Cultural Significance and Side Effects of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) In Central Tanzania: A Case of Gogo Women in Chalinze Ward in Dodoma Region.

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Abstract: More than 130 million girls and women worldwide have undergone female genital cutting (FGM or FC). FGM entails the collective name given to several different traditional practices that involve the cutting of female genitals. It is practiced traditionally often regarded essential for purification or cleansing of girls from misfortunes, likewise it is taken as a preparatory to adulthood. It is traditional practices that involve cutting or altering the female genitalia as a rite of passage or for other social cultural reasons.

The study took place in Dodoma region in Chalinze Ward. The study is concerned with the cultural significance of FGM among the Gogo and side effects caused, particularly in Chalinze ward. FGM is a practice often regarded essential for purification or cleansing of girls from misfortunes, likewise it is taken as a preparatory misfortunes. The study employed both quantitative and qualitative method to collect data from Chalinze ward. It had a sample of one hundred respondents which were picked randomly from the study area. The findings of the study suggested that the practices of Female Genital Mutilation have been associated to a number of causes ranging from numerous social, traditional, customary, and economical to ideological justifications.

Keywords: Women, traditional practice.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) is recognized by World Health Organization (WHO) as one of bad cultural practices in the world. The reasons for this practice have been identified by different scholars for different societies. It affects millions of women world wide, which has lead to the world concern over it. Social structures have been identified as obstacles to efforts toward eradicating the practice. Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) or Female circumcision is defined by World Health Organization (WHO) as comprising all procedures involving partial or total removal of the external female genitals organs whether for cultural or other non-therapeutic reasons. The procedures are irreversible and their effects last life time. FGM is not only an act that involve the physical cutting of females genital parts but also is explicitly intended to show a woman her confined role in the society and restrain her sexual desires. Most commonly girls experience Female Genital Mutilation between four and eight years of age, at a time when they feel they can be socialized and get aware of social role expected of them as women (Kitambi, 2000).

Female Genital Mutilation or Female circumcision is carried out due to traditional associated beliefs that women becomes beautiful/clean and real woman, also the people believe that circumcisions improves fertility and parents maternal and infant's mortality and morality. People believe that circumcision safe-guards virginity cures sexual deviant behavior such as lesbianism and excessive sexual arousal, so people take circumcisions as solution against such beliefs which is against humanity and human rights. Worldwide an estimated 130 million girls and women have undergone FGM (Toubia, 2000). This is one of the most damaging practice, it is sad to see that some cultures in every continent still cherish this practice. At least two million girls a year do undergo some form of the procedure. In Africa, an International African Committee (IAC) has been established as a way and effort to stop traditional practices affecting the health of women and children particularly FGM. FGM is still
circumcision directly and enlist international other feminists see the significance of attacking losing strategy to take it on directly. On contrast, entrenched in cultural practices that it would be a as infancy. In other societies, the ceremony may cultures girls experience genital mutilation as early contrary to norms relating to human rights. In some Western-based support in the process. FGM is been diff erent attitudes on the focus on eradicating this practice. Consequently, there has been diff erent attitudes on the focus on circumcision. Some feminists argue that efforts to eradicate FGM are western-influenced on that is not only very broad and complex issues but also politically, religiously and socially sensitive. Feminists in Africa are gaining leadership of the struggle against female mutilation. They engage in a lively debate over the appropriate strategy for eradicating this practice. Consequently, there has been different attitudes on the focus on circumcision. Some feminists argue that efforts to eradicate FGM are western-influenced on that is overly concerned with sexuality and that ignores other more serious problems, such as malnutrition. Such feminists further argue that circumcision is so entrenched in cultural practices that it would be a losing strategy to take it on directly. On contrast, other feminists see the significance of attacking circumcision directly and enlist international Western-based support in the process. FGM is contrary to norms relating to human rights. In some cultures girls experience genital mutilation as early as infancy. In other societies, the ceremony may not occur until the girl is of marriageable age approximately fourteen to sixteen year old.

Interest curtailing the practice of female genital mutilation (FGM) has increased in the past were 20 years. Although the political and legal environment towards the practice is more hostile, this awareness has yet to translate itself to measurable changes in prevalence. At the local level activities are shifting from a clinical, health risk, model to an understanding of the phenomenon in its social context. Under patriarchal structures of social control of sexuality and fertility, women and girls are the primary social group to suffer from as well as to perpetuate the practice of FGM. Circumcision is a reflection of a culture that subordinates women through a host of “male chauvinistic attitudes (Koso-Thomas, 1987). With appropriate investments in psychological and economic empowerment, women are also the most likely group to resist the practice(Toubia,et el,2003).

2.0 MATERIALS AND METHODS
This study was conducted at Chalinze Ward in Dodoma region. This place was chosen as area of study since in Dodoma region 67% of women have undergone FGM, where the percentage of FGM occurs at 36.9% in Tanzania. (Demographic Health Survey, 1996). This study employed cross-sectional design where by data were collected at a single point in time. Both qualitative and quantitative methods were used in primary data collection data. Data was analyzed by using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version12. One hundred respondents (100) respondents were involved in the study.

