



The Attitude of Parents towards Female Genital Mutilation in Etche Local Government Area of Rivers State: Implication for Counselling

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the attitude of parents towards female genital mutilation in Etche Local Government Area of Rivers State. The population for this study comprises all males and females in Etche Local Government Area of Rivers State. The sample size is 200 subjects selected through stratified random sampling technique. A self-structured instrument titled: Female Genital Mutilation Inventory (FGMI) was used. Three hypotheses were used in this study. An independent t-test was used to analysis the hypotheses. Findings were made as follows: (i) there is a noticeable difference in the attitude of educated and non-educated parents towards female genital mutilation. Based on the findings, recommendation and conclusion were made and implication for counselling was also carried out.

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Introduction

Female circumcision is now generally refereed to as Female Genital Mutilation. It has come under great check by women activists, Health personnel and United Nations because of the risk to Health of the individuals that are subjected to this practice.

Patai (1978) has explained that female circumcision or female genital mutilation is a relatively rare folk custom practiced in Egypt, some Ethiopians, Lybia, Indonesia and some other African countries including Nigeria, Etche in particular.

The African culture is different from the European culture. This is the culture that all African were exposed to before the advent of the Western culture as introduced by Christianity and Western education.

In spite of the fact that many parts of Nigerian and indeed African cultural norms have changed; there are certain traditional customs that still remain till today.

One of such practices is female circumcision (genital mutilation). According to Udo (1983), this practice was mostly common among the Efiks and Ibibios of Cross River and Akwa-Ibom States, where a man left the State to Ogbogbo town in Okrika Local Government Area of Rivers State. This man actually saw the rate of women immoral activities and suggested that the genital of females in that area be mutilated.

In Etche local government area of Rivers State in line with biblical instruction hence for any young girl and a candidate set for marriage she has to undergo fattening and circumcision was an integral part of this fattening.

An unmarried mother that is a lady that gave birth to a child outside wedlock who did not circumcise may not take part in female circumcision and the fattening processes. She was also not allowed to take part in public ceremonies of the parade of the female who had just completed the processes of

fattening. Girls who are deprived from circumcision were stigmatized. They and their parents were ridiculed in songs till death and even after.

In order to avoid such public ridicule, parents ensured that their daughters were circumcised and they remain chaste by abstaining from premarital sex in other to allow them go through the process of circumcision and fattening. It is worthwhile to note that Etche Ethnic Nationality in Rivers State individuals had to carry out female and male circumcision as a matter of conforming to the norms of the society. In these societies, no female or male was accepted without circumcision. No reputable young man could also marry them.

This female circumcision or testive cover in male consists of the excision of the Labia minora and the clitoris. It is scientifically referred to as clitoridectomy.

Kisseka (1980) explains that the practice of female genital mutilation is rudely operative in Nigeria. Hosken (1979) asserts that it has been performed on as many as 25 percent of Nigerian women and children among Hausas, Yoruba, Ibo, Efiks, Bokis Ibibios, Ogbogbo town of Etche Local Government Area of Rivers State and others in parts of Edo, Delta and other states. The Author agrees with Patai (1978) that the type of female circumcision practiced in Nigeria is known as clitoridectomy, which entails removal of the clitoris sometimes with adjacent Labia Majoria. The operation according to Kisseka (1987) varies in maprutual and severity among the ethnic groups and may be performed on infants as among the Yoruba or between the ages of three and six years or at puberty as among the Efiks, the Okrika and Etche people as part of fattening ceremonies.

In recent times, the practice of female circumcision has come under several criticism especially medical and woman

organizations while that of male remains without questions. It is called mutilation because people who carry out the operation are not specialists, have little or no knowledge about its health implication.

Today much public effort have been made to stop this practice which many people see as an abuse of the girl child. However, in spite of the efforts made to stop the female genital mutilation; some people (both male and female) think it should continue especially in areas where it is a cultural practice while others think it should be discontinued.

Although, many families due to education have discontinued the practice of female circumcision, quite a number of female in Etche Local Government Area of Rivers State are still subjected to this traditional ritual today.

This research therefore attempts to investigate the attitude of females towards this practice in Etche Local Government Area of Rivers State.

Hypothesis

The following hypotheses were tested in this study.

- There is no significant difference in the attitude of Christians and non-Christian parents towards female genital Mutilation.
- There is no significant difference in the attitude of younger and older parents towards female genital mutilation.
- There is no significant difference in the attitude of educated and non-educated parents towards Female Genital Mutila

Research Methodology

This study used survey research. This design was used because the main aim of the researcher is to find out the attitude of parents towards female genital mutilation in Etche Local Government Area of Rivers State. The population of this study comprised male and female parents in Etche Local Government Area. The study adopts the stratified random sampling technique to draw the sample for the study. The criteria of stratification were based on Etche Local Government Area of Rivers State, males and females in that

Community. The sample comprised 300 parents gotten through stratified random sampling technique.

