual intercourse with many sexual partners was used as a proxy to determine which of the categories are more likely to be exposed to sexual and reproductive health (SRH) problems. The outcome was that the late-initiated category was more likely than the early-initiated and un-initiated to have had sex with not more than one partner.

Relevance of Dipo

The study reveals that the majority of un-initiated young girls indicated that the celebration of *Dipo* has lost its value, and it is irrelevant to control early sexual behaviour among young people in contemporary times. Conversely, most young girls who experienced late-initiation supported the celebration of *Dipo*, because they are of the view that it is still relevant in averting early sexual behaviour and its associated SRH consequences. It also emerged from the survey that some indigenes, especially who have not been initiated perceived the rite as fetish, heathen and irrelevant. However, others, especially those who had passed

through the initiation strongly advocated that it should be maintained. They perceived the rite as relevant and a celebration of their social identity. Besides, it is the only means to celebrate their culture that displays their African values to the global world.

Social Control Mechanism of Dipo

The study further assessed the control function of *Dipo* and how effective it can inhibit early sexual debut among young people. As a result, participants who had sexual debut after their 16th birthday were assessed to understand whether *Dipo* influenced their decision to delay their first sex until they were matured enough. It was realized that majority of the girls who were exposed to late initiation, indicated that their initiation did not only influence their decision, but also encouraged them to negotiate safe sex with their partners. They explained that during their stay at the *Dipo* hut, they were taught many things bordering on their SRH issues. This has empowered them to delay their sexual debut until they were very certain that their partner is serious with the relationship. Similarly, most young girls who were virgins at the time of the survey, and were exposed to late initiation, attributed it to the fear of punishment from their parents/family. This indicated that they were either determined to successfully go through the initiation to please their parents/guardians or were taught to remain virgins until marriage during their initiation.

Conclusion

The current study concluded that *Dipo* is an essential cultural resource in our current dispensation as it preserves young girls' healthy sexual behaviour by instilling virtues, such as how to relate nicely with in-laws and being an adorable wife. This is because, findings suggest that despite that the rite has lost

some relevance due to the profound effect of the ban on its celebration for a long period, it continues to remain an important cultural practice that can effectively manage young Krobo girls' sexual conduct.

The study again showed *Dipo* as playing a mediating role between the background characteristics and early sexual behaviour among young girls in the study communities. The results indicated that late-initiated are more likely to experience pre-marital sex at matured age than their early-initiated counterparts. This is because the former tends to maintain their virginity until a successful completion of their initiation. Furthermore, some young girls who have not gone through the *Dipo* rites have maintained their chastity and the restraining factor is the practice of *Dipo* in the community. This is because, most traditional societies regard the un-initiated as children irrespective of their age at their sexual debut and are stigmatized or killed (Becker, 2004; Munthali et al., 2018). The qualitative data also indicated that many young girls in the communities are aware of the punishments involved in contravening *Dipo* and make efforts to avoid them. These findings further support the tenets of Hirschi's (1969) social control theory that belief in rules governing conventional behaviours and morality restrain individual from engaging in illegitimate behaviour.

Similarly, findings emanating from the study indicated that young girls who are attached to conservative parents/guardians are more likely to be exposed to late initiation, and this enables them to preserve their chastity until they are married or have come of age to negotiate safe sex. This finding is inconsistent with Hirschi's (1969) position that young people attached to parents/guardians irrespective of their viewpoint on traditional values, are more likely to turn to the acceptable behaviour of their society. Nonetheless, it

confirms the study by Jensen and Brownfield (1983) that young people who are attached to conservative parents/guardians are more likely to turn to the acceptable norm of behaviour of their society. This is a signal for the community to engage the age of initiation more critically to help use *Dipo* effectively to stem the tide of promiscuity and its associated SRH issues.

Furthermore, it can be concluded from the current study that commitment and involvement in *Dipo* activities have a significant relationship with early sexual debut. Findings from the logistics regression analysis show that the *Dipo* initiation, and levels of commitment and involvement were the significant predictors of early sexual initiation among young girls. In a nutshell, those who are involved/committed to passing through the initiation successfully at matured age, may be prevented from engaging in early sex prior to marriage since they are aware of what they will lose, especially if they conceive. The outcome is an indicator for the community to engage the social control factors more critically to effectively use *Dipo* as a cultural mechanism to control the sexual behaviour of young girls. This is particularly important as similar studies have suggested that commitment and involvement of a study that includes young girls aged 15-24 years old in religious activities is the reason for their delayed sexual initiation in Nigeria (Somefun 2019). Again, the finding further gives credence to social control theory by Hirschi (1969) that those who are involved/committed in acquiring good reputation or moral virtue in the community, may not have much time to engage in other frivolous or deviant activities since it can jeopardise all their investments in achieving their aim.