3.0 RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS
3.1 Basic reasons for the practice FGM among the Gogo in Chalinze Ward
The practices of Female Genital Mutilation have been associated to a number of causes ranging from numerous social, traditional, customary, and economical to ideological justifications. It was found out that the community had different understanding on the most basic reason on why they practice FGM (Table 1). Of all other reasons the majority (45%) of respondents regarded FGM as just the valued customary practice which is necessary for initiation of girls into society. Others (22%) claimed the practice is due to its significance as a prerequisite for participation in customs and traditional teaching session for girls. However, a significant number of respondents (15%) claimed that FGM was basically important for transformation of young girls into adulthood. Only a few (13%) found FGM as being basically practiced for controlling women’s sexual arousal. Only (5%) respondents attributed FGM with the pursuance of Aesthetics and hygiene. The ritual itself is conducted on December, during Christmas holiday in each year. It is a period of little activity in the farming, business and school calendars. This is also a time of the year, when the abundant harvest could sustain girls secluded feasting. Normally, the day of this ceremony is made known in advance though secretly to avoid “the legal eye”.

rampart in Africa, widely practiced in Tanzania despite its illegality by the Sexual Offenses Special Provisions Act of 1998. UNICEF in its annual report commented that FGM is still rampart in different ethnic groups in Tanzania. More than eighteen percent (18%) of women undergo FGM every year. By the year 1996, Arusha and Manyara regions were leading with 81%, Dodoma with 67%, Mara 43%, Kilimanjaro 36.8%, Iringa 27% and Singida with 25%. The girls were either brought individually or in large groups as between ten to twenty girls and then get circumcised simultaneously (TDHS, 1996).

The practitioner in most cases do not have training as a result they use unsterilized circumcision instruments, like razor blades , , kitchen knives, scissors etc. It was found that in some areas like Kenya , Egypt, Mali and Sudan professional people are also used to practice FGM, due to the increase of awareness in HIV and other infectious diseases (PRB ,2001). Girls and women who are subjected to FGM suffer severe excessive bleeding, unforgettable pains and sometimes die, particularly when undergoing child delivery. The customary practice (FGM) has attracted much attention on the international and national policy arenas in the past two decades (Toubia, 2000). The question of FGM is not only very broad and complex issues but also politically, religiously and socially sensitive. Feminists in Africa are gaining leadership of the struggle against female mutilation. They engage in a lively debate over the appropriate strategy for eradicating this practice. Consequently, there has been different attitudes on the focus on circumcision. Some feminists argue that efforts to eradicate FGM are western-influenced on that is overly concerned with sexuality and that ignores other more serious problems, such as malnutrition. Such feminists further argue that circumcision is so entrenched in cultural practices that it would be a losing strategy to take it on directly. On contrast, other feminists see the significance of attacking circumcision directly and enlist international Western-based support in the process. FGM is contrary to norms relating to human rights. In some cultures girls experience genital mutilation as early as infancy. In other societies, the ceremony may not occur until the girl is of marriageable age approximately fourteen to sixteen year old. Interest curtailing the practice of female genital mutilation (FGM) has increased in the past were 20 years. Although the political and legal environment towards the practice is more hostile, this awareness has yet to translate itself to measurable changes in prevalence. At the local level activities are shifting from a clinical, health risk, model to an understanding of the phenomenon in its social context. Under patriarchal structures of social
FGM as valued inherited practice.
From the above findings it implies that FGM is regarded as a valued customary practice that cannot be avoided. The practice was inherited from their ancestors and the Chalinze ward society was proud of it. It is believed that avoiding FGM would lead into curse “laana” from ancestors who embraced it as valuable and necessary practice from time to time in memorial. If a girl did not undergo FGM it was taken as a kind of jinx (“nuksi”) to the girl, her family, clan and the tribe as a whole. This conforms Anna et el (2013), that Masai communities in Tanzania practice FGM under the umbrella of the word “tradition” which is rooted in primitive and unchanging culture. Similarly, WHO (2003), on Gender equality and human rights, found customary beliefs as the most reasons for continuation of the practice. Conservatism towards adherence to customary practices is the basic cause for the continuation of FGM practice in area of study.

FGM as means to Transformation into adulthood.
FGM is still practiced to females in Chalinze ward in order for female adolescents to be transformed into full adulthood. It is believed that a girl who is not yet mutilated is regarded as a child; with childish behavior despite her age and role in society. These girls are regarded immature and can never be married.

