

Stayer youth shaping their transnational family lives

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PROPOSITIONS

accompanying the thesis

Stayer Youth Shaping Their Transnational Family Lives:

Experiences and aspirations of migrants' children living in Ghana

by Onallia Esther Osei

1. In transnational families, some members migrate while others stay in the origin country. Considering the perspectives of all stayers to complement migrants' views broadens transnational family knowledge production in diverse fields of study, ranging from youth studies and family sociology to transnational migration studies.
2. Aspirations are not fixed; they change over time. It is therefore important to have a temporal lens to understand the agency with which youth adapt and change their aspirations over time.
3. Some youth staying in their origin countries live without one or both parents because they migrated. For these stayer youth, how parental migration shapes their lives depends on how transnational family support aligns with changing needs or aspirations at varying moments of parent-child separation.
4. Through the instrumentality of new media technologies (ICTs) like social media platforms, stayer youth with access and technological know-how actively connect with migrant parents to sustain the bond with their parents and to maintain parental support, mainly through remittances, information and emotional support. Even if there is no to little contact, these youth use social media to surveil their parents. Hence, they are not passive receivers but actively shape this relationship.
5. After parental migration, local caregivers play vital roles in ensuring stayer youth survive and thrive in their origin country. However, caregivers cannot always provide stayer youth with sufficient and regular material and social support, including food and learning guidance or motivation. This situation may result in frequent changes in local caregivers, a cause of interruptions in the youth's educational trajectories.
6. Many stayer youth aim to emigrate after secondary school graduation, yet many are unable to do so. When stayer youth realise that their migration aspirations do not match the required abilities to migrate, they activate their agency by delaying their migration aspiration and shifting their focus to their time in Ghana to adequately prepare for their deferred migration.
7. We should refrain from calling stayer youth left-behind children, which signals these children are passive victims. On the contrary, stayer youth are highly agentic and actively shape their trajectories.
8. Most stayer youth rely on a broad transnational and local social network through which they get material and immaterial resources to help them develop, e.g., in education. This situation gives them a relatively grounded sense of security. Yet, most research focuses more on adults' networks, particularly their parents. Thus, future research should pay more attention to these youth's own networks as they are important for youth's development.
9. We need to study youth from many perspectives, including through their own eyes and that of significant others like their parents. In addition, we must give youth ample opportunities to tell their stories how they prefer for public representation. This way, we empower youth to use their own voices to say many things about their own lives, including their agency for their experiences and aspirations.
10. "Beneath every behaviour there is a feeling. And beneath each feeling is a need. And when we meet that need rather than focus on the behaviour, we begin to deal with the cause, not the symptom." (Ashleigh Warner, holistic family psychologist, <https://holisticfamilypsychologist.com/>)