

Rites of Passage

CONTENT

- Definition
- Strategies
- Health implications

Definition and Purpose

- A **rite of passage** is a ritual, event, or experience that marks or constitutes a major milestone or change in a person's life.
- These ceremonies celebrate the social movement of individuals into and out of groups or into or out of statuses of critical importance to the individual and the community.
- They serve as a bridge between different social or religious statuses, signifying transitions from one stage of life to another

Types of Rites of Passage

Biological Milestones: Many rites of passage are connected with **biological crises** or milestones of life, including:

- **Birth:** Welcoming a new life into the community.
- **Maturity:** Transition from childhood to adulthood.
- **Reproduction:** Marriage and initiation into sexual roles
- **Death:** Passage from life to afterlife

Cultural Changes: Some rites celebrate changes that are wholly cultural, such as initiation into societies with special interests (e.g., fraternities)

Universal Phenomenon: Rites of passage are universal and have likely existed since ancient times

Phases of Rites of Passage

- **Incorporation:** The individual is reintegrated into the community with their new status
- **Separation:** The individual is separated from their previous status or group.
- **Liminality:** The person is in a transitional state, neither fully in the old status nor fully in the new one

Entertainment and Aesthetics

- Religion has been a primary vehicle for art, music, song, dance, and other forms of aesthetic experience during these ceremonies
- Rites of passage have often provided entertainment. They were socially approved means of participating in pleasurable activities

Strategies to control rites of passage

- Alternative rites of passage
- Community-Led interventions
- Education and Curriculum Integration
- Involving fathers
- Health and Reproductive counselling
- Research and Evaluation

Alternative rites of passage

- For instance a celebration without harmful practice while retaining cultural significance
- They emphasize education, empowerment and community involvement
- Mainly used to address FGM

Community led interventions

- Play a crucial role in changing norms and behaviors
- Involve engaging community members, leaders and elders to promote awareness and advocate against harmful practices
- E.g. nyumba kumi

Education and curriculum integration

- Help raise awareness among young people
- Information about risks, consequences and legal aspects is provided
- Public fora and community discussions can further disseminate information and encourage dialogue

Health and reproductive counselling

- Can address misconceptions, promote safe practices, and empower people to make informed decisions

Research and Evaluation

- Continual research and evaluation of interventions are necessary
- Understanding the effectiveness of different strategies can help refine approaches and adapt to changing contexts
- Evidence based practices contribute to sustainable solutions

Health implications

- Breast ironing
- Female genital mutilation
- Traditional circumcision
- Child marriage
- Initiation ceremonies
- Holistic paradigms of health

Breast ironing

- Massaging and pounding young girls' breasts using heated objects like rocks hammers and spatulas
- This is to delay breast development and protect girls from early pregnancy and shame for the family
- Breast abscesses, cysts, itching, tissue damage, infection, dissymmetry of breasts
- Emotionally; low self esteem and lost femininity

Traditional male circumcision

- Incomplete foreskin removal
- Increased risk for HIV infection
- Complications e.g. bleeding, infection and tissue damage
- Sexual risk behavior

Child marriage

- Early pregnancy
- Increased maternal mortality and morbidity
- Abortion
- HIV/AIDS and STIs
- Gender Based Violence
- Obstetric fistulas
- Neonatal mortality and morbidity
- Low self esteem, depression, isolation, feeling helpless