

# THE OTHER FACE OF FGM

MORAL AND SOCIAL  
ELEMENTS

AFRICAN WOMEN'S ORGANIZATION



AFRICAN WOMEN'S ORGANIZATION  
against female genital mutilation

## AFRICAN WOMEN'S ORGANIZATION

Schwarzspanierstraße 15/1/2  
1090 Vienna  
Austria  
[office@help-africanwomen.org](mailto:office@help-africanwomen.org)  
[www.help-africanwomen.org](http://www.help-africanwomen.org)

Frauen<sup>MA57</sup>  
Stadt  Wien



# THE OTHER FACE OF FGM: MORAL AND SOCIAL ELEMENTS

African Women's Organization

October 2003, Vienna

## Inhalt:

Preface .....	4
I. Introduction .....	5
Objectives .....	6
Methodology .....	6
II. Background (Statement of the Problem) .....	8
1. Religion .....	9
2. Sociological reasons .....	10
3. Sexual and marriage factors .....	11
4. Psychological reasons .....	12
5. Health factors .....	13
6. Economic reasons .....	13
III. FINDINGS .....	14
Marriage and FGM .....	14
Types of marriage .....	16
Blood relations marriage or cross cousin marriages .....	17
Bride Price (Bride wealth) .....	18
Perception of FGM on marriage .....	21
FGM and virginity .....	22
FGM, Divorce, Prostitution .....	23
Prostitution .....	25
FGM, Indecency and Immorality .....	27
Family honour and FGM .....	29
FGM and Faithfulness .....	32
IV. Suggestions .....	34
V. Annex: Questionnaire .....	35
References .....	38



# Preface

Since the taboo over female genital mutilation has been broken through the efforts of women anti-FGM campaigners, a lot has been written on the subject. The researches and the writings focus on the types of the traditional operation and its consequences on the health of women and children. The latter has helped the campaigners to present their case against the practice of FGM. This has proved to be insufficient as it has not led to the total elimination of FGM.

As FGM is a practice deeply-rooted in the tradition and culture of the societies practicing it, it is essential to look into how the social and moral values attributed to it make it the backbone of the tradition. This aspect of FGM is poorly covered and researched. In order to bring forth a change of values and norms, it is necessary to understand what role FGM plays in the social and moral life of the people. Some questions such as what role does FGM have in marriage, preservation of virginity, faithfulness, family honour need to be answered.

This paper based on 80 questions from Africa and Europe, tries to show the relations of FGM and some main social and moral attributes given to FGM. Some of the replies may be subjective and many of the issues raised are personal and subjective. In some cases there is a need for a long-time observation of the communities. A simple yes and no answer would be insufficient and people sometime may not like to accept the realities of some bad cultures and their consequences.

The objective of the paper is to highlight the fact that there are other elements besides the health aspect that need to be looked into for the campaign against FGM. It also wants to show that more detailed and systematic studies should be under taken at the grassroots level, as the essence of the attributes may vary from community to community.

The African Women's organization is grateful to the City of Vienna MA 57 Women's Bureau (Stadt Wien, Magistratsabteilung 57 Frauenbüro) for sponsoring this study as well as its overall activities, and thanks all those who took their time to answer our questions.

*African Women's Organization, Vienna, October 2003*



# THE OTHER FACE OF FGM: MORAL AND SOCIAL ELEMENTS

## I. Introduction

The harmful practice of female genital mutilation (FGM), the cutting of the female genital organs for ritual rites dating back to pre-biblical times, is being currently practised dominantly in some 28 African countries, parts of the Middle East, pocket areas in other parts of the world and among immigrant population in the developed world. It is estimated that over 2 million infants and girl children are annually mutilated in the name of tradition and religious requirements. This practice is detrimental to the health and well-being of women and girl-children. At the international, regional and local levels various activities are being undertaken to address the issue as well as to prevent and eliminate it. There remains a lot to be done to identify the root causes and justifications to devise appropriate strategies addressing it.