Besides, the findings have established that *Dipo* womanhood rite is relevant as it has encouraged some young girls who understand and appreciate

the practice to delay their sexual debut until they have come of age or are married. The implication is that *Dipo* womanhood rite as a social control mechanism against early sexual debut, is more pronounced among young girls who are involved/committed to preserve their purity until they are matured enough to participate in the initiation rite. Again, the findings are consistent with Hirschi's (1969) social control theory that postulates that individuals who are less bonded to conventional society may be more likely to turn to illegitimate behaviour than those who are strongly bonded.

Again, two groups emerged with divergent worldviews towards the introduction of *Dipo* and its effects on sexual behaviour of young people. One group held the view that the initiation should be maintained since according to them, it marks their transition from childhood to adulthood, and gives them identity as Krobo women. On the other hand, the opponents view the practice of *Dipo* as evil and dangerous and should be abolished. The current study, however, supports the views of the former who are mostly conservatives or have passed through the initiation themselves. As a result, they demonstrated a fully cognisant and in-depth knowledge about the procedures of *Dipo* more than the latter group who are mostly non-conservatives or have not passed through the initiation. Against this backdrop, the study concludes that the opponents should be motivated through sensitization and awareness programmes to acknowledge the benefits of *Dipo* to both the initiates and the community.

The study further concluded that some young girls who have neither been initiated nor have no intention of passing through the initiation, have also kept their virginity. This could suggest that they were equally afraid to indulge in sexual deviance since the institution of *Dipo* have demonstrated that the

community abhorred early premarital sex. Also, most men are afraid to engage in pre-marital sex with the un-initiated young girls, because most traditional societies regard the un-initiated as children irrespective of their age and together with the men who impregnated them are stigmatized or killed (Becker, 2004; Munthali et al., 2018). The findings further support the tenets of Hirschi's (1969) social control theory that belief in rules governing conventional behaviours and morality restrain individual from engaging in illegitimate behaviour.

Again, with the introduction of the initiation of toddlers in contemporary times, previous writers have reported that *Dipo* is a catalyst for pre-marital sexual activities and teenage pregnancies in the community (Agra & Gbadegbe, 2014; Langmagne et al., 2018). However, the present study has revealed *Dipo* as a social control mechanism that mediates between individual socio-demographic, economic, household, and other characteristics, and sexual debut. This is largely because, young girls who are initiated at maturity can eschew early sexual debut because of *Dipo* and the ethical norms and values governing its practice in the society. Thus, in order not to contravene the acceptable behaviour of the society, young girls seize the opportunity offered them by the practice of *Dipo* to value their chastity as well as lead a strong moral value.

Recommendations

Based on the findings from both the survey and key informant interviews, the study recommends the following:

- Some of the indigenes, especially the devout Christians among them who have conceived the notion that *Dipo* is fetish and occult worship and claim that *Dipo* is irrelevant and should be scrapped, should be

motivated to accept the fact that it is not a pagan institution. Rather, it is a celebration of their social identity as well as to prepare young girls to assume womanhood positions in the society. To achieve this, it is recommended that the Council of elders and custodians of *Dipo* activities in the community, traditional leaders, the Municipal Assembly, NGOs, Ministry of Education (MOE)/Ghana Education Service (GES) and the Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture should intensify awareness raising programmes in the community to dispel myths about *Dipo* and highlight its positive aspects. Part of the awareness creation should involve the religious groups and associations in the community to ensure that the celebration of the rites involve all indigenes.

- Public Address (PA) systems and community radio programmes will be helpful in this effort. For instance, the PA system should have a daily information dubbed ‘a minute spot on *Dipo*’ that should carry a brief and succinct message to specifically highlight the positive aspects of *Dipo* rituals. The programme must be strategically timed to capture a lot of audience in the public space. Other programmes should include series of educational programmes on *Dipo* celebration such as discussions, and regular talk shows through the traditional and social media. They should also commemorate ‘One Week’ of *Dipo* events. Part of the programme should include clean-up of some major areas in the communities and organization of inter-schools’ debate programmes in the community. Furthermore, some offices designated for *Dipo* celebration, like the priest, the old women experts/caretakers and other places should be open

to welcome students, non-students and the general public to learn more about the history and relics of the *Dipo* initiation.

