



Can You Hear My Voice? Navigating The Journey from Pregnancy in Adolescence to Early Motherhood in Uganda

Dr. Annette Marie Garvey

Australian Catholic University, Australia

Abstract

Background: Whilst the challenges of pregnancy in adolescence are well documented, less researched is the role of deficit/problem-focussed discourses and their negative impact on the overall health, care, and socio-economic outcomes for mother and baby. This study proposed an alternative feminist discourse, arguing that despite the challenges of adolescent pregnancy and motherhood, this experience can be a positive experience, when girls are supported and empowered.

Design: This study took place in Uganda, where adolescent pregnancy and motherhood is commonly construed as problematic and negative discourses about young mothers are embedded in every aspect of life and health service, and where the perspective of adolescent mothers are notably under-researched. Using an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis underpinned by the theoretical framework of black feminism and intersectionality, this research explored the experiences of ten Ugandan adolescent pregnant girls.

Findings: The findings indicate that continued construction of adolescent pregnancy and motherhood as problematic result in isolation, stigmatisation, and discrimination, which disrupt education and dismantle relationships and trust. The participants demonstrated a lack of self-hood manifest through restricted autonomy and agency.

Highlighted is the negative impact of a lack of structured support and information available for adolescent girls, both prior to and during pregnancy, and after childbirth.

Contribution to the field: The research findings contribute to shaping a distinct new body of knowledge and elucidate the necessary information for informing the Ugandan MoH and NGOs that work in education, policy, research, and practice. A conceptual pedagogical 'talking tool' framework was created, which will support the understanding for those working with Ugandan adolescent girls.

Keywords: Girl; Pregnant; Phenomenology; Feminism; Intersectionality