"First child? No! A late born"

A study about the social agendas concerning the lives of young adult female PCC members and the process of invisibilization as response to their premarital pregnancy – by Annabel de Groot

Teenage pregnancy, a problem to society

Ghana, a model for political and economic reform.

70% of Ghanaian population adheres to the Christian faith of which 30% are members of PCCs.

2012: Ghana registered 750.000 pregnant teenagers (10-18 yrs).

Media shows a great concern of health personnel, teachers, social workers, pastors and ministers who consider the rise of teenage pregnancy a serious problem to society.

Reasons given:
- "Nude and pornographic elements" in local and foreign movies
- Broken homes
- Poverty
- Peer pressure
- Lack of sexual education → No sex talk
- ("bad young teachers")

The research

This study is about the experience unmarried young adult pregnant members of PCCs.

Three groups have major impact on the lives of these young adult women: family, peers (fellow young adults/friends) and their church.

Could disobedience of the moral conventions of one group been caused by the fulfilment of expectations of another group?

The central question of this research is:
How is pregnancy before marriage being perceived by young adult women, their peers, families and Pentecostal and Charismatic churches in Kumasi, and how do these views relate to moral and social conventions concerning age, gender and sexuality in these contexts?

Data for this study were collected between February and May 2014, by means of participant observation, (semi-structured) interviews, media analyses, and focus group discussions.

A retrospective approach.

Navigating Youth

More than 30% of the Ghanaian society are youth (aged 10-24 years) and 62 of 1000 women aged 15-19 years delivered a baby (Population Reference Bureau 2013)

African youth find themselves in grave situations, but are in relatively powerless positions due to their age and social status.

Ghanaian youth are "managin'g".

Young adults have problems and are the problem.

Vigh (2006) 'social navigation' → Christiansen et al. (2006) youth as social shifters.

Lifecourse, social agendas and moral conventions.

Social agendas of their social relations

	Family	Peers	PCC
Education	++	+++	+++
Financial independence	++	+++	++
Premarital relationships	---	+++	-/+
Marriage	+++	-/+	+++
Giving birth	+++	-/+	-/+
Talk about sex	---	+++	-/+

Fulfilment results in respect, disobedience results in disgrace.

Responses to teenage pregnancy

Invisibilization as a solution to a socio-political problem.

Laura Hammond (2008: 519) defined the process invisibilization as "a particular brand of marginalization, that effectively removes people from the gaze of the public (...) [and] satisfies certain political goals".

Fear to tell the truth leads to invisibilization.

Responses of peers

Social exclusion

Only ones to talk to.

Abortion, if not you are a fool

Never tell your elders

Responses of families

Live at the village, or stay in the house.

Disappointment, condemnation and denial.

First child? No, a late born!

Take her from school.

It's not there when we don't talk about it.

Responses of Pentecostal & Charismatic Churches

Excommunication

"..but not in this church."

Silence

It's her choice! Isn't it?

Teenage pregnancy is considered a wrong choice.

Roberts (1991) and Hammond (2008) argue that invisibilization often results from the powerlessness of those being marginalized to speak for themselves.

Invisibilization as a political tool to ensure social reputations.

Are young adult pregnant women in Ghana indeed powerless, or do they also benefit from their invisibilization and is it their choice too?

As young adult women in Ghana navigate the moral conventions of their social relations, is their any space left for their own agency?

Recommendations

Further research on the influence of social navigation of moral conventions on the agency of young adult women.

Cooperation of NGOs concerning SRHR and churches in Ghanaian/African context because,
- Churches are part of the problem and therefore need to be part of the solution.
- Churches have a major impact on Ghanaian/African (youth) society.
- Open cooperation of churches and NGOs might reduce the level of shame.
- Churches need the biomedical know-how of these NGOs to provide their youth members of proper sexual education (and show the risks of sex before marriage).