- During the celebration of the rites, it is recommended that all leaders or representatives of the various religious sects, associations and groups in the community should be invited by the Council of elders to climax the occasion. Besides, like the “quinceanera” of the Latin Americans, it is suggested that initiates should be allowed to visit their various religious sects or groups to inform them about their initiation and for the leaders to bless them before the initiation process takes effect. This will enable other religious bodies to either implicitly or explicitly be involved in the initiation process.
- The Council of elders, the District Assembly, Religious bodies, and other stakeholders working to promote the relevance of *Dipo* in the community, should intensify efforts to get more high level-powered personalities such as the President, Ministers, Members of Parliament, Religious leaders, Assembly men/women and influential people during the period of *Dipo* celebration to grace the occasion. For instance, during his time as President, Mr. Sam Nujoma, the first President of Namibia, was always invited by the community elders to attend the *Olufuko* ceremony. In 2016, Mr. Nujoma delivered a very powerful and famous speech where he advocated the continuation of cultural celebrations, because according to him “a Nation without culture is like a tree without roots” (Kuoppala, 2018: p. 22). This activity will encourage people in the community and extension, Ghana to throw their weight behind the celebration of *Dipo* and other traditional practices.

- The Traditional Council should intensify education to encourage parents/guardians to opt for late initiation for their daughters. The reason is that if it is restricted to the celebration of matured girls as was done in the past, most of them will be afraid to get pregnant before their initiation. In addition, they can comprehend the moral and sexual education they receive at the *Dipo* camp to empower them to negotiate safe sex with their sexual partners.
- The Council of elders, Queen mother, traditional leaders and religious bodies in the community should be motivated to invite high professional counsellors during their stay at *Dipo* camp to give the young girls more and effective counselling on healthy sexual behaviour. They should give them more professional advice and counselling on how to eschew early sex, protect their virginity or empower them to insist on safe sex with their sexual partners to avoid STDs, including HIV and AIDS as well as unintended pregnancy. Moreover, since the duration of the initiation has been drastically reduced, the expert old women/caretakers and professional counsellors should embark on programmes to encourage and empower parents/guardians in the community to see to it that the girls are well behaved and controlled after they have passed through the initiation.
- With the current dispensation, the Council of elders should be prepared to consider proposals that intend to bring further modifications in the events marking the *Dipo* celebration to meet the prevailing circumstances. For instance, some parents/guardians complain about the costume that exposed most sensitive body parts of the initiates to the

public when they pass through the initiation at maturity. It is recommended that initiates should be allowed to wear costume that covers their breast, thighs and other vital parts of their body as suggested by Agra and Gbadegbe (2014). They can also take a clue from the “quinceanera” of the Latin Americans, or the Swazi girls. Thus, young initiates undergoing *Dipo* in Yilo-Krobo can also wear full traditional dresses with unique colours to symbolize their purity throughout the occasion.

- Moreover, as the duration of the celebration has been reduced from about a year to about four days, currently, it is recommended that given pertinent traditional education on marriage and womanhood in general, the duration should be modified to allow them to spend a little more time about a couple of weeks at the *Dipo* camp. Thus, the chiefs and Council of elders should consider the timing of the initiation to coincide with a period when the young girls are on vacation for long period.

Issues Emerging for Further Studies

This study was undertaken to assess the mediating role of *Dipo* on the relationship between individual socio-demographic, economic, household, and other characteristics, and sexual debut (early or late initiation of sex) of young girls in the 21st Century. The study has revealed that the rites is a relevant cultural resource that can be used to control early sexual initiation of young people. However, further studies should focus on how the *Dipo* celebration can be modified further to make the celebration more attractive to all the indigenes who reside in or outside the Municipality. Studies are also encouraged to come

up with strategies that will make the various punishments meted out to violators more effective and deterrent enough.

Furthermore, there has been a drastic reduction in the duration of the ceremony, from about a year to about four days (kasapafmonline.com 2020) in contemporary times. Against this background, studies are encouraged to look at more coping strategies that will help unmarried young girls especially to protect their purity before, during and after the initiation.

Also, studies should investigate further the structure of *Dipo* and what led to the initiation of toddlers in contemporary times. This is because, as a womanhood rite, the initiation of toddlers in recent times, deviates from the the past where it was strictly performed for matured girls to prepare them for marriage.

