

CONCEPTIONS OF ADULTHOOD BY EMERGING ADULTS IN CAMEROON

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study was to describe and articulate the definitions of adulthood by young people in Cameroon. Participants were 992 high school students (females = 54% and males = 46%, with mean age = 20) selected from four urban centres in the country. They completed a self-developed Likert-type questionnaire. Descriptive results indicate that young people in Cameroon tended to conceptualise adulthood in terms of independence (57.6%), emotional maturity (83.6%), financial independence (72.0%), being more responsible (90.1%) and attainment of role transitions (72.9 %). The results suggest that Cameroonian youth in urban centres like others around the world are currently witnessing a new way of defining adulthood where definitions of adulthood, though psychological in most respects, are also demographic. Results showed that adult role transitions-getting married, starting a career, having children-still matter greatly. The implication is that while Cameroonian young people equally share of the widely acclaimed subjective markers of adulthood, they continue to value objective indicators of adulthood. Society-based indicators of adulthood are still widely considered very important in most African societies today.

Keywords: Independence, Emotional maturity, Financial independence, Responsible adulthood, Role transitions.