Preliminary and initial field studies and surveys have been made to assess the nature and magnitude of the problem at the grassroot level by various NGOs and researchers. When one looks into the main justifications or rationalization of FGM, the important reasons outside of religion fall under tradition and culture which in turn covers the moral and social values that the community practices and strongly defends. The moral and social factors to include:

- Increasing marriage chances
- Preserving virginity
- Preventing promiscuity (indecentcy)
- Preventing immorality
- Ensuring faithfulness and chastity
- Controlling sexual desire

The social and moral aspect of FGM have not been given sufficient attention and have been raised only in regards to the identification of the justifications of FGM. The main area of concentration to date has been the consequences of FGM on the health of children and women – the medical aspect. The findings in this aspect has been successful in mobilizing the campaign against FGM from the health aspect. It has been globally accepted that FGM is harmful and fatal in some cases.

Unfortunately, the other commonly cited justifications inherent in most of the FGM risk



communities have not been dealt with. The social and moral aspect can not be easily scientifically monitored but at least it requires an in-depth research. Assumptions require follow ups and systematically monitored. The fight against FGM requires an in-depth knowledge on the moral and social factors that maintain FGM in order to design appropriate measures to help demystify the values wrongly attributed to FGM. In principle the surest and acceptable way to eliminate FGM is a change of values, norms and behaviours. To devise a strategy towards this end requires looking into the various factors that help to maintain the tradition. The justifications may vary from region to region but the objectives are usually common. In this case they have to do with women and sexual life and morality. Each justification must be thoroughly looked into to show the unnecessary and the harmfulness of the practice and that it has no relations with the attributes associated with it. Understanding this aspect of the practice will promote the campaign and speed up its elimination.

## Objectives

The immediate objective is to answer the question whether FGM achieves its objectives of preserving the social and moral values that have been attributed to FGM by the practitioners, guardians and sponsors of the practice. Does FGM control or help to prevent negative social and moral behaviours claimed to be manifested by women and young girls in their sexual and social life, for example does it prevent prostitution or premarital sex or unfaithfulness? Have these behaviours got anything to do with FGM?

Another objective of this exercise is to show that, just like in the case of religion, the social and moral values attributed to it are not dependent on the practice of FGM nor does FGM contribute to maintain them. It may be argued that the consequences of FGM may encourage unwanted elements of the culture to flourish, for example looking for satisfaction outside of marriage in cases of failed marriages due to FGM. It is hoped that the outcome will help strengthen the fight against FGM by providing an additional tool to expose the unacceptability of this harmful tradition; and that more serious and extensive studies on the moral and social aspect of FGM will be undertaken.

This is an exercise, not an end by itself but a first step towards a serious in-depth study of FGM's other side not given sufficient attention. Its aim is to provoke others to take a look into the unknowns of FGM.

## Methodology

The study has been based on a well structured questionnaire administered by women to

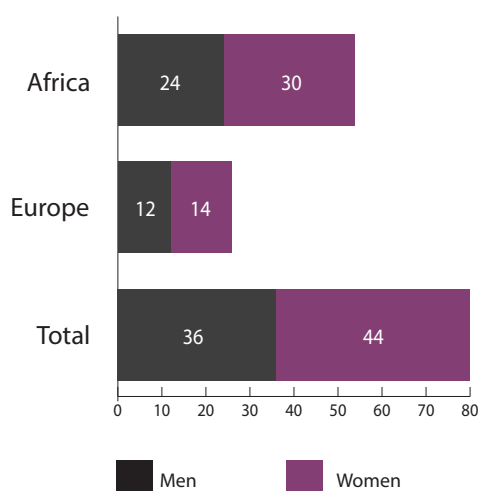


women and also men by men. The questionnaire focuses on general and specific issues related to the moral and social aspects attributed to FGM (see Annex). All the topics raised such as marriage, bride price, prostitution, divorce, immorality, family honour, faithfulness were raised in terms of their relation to FGM. These points are usually the backbone for the defence of FGM.

Attempts have been made to have as many respondents as possible and copies had been sent via e-mail to over 20 African NGOs in Africa and some in Europe. Sadly, none of them had the willingness to reply or even acknowledge receiving it. Their input would have possibly enriched the outcome of this study.