In recent times a few, but growing scholars on indigenous culture in Ghana have discussed the spike in early sexual debut and its associated SRH problems among unmarried young boys and girls. They have further advocated the need to re-visit some of these cultural practices to minimize or contain the spread of these SRH problems. Further studies are therefore, encouraged to highlight the use of Hirschi's social control theory more effectively to assist young girls to pass through the initiation at mature age, which would help them to eschew non-spousal sexual encounters and to also enable them to have safe sex.

Moreover, the current study has espoused the values of African traditional practices and how the average African still has a deep reverence for the lesser gods, and their commands on moral issues are followed without contestation. Thus, *Dipo*, instituted by Nana Kloweki, the goddess of fertility in

Krobo in the Seventeenth Century to achieve a good course, has been sustained and practiced by the residents. On the other hand, it is a common knowledge that most laudable byelaws initiated and implemented by the District Assemblies in Ghana in modern times, are neither sustained nor obeyed by the residents despite the associated sanctions and penalties for non-compliance. Further studies are therefore, encouraged to stimulate discussions on leveraging the gods' factor in the processes of policy development in traditional societies and, by extension, Ghana to ensure their sustainability for development.



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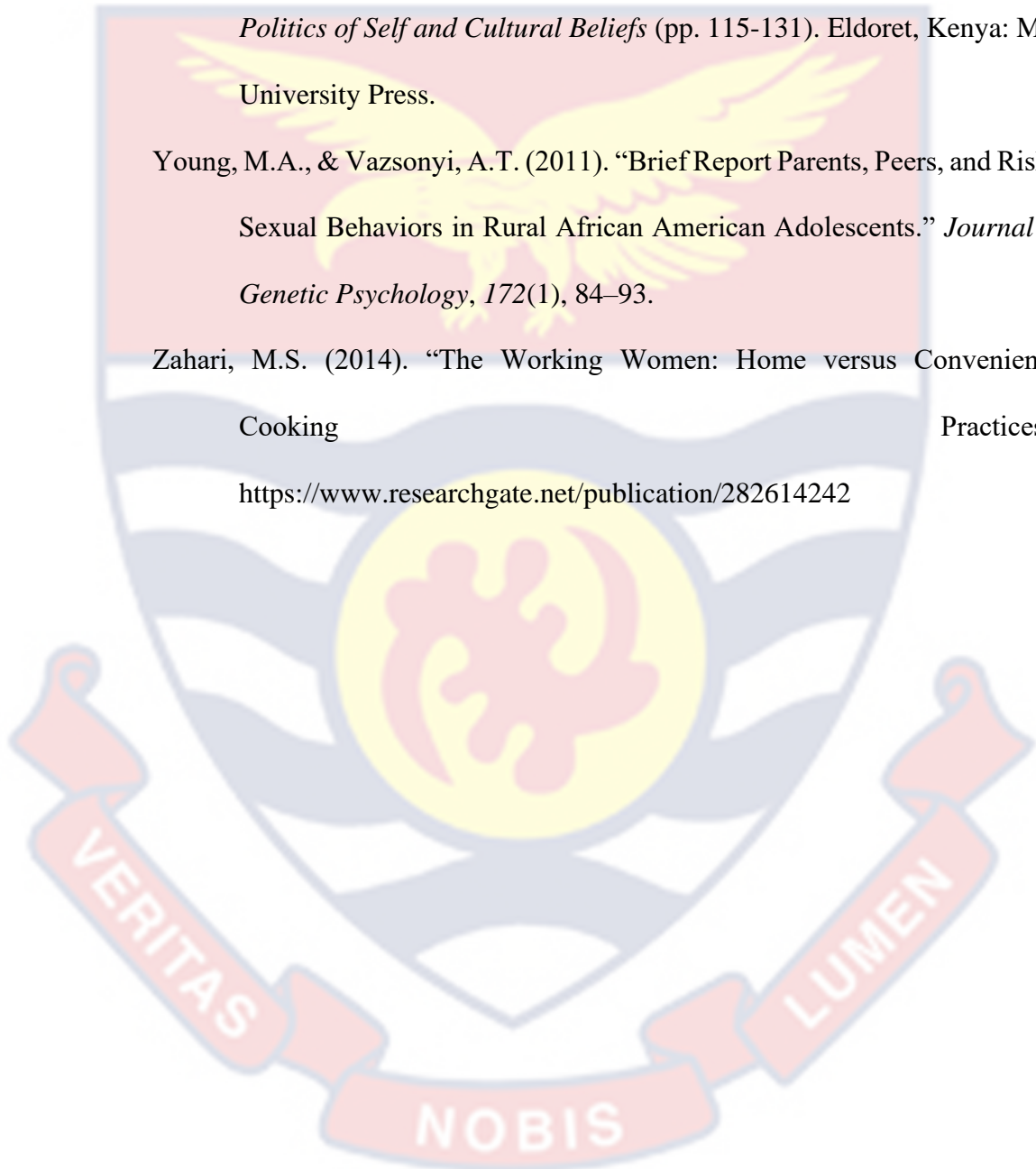
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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY AND ANTHROPOLOGY

