

Between tradition and modernity: girls' talk about sexual relationships and violence in Kenya, Ghana and Mozambique

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Description:

This paper interrogates the influence of a tradition-modernity dichotomy on perspectives and practices on sexual violence and sexual relationships involving girls in three districts of Kenya, Ghana and Mozambique. Through deploying an analytical framework of positioning within multiple discursive sites, the authors argue that although the dichotomy misrepresents the complexity of contemporary communities, it is nonetheless deployed by girls, educational initiatives and researchers in their reflections on girls' sexual practices and sexual violence. The analysis examines variations between communities in patterns of and perspectives about sexual relationships, transactional sex and sexual violence. It illuminates ways in which features of 'modernisation' and 'tradition' both exacerbate and protect girls from violence. Across contexts, girls actively positioned themselves between tradition and modernity, while positioning others at the extreme poles. Education initiatives also invoked bipolar positions in their attempts to protect girls' rights to education and freedom from violence. The paper concludes by considering the implications for educational intervention and the potential for the analytical framing to generate richer, more contextualised understandings about girls' perspectives, experiences and ways of resisting sexual violence.

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