This study is based on 80 respondents based on one to one interview. Out of the interviewees 44 are women and 36 men. The interviews were carried out in Africa( Ethiopia, Sudan) and Austria (Vienna, Graz and Linz) and the UK.

Table 1. Breakdown of Interviewees



Outcomes usually are determined by the methodology implemented, how cooperative the respondents are, how interesting and sensitive the issue is. It is human nature to avoid sensitive and personal issues and usually responses become devoid of details. Tradition is a sensitive subject and in some places a taboo. In this study and similar ones issues like prostitution, unfaithfulness, extramarital affairs are sensitive issues denied by individuals and communities. Therefore, responses have to be taken with caution and in these cases long-term observations might be more beneficial. It might also help to have taken the issues piece-meal to get an in-depth knowledge of the issue and its relation with other factors, such as bride price and its relation with marriage and FGM. We must also consider when dealing with this issue how the problem has entrenched itself in the society. The responses may reflect it.



## II. Background (Statement of the Problem)

Each society has its own generally accepted conventions or norms that regulate social life. These norms and values affect the attitude and behaviour of individuals within the given community. All forms of justifications are invoked to justify and maintain these norms including traditional and cultural practices, religious and ethnic beliefs. Traditional and cultural practices have their good and bad parts. Harmful traditional practices (HTPs) affect the health, psychology and physical well-being of individuals. They become deep-rooted due to poverty, ignorance and other social causes such as the patriarchal society, in most cases, in rural, poor, under-privileged communities with no or poor access to education, information and the outside world. In most cases the victims of HTPs are women children and men from underprivileged groups.

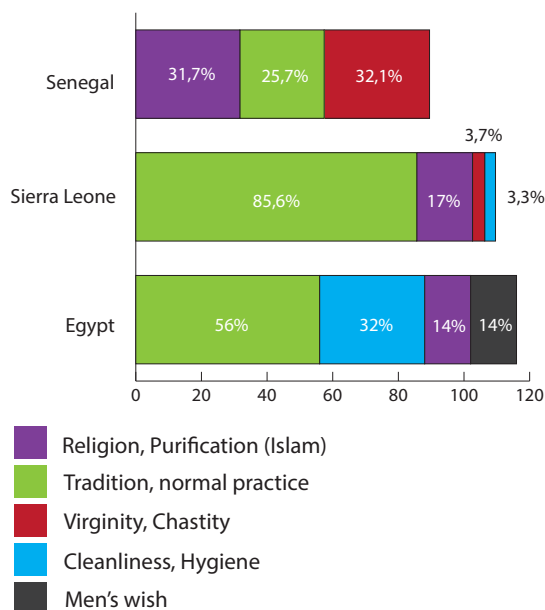
One of the worst forms of violence against babies, little girls and women practised in the name of tradition and culture, religion and social relationships is the widespread practice of female genital mutilation (FGM), also known as female circumcision, excision, and genital cutting. FGM is the removal, partially, or completely, of the sensitive external parts of female genitalia with irreversible consequences.

The victims of this harmful tradition are infants, little girls and women ranging between the ages of 7 and 8 days after birth and 10-14 years old, living mostly in 28 African countries across the Sahara Belt, the Middle East, pocket areas in Asia and among immigrants in the Americas, Europe and Australia. It is estimated (by Hosken 1997) that there are more than 150 million mutilated babies, little girls and women in Africa. It is also estimated that at least 2 million babies and little girls are mutilated every year. In the European context it is estimated that there are more than 270,000 at risk (EU Daphne).

Various justifications are put forward by its adherents. Among these are to preserve virginity of women, prevents promiscuity, as well as a form of cleanliness, preserves virginity, controls waywardness. In societies where illiteracy and poverty prevail, where women believe the practice is universal, where social pressure is tight, the justifications are the realities for the women. The sad part is that they are accused of doing and maintaining it. Here we can see the example of three countries sectoral surveys to show which reasons are the important ones.







Bob 1999 - Stat. Rec. Of Women Worldwide Leye

The basic question we have to ask is what are the reasons and justifications for its persistence regardless of its psychological and physiological irreversible damages. The reasons forwarded by the practitioners can be divided into two: religious sanctions and traditional factors. The latter covers a wide variety of factors. We shall try to see the main ones next.