INTERVIEW GUIDE: DIPO WOMANHOOD RITE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE (15-24 YEARS OLD) IN YILO-KROBO MUNICIPALITY

Start of interview (time) End of interview (time)

.....

Date of interview Name of Community

.....

PART ONE: GENERAL INFORMATION OF THE RESPONDENTS

1. Locality of interview? 1. Urban 2. Rural

2. Age of respondent? 1. 15 2. 16 3. 17 4. 18 5. 19 6. 20 7. 21 8.

22 9. 23 10. 24

3. What is your religious affiliation? 1. Christian 2. Muslim 3.

Traditionalist

4. No Religion 5. Other (Please specify)

.....

4. What is your parents/guardians' religious affiliation? 1. Christian 2.

Muslim

3. Traditionalist 4. No Religion 5. Other (Please specify)

.....

5. What is your current marital status? 1. Single 2. Married 3

Widowed

4. Consensual Union 5. Divorced 6. Separated 7. Other (Please,

Specify)

6 What is the current marital status of your parents/guardians? 1. Single

2. Married

3. Consensual Union 4. Widowed 5. Separated 6. Remarried 7. Other

(Please, Specify)

7. What is your current/highest educational status? (*If in School, go to Q9*).

1. No Formal Education 2. Primary 3. Junior High School 4.

Senior High School

5. Tertiary 6. Other (Please specify) ...

8. If out-of-school, what are you doing currently? 1. Unemployed 2.

Business/Trading

3. Sewing/tailoring 4. Farming 5. Learning a

trade/profession/apprenticeship

6. Petty trading 7. Public/civil servant 8. Other (Please

specify).....

9. Have you ever stayed outside this Municipality? 1. No 2. Yes (*If no go to Q13*)

10. How long did you stay outside this Municipality? 1. <1yr 2. 1yr. 3.

2yrs. 4. 3yrs.

5. 4yrs. 6. 5yrs 7. 6yrs 8. 7yrs 9. 8yrs 10. 9yrs 11. 10yrs 12. Other

(Please, specify) ...

11. When did you last return to this community? 1. <1yr 2. 1yr. 3. 2yrs.
4. 3yrs. 5. 4yrs.
6. 5yrs 7. 6yrs 8. 7yrs 9. 8yrs 10. 9yrs 11. 10yrs 12. (Other,
please specify) ...

12. Who did you stay with when you were outside this community? 1.
Parents/guardians 2. Family member 3. Friends 4. Spouse 5. Strangers
6. No one (uncompleted place)
7. No one (open space) 8. No one (rented) 9. Other (Please, specify)

13. What is the total size of your household members in this community?
1. Zero 2. One-
3. Two 4-Three 5. Four 6. Five 7. Six 8. Seven 9-Eight 10. Nine 11.
Ten+

14. On the average, about how many people per a room in your household?
1. One 2. Two
3. Three 4. Four 5. Five 6. Six 7. Seven 8. Eight 9. Nine 10. Ten
11. Other (Please, specify)

15. Which one of the following is your parents/guardians' main occupation?
1. Retired/unemployed 2. Farmer 3. Petty Trader 4. Mason 5.
Driver
6. Teacher 7. Sewing/tailoring 8. Mechanic/repairer 9. Chief/Queen
mother/elder
10. Herbalist 11. Pastor 12. Other (Please
specify).....

16. Compared to other families in this community, how would you describe your family's socio-economic status? 1. Very rich 2. Rich 3. Average 4.