Instrument for Data Collection

The instrument for data collection was self-structured questionnaire titled: "Female and Male Circumcision Inventory" (MFCS). The instrument used for this research was validated by the researcher's supervisor, and other experts in the Measurement and Evaluation in the Department of Educational Psychology in Ignatius Ajuru University of Education. The instrument was personally administered to experts in the Faculty of Education by the researcher and also retrieved by him after the respondents had filled it. The confidentiality of the respondents was equally assured.

Method of Data Analysis

The research hypotheses were answered with independent t-test at 0.05 level of significance.

Results

Hypothesis One

There is no significant difference in the attitude of Christians and non Christian parents towards female mutilation/circumcision. The hypothesis was answered with t-test statistics on table 4.1 below.

Discussion of Findings

The discussion is based on the research hypothesis⁸ formulated and finding of the positive attitude that there is a remarkable difference in the attitude of Christian and non-Christian parents towards Female Genital Mutilation. This points to us that most non-Christian parents favour the female genital mutilation than the Christian parents. And the finding of the second hypothesis shows that there is noticeable difference in the attitude of educated and un-educated parents towards Female Genital Mutilation. Most of the non-educated parents favour the female genital mutilation than the educated parents; and finally, the third hypothesis reveals that there is great significant difference in the attitude of younger and older parents towards female genital Mutilation. And this tells us that older parents favour Genital Mutilation more than the younger ones.

Table 4.1. A two tailed t-test statistics of difference between Christians and non- Christians.

Item	Number	Mean	SD	Df	Standard error	t-test cal.	t-test critical
Christians	80	8.0	1.65	288	0.2	20.0	1.96
Non-Christians	120	12.0	1.1				

The result of the above analysis revealed that the calculated value of (200) is far greater than the table of t (1.96) at 288 degree of freedom and 0.05 level of significance, therefore the null hypothesis is rejected, pointing out that there is a huge remarkable difference in the attitude of Christians and non-Christians parents towards Female Genital Mutilation.

Table 4.3. A two tailed t-statistics test of difference between educated and non-educated parents.

Item	Number	Mean	SD	Df	Standard error	t-test cal.	t-test critical
Educated	96	9.6	1.25	288	0.22	3.64	1.96
Non-educated	104	10.4	0.58				

The result of the above analysis shows that the calculated value of t (3.64) is greater than the table value of t (1.96) at 288 degree of freedom and 0.05 level of significance, therefore the null hypothesis is rejected, showing that there is a significant difference in the attitude of Educated and non-educated parents towards Female Genital Mutilation.

Table 4.4A two tailed t-test statistics of difference between younger and older parents

Item	Number	Mean	SD	Df	Standard error	t-test cal.	t-test critical
Younger	110	11.0	1.02	288	0.17	11.7%	1.96
Older	90	9.0	1.33				

The result of the above analysis indicated that the calculated value of t (11.76) greatly exceeds the total value of t (1.96) at 288 degree of freedom and 0.05 level of significance therefore the null hypothesis is rejected showing also that there is a great remarkable difference in the attitude of young and old parents towards Female Genital Mutilation

Hypothesis Two

There is no significant difference in the attitude of educated and non-educated parents towards Female Genital Mutilation. To test this hypothesis, the mean score and standard deviations were calculated first before calculating for the t-test as presented in the table 4.7 below:

Hypothesis Three

There is no significant difference in the attitude of younger and older parents towards Female Genital Mutilation.

Conclusion

Based on the findings one can boldly conclude that most of the parents have negative attitude towards Female Genital Mutilation and there are exceedingly great significant difference in the attitude of parents who are Christians and non-Christians, who are educated and non-educated and who are younger and older hence each of the groups of parents show difference attitude towards Female Genital Mutilation based on their religious, age and educational background.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are made based on the finding of this study:

- i) There should be improvement in the education of the girl child as a means of creating more awareness on the dangers of the practice.
- ii) Women organizations, Government Agencies as well as non-governmental organizations are encouraged to take the message to the villages and towns to educate them the rural men and women on the dangers of Female Genital Mutilation.
- iii) The campaign to stop this unwholesome practice should be continued as it has brought untold harm to the Nigerian women.

Implication for Counseling

The following implications for counseling are made based on the findings of this study.

- There should be trained counselors in the towns and villages to safe guide the girl child.
- There should be Guidance counselors in the rural areas so that parents in that geographical area will be educated.
- There should be a helping hand from the federal government to employ many more counselors who will go about from time to time inculcate the dangerousness of the Female Genital Mutilation.

However, all guidance counselors should have it in mind that there are villages and towns where they need to be posted into therefore should start putting up their application for real government employment.

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