## 1. Religion

One of the biggest misconception about FGM is that it is sanctioned by religion be it Christianity or Islam. There is no possible connection between FGM and religion as it precedes both of them. In the FGM risk countries it is practised by followers of all denominations: Christians, Moslems, animists and non-believers and followers of indigenous (traditional) religion.

The practice seems to be very extensive among the Muslim population in the FGM practicing countries and as such has acquired a religious dimension. In Ethiopia and Egypt, for example, both the Coptic Christians and the Muslims practise FGM. However, not all Muslims practise FGM, for example, it is not practised in Saudi Arabia, Libya, Jordan, Turkey, Syria, the Maghreb countries of northwest Africa, Morocco, Iran and Iraq. All the Muslims in FGM practicing countries do not practice it, for example, in the case of Senegal where 94% of the population are Muslims only 20% practice FGM (Mottin-Sylla 1990).



None of the two major religions, Islam and Christianity, impose the practice of FGM. There is nothing specific in the Bible or the Koran which allows the mutilation of women (Toubia 1993). The Koran does not refer to FGM but a few sayings of the Prophet (Hadith) quote His dialogue with a circumcisor where He is quoted to have said "reduce but do not destroy" (Al 1998). It is also claimed that the Prophet said, "...if you cut, do not over do it, because it brings more radiance to the face and it is more pleasant for the husband." There are controversies surrounding this Hadith.

Religious leaders, except some missionaries, have not until recently recognized it as a harmful practice and/or discouraged its practice. In a 1998 symposium of religious leaders they agreed that FGM has no religious basis and has nothing to do with Islam (IAC Report). However, they tend to link the moral benefits attributed to FGM (such as purity, virginity, morality, etc) with religion.

## 2. Sociological reasons

One justification of FGM is the sociological aspect which presents the operation as a transition in life stages as an initiation rite or passage rite. It was performed at puberty on girls 12 to 14 years old, or just before the onset of menstruation and just before marriage. FGM as an initiation rite emphasises the transition in age status from girlhood to womanhood and to marriageable age. In FGM practicing countries, an uncircumcised girl has no chance of having a suitor, the operation is a signal for her readiness for marriage and availability.

Before initiation through mutilation individually or in group, the girls are kept in seclusion for a period of time (at least 2 weeks) and given instructions on morality, tribal law, social codes, being a good wife, etc.

Jomo Kenyatta, the first president of Kenya and a strong supporter of the tradition of FGM, gives a better picture of the importance of FGM in tradition.

*"The operation is (still) regarded as the very essence of an institution which has enormous educational, social, moral and religious implications, quite apart from the operation itself. For the present it is impossible for a member of the tribe to imagine an initiation without clitoridectomy (FGM). Therefore, the abolition of the surgical element in this custom means to the Gikuyu the abolition of the whole institution."*

He goes on to show the close relation between marriage and FGM. He shows us that uncircumcised tribe members cannot marry and is ostracized by the community and tribe.



*"In the matrimonial relation, the rite of passage is the deciding factor. No proper Gikuyu would dream of marrying a girl who has not been circumcised, and vice versa. It is a taboo for a Gikuyu man or woman to have sexual relations with someone who has not undergone this operation".*

Recent studies indicate that the initiation part of FGM is declining and that the age of operation is also declining. In many parts of Africa this justification does not hold grounds as the operation takes place on infants 7 or 8 days old as in Ethiopia, in parts of the Gambia and Nigeria, and girl-children most under 5 years of age. The victims are too young even to understand the word marriage itself.

### 3. Sexual and marriage factors

A frequently cited reason for FGM is its assumed ability to diminish women's desire for sex. This in reality is the truth. Cutting away of the sensitive part of the genitalia kills the emotion associated with the organ. There is a generally held belief that uncircumcised women and girls are difficult to satisfy sexually, and this implies that women cannot control their sexual emotions. Uncircumcised women are assumed to be over sexy.