Poor 5. Very poor

6. Other (Please specify)

17. Which one of the following best describes your household type in this community?

1. Nuclear 2. Extended 3. Single-Parent (Please, Specify)...4. Other (Please, Specific) ...

18. What is the relationship of the household head to you? 1. Father 2.

Mother 3. Aunt

4. Uncle 5. Guardians 6. Grandmother 7. Grandfather 8. Self

9. Step-father 10. Step-mother 11. Spouse 12. Other (Please specify).....

19. Do you have someone you referred to as a best friend? 1. No 2. Yes

(If no, go to Q21)

20. Is your best friend a native of this community? 1. No 2. Yes

PART TWO: KNOWLEDGE AND PRACTICE OF "DIPO" PUBERTY

RITES

- ***Knowledge of "Dipo" Puberty Rites***

21. Do you know about "Dipo" Puberty rite celebration in this community?

1. No 2. Yes (If no, go to Q27)

22. How did you get to know about the celebration? 1. My parents/guardians

2. My friend/s 3. My Pastor/Imam 4. Community members 5.

Teacher

6. Myself 7. Other (Please specify)

**23. What do you think might have accounted for the introduction of “Dipo”
puberty rites in this community?**

.....
.....

**24. In the past, do you know that young people who engaged in sex or got
pregnant before undergoing the “Dipo” rites were punished in this
community?**

1. No 2. Yes 88. DK (If no, go to Q27).

**25. Can you recollect some of the punishments you witnessed or heard in
this town/village to a young person who broke the rules of “Dipo” and
whether it had any effect on you as a growing up young woman? (Probe for
the period and effect on her sexual behaviour).**

.....
.....

**26. Which “Dipo” punishment(s) exists in this community today? (Multiple
Responses)**

- 1. No punishment 2. Insult/beating from parents/guardians
- 3. Insult/beating by a family member 4. Peers will shun your company
- 5. Drop-out of school 6. Other (Please, specify)

27. If no, why haven't you heard about the initiation?

.....
.....

• Practice of "Dipo" Puberty Rites

28. Have you been initiated in "Dipo" rites? 1. No 2. Yes (If no, go to Q31)

29. At what age were you initiated?

30. Why were you initiated at that age?

.....

31. Why haven't you been initiated?

.....

32. How would your parents/guardians react if they find out that you've engaged in sex prior to your initiation/marriage and why? (Probe: for form of punishments)

.....

33. How would your best friend(s) react if they find out that you've engaged in sex prior to your initiation/marriage and why? (Probe: for form of punishments)

.....

34. Do your parents/guardians attach any importance to the practice of “Dipo”?

1. No 2. Yes 88. DK/Can't tell

35. Please, explain your answer (*Probe: If her mother was initiated*).....

36. Do your best friend(s) attach any importance to the practice of “Dipo”?

1. No 2. Yes 88. DK/Can't tell

37. Please, explain your answer (*Probe: If her best friend was initiated*).....

PART THREE: SOCIAL CONTROL VARIABLES

- ***Attachment to Parents/Guardians***

Use the following to answer Q38-44

1. Never
2. Sometimes
3. Very often

38. How often do you want to be like your mother/father/guardians?

39. How often do you enjoy spending time with your

mother/father/guardians?

40. How often do your parents/guardians know where you are when you are away from home?

41. How often do your parents know who you are with when you are away from home?

42. How often do your parents/guardians ask about your academic work or business?

43. How often would your parent/guardian stick by you when you got into terrible trouble?

44. How often do you take part in making family decisions?

Commitment to "Dipo" Initiation

Use the following to answer Q45-49

1. Not committed at all
2. Committed
3. Very committed

45. Are you committed to invest money, time, and energy in the celebration of “Dipo” in this community?

46. Are you committed in playing a role in the celebration of “Dipo” in the community?

47. Are you committed in ensuring that the community remembers you as someone who ensures that traditional values are observed/preserved in the community?

48. Were/are you committed to undergo “Dipo” rite?

49. Were/are you committed to remain virgin until you passed “Dipo” rites/married?

Involvement in “Dipo” Initiation

Use the following to answer Q50-53

1. Not important
2. Important
3. Very important

50. How important was/is it to you to pass through the initiation successfully?

51. When you are in town, how important is it to you to witness the performance of the initiation rites?

52. How important is it to you to belong to any social club/group in the community that organizes the initiation rites?

53. How important is it for you to be married as a virgin?

- *Beliefs in Tradition/Religion*

54. Puberty rite's rules are fair 1. Disagree 2. Agree

55. Puberty rites observance can control early sexual initiation? 1. Disagree 2. Agree

56. Turn to traditional belief/prayers when there is a problem? 1. Disagree 2. Agree

57. Turn to Christian/Muslim prayers when there is a problem? 1. Disagree 2. Agree

PART FOUR: SEXUAL BEHAVIOUR AMONG YOUNG PEOPLE

58. Have you ever had sexual intercourse? 1. No 2. Yes (If no, go to Q60)

59. How old were you when you first had sex? 1. <10 yrs 2. 10 yrs
3. 11 yrs
4. 12 yrs 5. 13 yrs 6. 14 yrs 7. 15 yrs 8. 16yrs 9. 17yrs 10.
18yrs 11. 19yrs

12. 20 yrs 13. 21yrs 14. 22 yrs 15. 23 yrs 16. 24 yrs 17. Other

(Please, specify)...