Table 1: Basic reasons for the practice FGM among the Gogo in Chalinze Ward

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CAUSES</th>
<th>FREQUENCY</th>
<th>PERCENTAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FGM as valued inherited practice</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FGM as prerequisite to traditional teaching sessions</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FGM as means to Transformation into adulthood</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FGM as means to prevent Promiscuity</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For pursuance of Aesthetics and hygiene</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source, field survey, 2012

3.2 Effects of FGM.
Although FGM is practiced on cultural grounds, it has serious potential health consequences for women. They include the risk of physical complication as well as psychological effects. Respondents were asked to mention one most dangerous side effect of FGM mostly experienced by victims of FGM. The following were put forward:

(i) Physical Effects
In this respect, immediate complications of FGM that were cited by the respondents involved severe pains and bleeding during mutilation exercise. After circumcision, a local medicine called “ndasimi” is used to ensure quick recovery. It may be in the form of powder, liquid or greasy to massage with. This medicine is under the secrecy of the operator who gives it to the girl’s mother for further applications on the wound. However, respondents who expressed cases of prolonged bleeding as mostly experienced side effect of FGM were 40(40%). This experience affected the development of Chalinze Gogo women as it resulted into lifelong weakness. Besides this, it had been further noted that shock, pain, trauma were experienced during the procedure. In many situations, where bleeding prolonged, application of cow-dug was used at the genital parts in order to cause clotting of blood. Other side effects were categorically of long term complications. The findings indicates that 20(20%) respondents expressed feeling of pains during

FGM as means to prevent Promiscuity (psychosexual reason).
It is believed that uncircumcised women are impolite and oversexed. Parts of the genitalia, especially the clitoris are to be removed so as to ensure good behavior of girls. It is done to ensure virginity before and fidelity after marriage and or to increase male sexual pleasure. Although it is said that uncircumcised girl/ woman is likely to be a prostitute, many findings contradict this assumption. Prostitution exists among the Gogo especially to those circumcised ones.

(iv) FGM as prerequisite to traditional teaching sessions.
Among the Gogo in Chalinze ward, a girl must undergo FGM in order to attend customs and traditional teaching sessions. “It is a teaching period to a girl”, as one respondent put it during interview. Such teachings are believed to increase the girl’s matrimonial opportunities as they prepare her to assume marriage responsibilities. When it is done as a community ceremony, each family with a child for initiation ceremony has to contribute food for children and adults involved in teachings.
sexual intercourse as mostly experienced side effect (Table 2). On the other hand it was found out that there was a very close relationship between HIV and FGM as 38 (38%) respondents mentioned this as most dangerous issue experienced by FGM victims. This conforms Reb ecca (year) that in Tanzania among girls who went through the practice, about 20% were infected. Urethral damage and chronic pelvic infection scored 10% and 25% respectively as threatening side effects of FGM over women

(ii) Psychological effect
In the four villages under study, it was observed that FGM had serious psychological effects. This was particularly towards disturbances in eating, sleeping, mood and cognition immediately after experiencing the procedure. Thorough Focus Group Discussion (FGD), it was found out that many women who had undergone FGM had experienced fear, submission or inhibition and suppressed feelings of anger, bitterness and betrayal.

Table 2: Expressed side effects of FGM in Chalinze Ward in Dodoma region.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Suggested effects</th>
<th>Frequency out of 100 respondents</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Birth complication</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Pain in sexual intercourse</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Excessive bleeding</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>HIV infection</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Urethra damage</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Chronic pelvic infection</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source, field survey, 2012

4.0 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION
Conclusively, the reasons for continuation of the practice of FGM are embedded in the cultural values of a given society. For the Gogo people, FGM is regarded as an inherited practice from the ancestors that cannot be avoided, but more practically as a basic rite through which socialization of the young generation takes place. However the community members recognize side effects which range from physical to psychological ones. In this scenario, the demanded cultural significances of the practice do not outweigh the side effects. This being the case, efforts to eliminate the practice, have to be supported by whoever values women dignity and their contribution in development. Education provision is recommended as basic mechanism in the elimination of FGM.

With adequate enlightenmment through education about adverse effects of FGM, the fight against the practice can be made possible and easy. This will create understanding and change in the attitude of FGM practitioners toward need for elimination of the practice. It is the education that will facilitate the people to put down or denounce those defective customs and traditional luggage they travel with in their life long journey in this world. With better education, women can be more objective in their judgment of social issues, especially those that affect their health. Campaigns against FGM must be re-doubled, since social acceptance still emerges as a bottleneck to fight against this cultural practice that discriminate against women and that meant to control their sexuality.

Actions have to be taken so as to improve the status of women in every sector of society. Government should address women’s status in the family, their adequate access to education on gender issues. This needs to be taught from grass root level. People have to be taught about the gender equality between women and men in order to have the society which is gender sensitive. This will be possible if the government would undertake efforts to remove barriers to women education. It is only when women will have truly attained a status equal to that of men, that they will be in a position to make a genuine and strong choice about whether to undergo FGM or not.

However, the government should make effective enforcement of the Sexual Offence Act, 1998. It should enforce the operation of this law and the law should be seen enforced. Practically the government should be directly involved in the campaigns against FGM and not to leave this to Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs) which work under poor financial position.

On the other hand, in order to maintain that traditional values associated with the practice, the government should make effective enforcement of the Sexual Offence Act, 1998. It should enforce the operation of this law and the law should be seen enforced. Practically the government should be directly involved in the campaigns against FGM and not to leave this to Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs) which work under poor financial position.
develop a symbolic substitute, a token ceremony to confer the psychological benefits derived by African woman from membership of sonority.

REFERENCE


Contributing to Transmission of HIV in Africa. Review of Infectious Diseases.