*"Excision is believed to protect a woman against her over sexed nature, saving her from temptation, suspicion and disgrace while preserving her chastity" (MRG 1992/3).*

This is one of the core reasons for the existence of FGM. It is believed that FGM serves as a means to discourage premarital sex and reducing sexual desire of a girl thereby preserving her virginity. The reduced desire even during the marriage is expected to ensure faithfulness of a woman to her husband. This is why it is believed that uncircumcised girls are assumed to run wild, or are considered of loose moral bringing shame and disgrace to her parents.

For most African women as well as other Third World women **marriage is not an option but a must for survival**. Marriage and reproduction are the only guarantee for a woman to gain economic security and social status. Marriage ensures a woman with old age pension or security as well as respect in the society. Infertility is one of the worst fates that a woman can face in her life in these communities and can lead to divorce. In some African communities a woman without children or an unmarried woman will have a very difficult life and a devastated old age, especially ones without any support from their relatives or community. Marriage is the base for the whole practice of FGM. Without undergoing FGM, a woman is denied the right of marriage, in most cases also the denial of receiving bride price.



In Africa marriage does not come easily without its sacrifices. Virginity must be maintained at the time of wedding and the lack of it has damaging social consequences to the individual as well as to the parents. Virginity is the base for marriageability and it also enforces the prohibitions of sexual relationships outside marriage. Virginity is also considered as a base for a family's honour. A girl is expected to bring honour to her family through the preservation of her virginity. Even though honour killing is not a norm in Africa, a woman not a virgin on her wedding day will suffer a lot in her life. This is where FGM comes as a means of ensuring virginity. Infibulation might help ensure virginity as it requires an operation to disvirgin the woman or weeks of attempt to penetrate.

## 4. Psychological reasons

In some societies the clitoris is seen as a "dangerous" organ, hence, requiring its removal. It must be removed as in Mali, Burkina Faso, and all over West Africa because it represents maleness. FGM is practiced to clearly distinguish the sex of an individual based on the belief that the clitoris of the female makes her a male. So in FGM practising countries the removal of the clitoris is believed to make a woman feminine. In addition, clitoris is considered to be ugly on a girl and must be removed to eliminate any indications of maleness. Some go even to the extreme by priding themselves on the degree of mutilation. According to one Sudanese woman, "In some countries they only cut out the clitoris, but here we do it properly. *We scrape our girls clean*. If it is properly done, nothing is left, other than a scar. Everything has to be cut away."

Since the clitoris represents masculinity in young girls and hence the need to identify their sex clearly becomes of prime importance (Hosken 1993; MRG, 1992/3). This point is best explained by an Egyptian woman defending FGM.

*"We are circumcised and insist on circumcising our daughters so that there is no mixing between male and female ... An uncircumcised woman is put to shame by her husband, who calls her 'you with the clitoris'. People say she is like a man. Her organ would prick the man".*

In Ethiopia an uncircumcised woman is called *kintram* (the one with clitoris) and is used in a derogatory way. It is a disgrace for a woman to be called *kintram*.



## 5. Health factors

The upholders of FGM argue that the removal of the female genitalia contributes to the cleanliness and purity of women. In some communities popular terms for mutilation are synonymous with purification, for example *tahara* in Egypt and *tahur* in Sudan (Al 1998) and the opposite *nejasa* (unclean).

It is believed that the removal of the clitoris and labia contribute to the cleanliness and beauty of women. In such societies an uncut woman is considered dirty and polluted. This is one reason why uncut women are ostracized within their own families and communities. They are not part of the social life such as communal feasts. The absence or removal of the clitoris keeps the vagina clean and makes vaginal intercourse more desirable than clitoral stimulation. These misconceptions are based on the fact that secretions produced by the glands in the clitoris, labia minora and majora are bad smelling and unhygienic and so makes the female body unclean.

It is believed that the absence of the clitoris keeps the vagina clean. On the other hand, its presence is believed to damage the baby at delivery and affects the husband's genitalia during intercourse. It is also believed to enhance fertility (Leye 1998). Other myths include that FGM enhances the husband's sexual desire; prevents maternal and infant mortality. As one can easily deduct this deep-rooted beliefs are incompatible with reality.