60. In your opinion, which category of young girls are more likely to have multiple sexual partners in this community prior to marriage and why? (ie. early initiators, late initiators and never initiated girls. Probe for motivation).

.....
.....

61. In your opinion, which category of young girls are more likely to engage in early sexual activity in this community prior to marriage and why? (ie. early initiators, late initiators and never initiated girls. Probe for motivation).

.....
.....

62. In your opinion, which category of unmarried young girls would not use condom during their first sexual encounter in this community and why? (ie. early initiators, late initiators and never initiated girls. Probe for motivation).

.....
.....

63. What major role/s has your initiation/no initiation played in your marriage/in your search for a spouse?

.....
.....

64. *(Boys Only)*. What major role/s has young girl's initiation status played in your marriage/in your search for a spouse? *(Probe for his prefer choice of spouse: initiated vs. uninitiated and why)*

.....

65. Do you regret that you've been initiated/not initiated and why? *(Probe for age of initiation)*.....

.....

66. *(Boys Only)*. Do you regret that you have married/have been in a relationship with a woman who'd passed through the "Dipo" and why?

.....

.....

PART FIVE: "DIPO" RITES AND SEXUAL CONDUCT AMONG YOUNG PEOPLE

Those who have had sex before 16 years old in Q59

67. Did you initiate "Dipo" before your first sexual intercourse?

- 1. No 2. Yes *(If yes, go to Q76)*

68. Were you sanctioned? 1. No 2. Yes *(If no, go to Q70)*

69. Who sanctioned you? 1. Community 2. Chief/Queen-mother 3. Religious Leader/Priest

4. Family Member 5. Friend (s) 6. Parents 7. Other (Please, specify)

70. Please, describe the nature of the punishment?

.....

71. If no, please, explain why you were not sanctioned?

.....
.....

72. Did you go through the “Dipo” initiation afterwards? 1. No 2. Yes

73. Please, explain your answer

.....
.....

(And go to Q76)

BOYS ONLY

74. Have you ever had sexual intercourse with an unmarried young girl in this community?

1. No 2. Yes 99. N/A *(If no, go to Q72)*

75. If yes, how old was the young girl? 1. 10 yrs 2. 11 yrs 3. 12 yrs 4. 13 yrs 5. 14yrs 6. 15 yrs 7. 16 years 8. 17yrs 9. 18yrs 10. 19yrs 11. 20yrs 12. 21yrs 13. 22yrs

14. 23yrs 15. 24yrs 16. Other (Please, specify) 88. DK/Can't tell

76. What category was the young girl? 1. Had initiated at childhood 2. Had initiated at adolescent age/after her first menstruation 3. Someone who'd not passed through the initiation 4. Someone who's preparing for her initiation 5. Other (Please, specify) *(If initiated, go to Q72)*

77. If she's not initiated, were you sanctioned? 1. No 2. Yes *(If no, go to Q69)*

78. Who sanctioned you? 1. Community 2. Chief/Queen-mother
3. Religious Leader/Priest 4. Family Member 5. Friend (s)
6. Parents 7. Other (Please, specify)
.....

79. Please, describe the nature of the punishment?
.....
.....

80. If no, please, explain why you were not sanctioned?
.....
.....

81. Did the young girl go through the "Dipo" initiation afterwards?
1. No 2. Yes 88. DK/Can't tell

82. Please, explain your answer

.....
.....

Those who have had sex after 16 years old in Q59

83. Did you delay first sex because you wanted to be initiated? 1. No 2.

Yes

84. Please, explain your answer.....

(And go to Q76)

Those who have had no sex in Q58

85. Which one best explains why you have avoided sex? (Multiple Answers)

- 1. I'm still young/in school/apprenticeship 2. I'm yet to undergo "Dipo"
- 2. My parents/guardians would punish me/be angry with me
- 3. I'm afraid of the consequences from my family
- 4. I'm afraid of the consequences from the community
- 5. I was taught to remain chaste until marriage during "Dipo" initiation
- 6. Other (Please specify)

86. In general, do you think the celebration of "Dipo" puberty rites in contemporary times is relevant in controlling early sexual conduct of young people? 1. No 2. Yes 88. DK/CT

