

# A Child's Journey: Pregnancy to Adulthood in Four Countries

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# Abstract

How a child is raised and the expectations put on them is dependent on their culture. Communities around the globe have different ideals, practices, ceremonies, beliefs, and more that impact their current and future generations. The current study examines and compares the culturally perceived aspects of childhood, from pregnancy to adulthood, of four different countries. The elements of childhood included in this research relate to different attitudes towards and aspects of childhood events (e.g., childbirth, education, puberty), childhood milestones, rites of passage, and reaching adulthood. The four focus countries include France, the United States of America, India, and Kenya. To obtain data, 4-5 participants from each country were interviewed via Zoom, in-person, or by email. The objective of the research is to explore how childhood experiences vary in different communities and uncover common themes that appear in this period of life. Through these interviews, we (1) gain knowledge on how each country values children and childhood events, (2) step out of the expectations of the western world to evaluate how children globally are raised, and (3) discover common themes amongst various cultures in child rearing.

# Methods

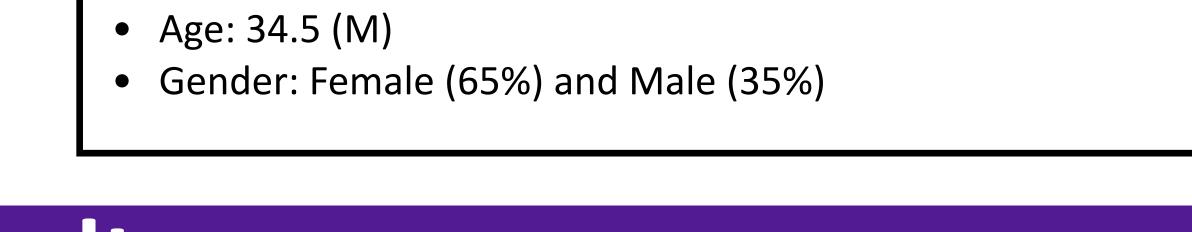
The participants in this study came from various regions in four countries: the United States of a, France, Kenya, and India. To contribute participants had to be 18 years of age or older, fluent in English, and both born and currently living in the country they were representing. All participants were recruited through an email in which they filled out an electronic consent form to participate.

The data was collected through a 10-question interview either in-person or electronically via email or Zoom. The questions covered topics that ranged from pregnancy to the commencement of adulthood. The questions asked about birth processes, childhood milestones, puberty, rites of passage, and marriage. After the data was collected, recorded, and transcribed, the information was analyzed qualitatively through ATLAS.ti, a software that allows written documents to be

### Participants:

- 17 Participants
- France 4 Participants
- Age: 31.5 (M)
- United States 5 Participants
- Age: 34.6 (M)

- Kenya 4 Participants
- Age: 40 (M)
- India 4 Participants
- Age: 31.8 (M)



## Results

### "Pregnancy is celebrated in many forms, women do pregnancy photos, cast of their tummy's, blessing ceremonies, naming ceremonies, baby showers, gender reveal parties, do yoga, birthing classes etc."

### MARRIAGE

- 1. In KE and IN, the Average Age of Marriage is
- between 18 and Early 20's
- 2. In the US and FR, the Average Age of Marriage is Between mid 20's and Early 30's
- 3. Marital Age in All Countries Depends on Education, Financial Stability, Religion, and Pregnancy

### ADULTHOOD

- 1. Every Country has the Legal Adult Age as 18 But Varies in Their Responses to When They Actually Considered Someone To Be
- 2. KE has Gender Based Milestones and Rites to Enter Adulthood
- 3. Independence is a Huge Indicator of Adulthood for All Countries

## CHANGING RITES OF PASSAGE

- 1. Education Has Changed the Rites of Passage in Each Country
- 2. Modernization and Westernization are Responsible for Changing Rites of Passage in the US, IN, and KE

### **PREGNANCY**

- 1. Celebrated and Discussed Everywhere But to
- **Different Extremes**
- 2. Some Countries Have Specific Rituals
- 3. Maternal Care Varies Across Cultures 4. The Social Importance of Pregnancy is Diverse

**PUBERTY** 

2. FR and US Reported More on the Physical

Changes Whereas KE and IN Reported

More About the Communal/Relational

1. Puberty is Affiliated With Different

Emotions in Every Country

Changes

# CHILD MILESTONES

# But the Type of Word Itself Varies Achievements

BIRTH PROCESS

3. In the Majority of the Countries, Doctors and

1. Hospital Births are Common Globally

2. Immediate Celebration Varies Across

Fathers are Present at Birth

**Across the Board for All Countries** 

## ACADEMIC/VOCATIONAL MILESTONES

- 1. The US focuses on More Little

- Considered the Biggest Achievements in All Countries
- 2. In the US, FR, and IN, the Biggest Achievement a Child Can Have is an
- 3. In KE, the Biggest Achievement a Child Engagement

children to be independent so I would prefer them to be wise, ndependent, and smart enough to handle the current scenario because it is ever changing nowadays."

"We have always wanted our

"The birth process is pretty much

globally done at the hospital or a

maternity. It is pretty rare to have a

home birth, or an alternative birth

process."

- 1. Talking is a Milestone in All Countries,
- 2. Individual Achievement vs Community
- 3. Lots of Physical Milestones are Noted

- Accomplishments Than Any of the Other
- 2. Education is Highly Valued in All Countries 3. Different Vocations are Valued Differently

### **BIGGEST ACHIEVEMENT**

in FR, KE, and IN

- 1. Independence and Education are
- Individual Accomplishment
- Can Have is Based on Their Community

# Discussion

The results of this study suggest that countries such as India and Kenya are more community-based compared to individualist countries like the United States and France. These countries also perform more rituals and ceremonies during their childhood years. However, the results also demonstrated that Western ideals are changing collectivist cultures to value individuality, modernity, and education. While there are a multitude of differences in these four countries, the results showed that there were also some similarities in the milestones that caregivers look for in their developing children.

Limitations of the study include a narrow group of participants: all participants were fluent in English, well-educated and had access to technology. Therefore, the group was not fully representative of the marginalized or minority communities in each of these countries. In addition, the sample size was not large enough to represent the reality of the whole population.

Future research should focus on how childhood experiences and child rearing varies within one country; there are numerous different cultures represented within the border of one nation. This process would allow for a better representation of one geographical location. Additional research could also focus on one of the ten events included in this project exclusively, lending a more whole understanding of a crucial childhood experience.

# References

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## "Almost all of them have faded because of education, Christianity, advanced technology and others are being prohibited by the government."

## RITES OF PASSAGE

- 1. In FR and the US, Individual Accomplishments are Reported as Rites of Passage
- 2. The US and IN Consider Religious Events as Rites of Passage
- 3. In IN and KE, Rites of Passage are Ceremonies or Events Based on Age