Under normal conditions secretions are odourless and if the secretions are bad smelling, excessive and coloured, then this is an indication of infection or other serious problems, probably requiring medication. In reality FGM can create uncleanliness by closing the vulva and preventing the natural flow of urine and menstrual flow and consequently leading to the retention of urine and menstrual blood causing offensive smell.

## 6. Economic reasons

### Bride Price

Economic reasons are important factors that perpetuate the practice of FGM particularly in the rural as well as urban areas. Mutilation is a prerequisite for marriage and payment of the bride price to the parents of the girl. In communities where the practice of FGM is deeply-rooted an uncut girl is not eligible for marriage and maybe a burden on her parents as no one member of the community will dare to marry her. This enforces parents to have their daughters undergo the FGM operation. Along this line one can always



refer to President Kenyatta on this issue of circumcision and marriage – *“No proper Kikuyu would dream of marrying a girl who has not been circumcised.”* The payment of bride price is part of the marriage institution and can be relative to the degree of the operation (Smith 1995). Bride price holds the key to marriage by enforcing FGM and virginity.

### The circumcisor

The circumcisers, also known as traditional birth attendants or excisors, also play a big role in promoting and prolonging the practice of FGM particularly in the rural areas. Their trade provides them with a regular income and a social status in the community.

## III. FINDINGS

### Marriage and FGM

The matrimonial covenant or agreement, by which a man and a woman establish between themselves a partnership for the whole life of their life, is by its nature ordered toward the good of the spouses and the procreation and education of offsprings. Marriage is brought about through the consent of the parties, legitimately manifested between persons who are capable of consent which must be rational, free, true and mutual. This is a reflection of modern marriage with an emphasis of Christian element and a monogamous marriage which appears to be the most popular. In both Christianity and Islam marriage is conceived as a legal commitment sanctioned by God and acknowledged by society. In reality the role players are the two partners to be united; however, in some communities there are more important role players, as in the case of Africa.

Marriage is an important institution for an African woman. Marriage is not an option but a must for survival. Her role in society and her survival depends on her being married and being able to reproduce. Being married gives her economic and social security as most of them have no access to property or employment outside of the household. Her fertility gives her a social status and respect among her in-laws and additional labour at the household level. Most of the farm and household work is the responsibility of the women and takes up most of her time.

In the African context marriage institute fulfills certain functions which include procreation (continuation of the lineage of the family), bridge between families and provision of labour.



We can divide the prevalent forms of marriage into three: 1.) traditional or customary marriage; 2.) religious marriage; 3.) civil marriage. They may appear different but in the African context there is high probability that they overlap, for example, religious and civil marriage, traditional and religious marriage.

Traditional or customary marriage is the most popular form in Africa and a man can marry more than one wife. The cornerstone of this form is that the decision and the selection are made by the elders according to well set norms and is primarily a union between families, rather than between two individuals. It consists of various stages and negotiations. The elders, especially the grandparents, have the duty of selecting the spouse and overseeing that all aspects of the arrangements are fulfilled. They also have the responsibility to see that the marriage is working out properly. This also means that normally divorce cannot take place until members of both families have failed their various attempts at reconciliation between husband and wife (Dolphyne 1991). Traditionally marriages are arranged between two families and its success depends to a considerable extent on whether the two families are agreeable to the union.

Religious marriage – Christian or Islam – are carried out in the presence of religious leaders. Inter-marriage between the two is unthinkable in most parts of Africa as the partners have the responsibility of bringing up their children properly in their faith. In a Muslim marriage a man can marry up to four women, and in Christian marriage he can have only one wife at a time.

Civil or statutory marriage is performed in the presence of municipal officials and witnesses of both partners. The marriage is confirmed by a legal document which highlights the responsibilities of both partners and their relations regarding their income and responsibilities. This type of marriage is popular among the elites and middle class residing in the urban areas. In most cases it overlaps religious marriage. It can also be part of traditional marriage as the selection and approval of the partners will be made by the elders. In case of divorce the final decision is made at the courts after it has gone through family or elders council.



## Types of marriage

There are numerous types of marriage and vary from community to community. We shall limit ourselves to the main ones here.