87. Please, explain your answer

PART SIX: EARLY SEXUAL INTERCOURSE AND MULTIPLE SEXUAL PARTNERS

88. Have you ever had sex with more than one partner? 1. No 2. Yes

99. N/A

89. How many sexual partners have you ever had sex with? 1. 0 2. 1

3. 2 4. 3

5. 4 6. 5+

90. How many sexual partner/s do you have, currently? 1. 0 2. 1 3. 2 4.

3 5. 4 6. 5+

PART SEVEN: OPINIONS/SUGGESTIONS

91. Do you believe that there has been changes in the focus/significance of the rite over the years and why? (Probe for punishments and qualifications for initiates)

.....

92. Which period (past vs. present) was the rite very effective in achieving its focus/significance and why? (Probe for punishments and sanctions).

.....

93. In your opinion has “Dipo” puberty rites as celebrated today helped address the high rate of young people engaging in early sexual activity in this town/village today and why?

.....

.....

94. What can be done to make “Dipo” more attractive/relevant to everyone in this community regardless of their religious faith, and location?

(Multiple Answers).

1. It should be separated from rituals/spiritual activities

2. It should be done for girls when they’re very young to avoid cost

3. Initiates should wear a full traditional dress with a colour/s that symbolises purity

4. Initiates should not be kept away from their parents for a long time

5. The celebration should cost less/subsidized by government/assembly

6. Should involve only pubescent girls/at first menstruation

7. Initiation should take place immediately young girls complete junior high school (JHS) to climax the occasion.

8. Various religious heads/opinion leaders in the community should be involved

9. Other (Please, specify)

95. Please, explain your answer (s) to Q94

GENERAL COMMENTS FROM RESPONDENTS

.....
.....
.....

THANK YOU

APPENDIX B: KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW

- *Chiefs/Queen-mothers, Elders, Religious Leaders, Dipo Priests/Priestesses, Caregivers etc*

Nana/Elder, thank you very much for welcoming us to your town/village/house to conduct our survey which seeks to obtain information on the relationship between “Dipo” womanhood rites and early sexual behaviour among young people aged between 15 and 24 years old in Yilo-Krobo Municipality for a PhD thesis in Sociology at University of Cape Coast. As explained already, our survey is in two parts: a quantitative part, which seeks to interview young people age 15-24 years old with a mixture of closed- and open-ended questionnaire, while the second part is qualitative and it seeks to have one-on-one interview with opinion leaders in this town/village to obtain detailed information on the topics. Nana/Elder, we will therefore, ask for your permission to conduct the key informant interview with you and it will take about an hour to complete. However, due to the limited time, we will again like to ask for your permission to use a tape recorder to record the interview. This will make it easier for us to transcribe when we go back to the University.

1. Can you please give us a brief history of your community in terms of?

- Some of the earlier founders
- How it got its current name
- How your forefathers came to settle in this town/village

- Some of the battles this town/village has fought etc.

2. Can you please give us a brief historical importance and origins of “Dipo” womanhood rites celebration in this community?

3. What is your perception about the introduction of “Dipo” womanhood rite celebration in this community? (*Probe: age at sexual debut among unmarried young people*)

4. Has there been changes in the focus and significance of the rite over the years and why? (*Probe: punishments and qualifications for initiates*)

5. Which period (past vs. present) was the celebration very effective in achieving its focus and significance and why?

6. Which punishment/s do you still remember and whether it is still enforced today?

7. How would you react if you find out that your child has engaged in pre-marital sex and why? (*Probe: form of punishments and gender specific*).

8. Why do some families initiate young girls at early age (toddlers), adolescent age (matured) and some don't initiate young girls today?

9. Which category of the initiates are likely to delay early sexual debut prior to marriage and why? (ie. early-initiates, late initiates and un-initiates).

10. What's the current sexual conduct of young girls (according to initiation categories) in the face of "Dipo" rite's celebration?

11. Do you think that the contemporary observance of "Dipo" in this community is relevant and has helped controlled the rate of early sexual behaviour among unmarried young people in recent times?

12. Do you regret your action of initiating/not initiating your daughter/s and why?

13. Why do some parents encourage their son/s to marry initiated/un-initiated women in this community?

14. What can be done to make "Dipo" more effective to control the sexual behaviour of unmarried young people in this community irrespective of their educational, religious and socio-economic backgrounds in this town/village?

15. Please, do you have any other comment/suggestions/additional information on the discussed topic?

THANK YOU