

Female Genital Mutilation and Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights in Ebonyi State, Nigeria

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Abstract

Background: Female genital mutilation and sexual and reproductive rights of women is a major public health issue exposing individual, families, and communities to untold hardship. The practice has been associated with vesico vaginal fistulae, adverse health consequences and psychological trauma like Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), anxiety and depression. The study was carried out to ascertain the disruption of sexual right of women through female genital mutilation FGM in Ebonyi State.

Objectives: The general objective of the study is to determine the extent to which female genital mutilation and sexual rights of women in Ebonyi State, has continued to exist despite efforts by NGOs, international organizations and governments.

Methodology: We employed survey research design using structured questionnaires. In-depth interviews was conducted with adult (18 years and older) volunteers within the three Local Government Areas of Ebonyi State. Thematic analysis using NVivo 11 Pro software, three sub-themes emerged.

Findings: from the study revealed that the practice is sustained by tradition, religious belief and cultural practices of the people who perceive it as a rite of passage to womanhood which is often accompanied with festive ceremonies. Knowledge of health implications and reproductive rights violation associated with FGM was discovered to be low among stakeholders interviewed.

Conclusion: Based on the findings, the study concluded that there is a need to increase awareness and bridge cultural practices and obstetric outcomes that have gained the required attention. Previously in the state NGOs have attempted campaigns against FGM while on the side of Government agencies are yet to put intensive effort to achieve desire objectives.

Recommendations: There is a need for more commitment from traditional leaders, religious leaders, medical professionals, and partners through community conversations, health education and mass awareness-raising through policy, legislative and social media interventions to ensure better public health outcomes.

Keywords: Vesico vaginal fistulae, female genital mutilation, Culture, Knowledge & Awareness