**Marriage by abduction:** the bridegroom and his friends kidnap the bride and take her to the bridegroom's place. In some cases it might involve the cooperation of the bride also. He later sends elders to start negotiation with the bride's family on his behalf. He may have to pay some compensation for his misbehaviour. His action may be an outcome of the bride's parents refusal to consider him as a good suitor on the grounds of his income, family status, ethnicity, etc. If she becomes pregnant their objection may not last long.

**Forced marriage:** occurs when a father without any consultation with the girl or her mother and the family gives his daughter to one of his choice. This type of marriage rarely works leading to divorce and to the exodus to the urban areas. This is totally against customary marriages which consists of family elders consultation and approval.

**Love marriage:** reached by a consensus of two mature adults and is facilitated by the co-education found in secular schools or and working situations bringing potential partners together. This is mostly found in urban areas where the control of the immediate family and the extended family is relatively lax. However, the partners must get the approval and blessing of their families. This does not exclude those living abroad. Western influence may have also an impact on it.

**Levirate marriage (widow inheritance):** is a case where a widow marries the brother of her deceased husband. The objective of this marriage is to keep the dead man's wealth and children within the family and maintain the family's bond. This is prevalent in polygamous communities.

**Polygamy:** is the marriage of one man to several women at the same time. Islam allows up to four wives but the restrictions does not allow an individual to have that many. The financial constraints can discourage the young to have so many wives. Customary or traditional marriage does not limit the number of wives a man can marry. It all depends on his resources and wealth.

**Charity marriage (Sadaka):** is when a father gives his daughter in marriage to a learned Islamic man or a poor man who cannot afford the expenses involved in a wedding. It came with the advent of Islam. It is claimed to be misused because fathers give their daughters to individuals already married and also became a means of getting rid of daughters who can't have suitors. (Mahaman Issaka 1998: [www.uic.edu/classes](http://www.uic.edu/classes)).





## Blood relations marriage or cross cousin marriages

**Arranged marriages:** is the most popular form of marriage in the Africa context. The responsibility of choosing and deciding the union in a marriage is outside the scope of the concerned partners. It is the responsibility of the family elders, mainly the men. Basically it is a family affair and the consent of the bride and the bridegroom is not essential and required. It is commonly arranged by the parents or their agents when the marriage is seen primarily of uniting two families and not only uniting just the husband and wife. There is the assumption that young adults are too inexperienced to make a wise decision on their future married life. In some cases they are the last to know, especially in the case of the bride. Such arrangements may follow certain rules of selection considering the extended family, religious community, economic class, ethnic, age, etc. Parents play an active role and are directly responsible for choosing or approving a partner for their child. Disobedience can result in being out cast from the family and disinherited. In cases of a failed marriage, divorce can be made with the approval of those elders who initially approved the marriage.

**Child marriage:** a young girl, too young to be married is given in marriage to an older person. Two facts may be behind such situation. She may be forced to marry early while still a virgin, meaning the older she gets she may be tempted to have premarital sex. The other possibility is the parents greed or necessity of acquiring bride price.

In this study, over half of the respondents showed that religious marriage (Christian and Islam) is prevalent. Arranged marriage and early marriage are the popular forms. The latter is part of the former because it requires the arrangement and approval of the parents.

In modern western style marriage, consent, compatibility, economical and psychological and mutual understanding are essential elements of a marriage. In a society where marriage serves other purposes besides uniting the husband and wife together, it will have broader elements. Since the marriage is arranged by the family and elders, their decision and priorities might involve detailed assessment of the situation. The consent of the potential bride and bridegroom is not required and is of no consequence. The main elements of marriage in the African context include the following.

1. Virginity of the bride is considered of prime importance. For the first time marriage it is indispensable. Proof of her virginity is produced the day the marriage is consummated. Virginity is the sign of her faithfulness and control of her sexual emotions. It is also a proof that her parents have given her a proper upbringing which enabled her to remain chaste until her wedding day. The opposite is a disgrace to her parents. Virginity of the man is not an issue.



2. Bride price payment to the bride's parents is also an essential element of an African marriage. A prospective husband, usually with the help of relatives and friends gives cash or valued goods to his future wife's family before a marriage can be contracted. The amount and the nature of the payment can be settled through negotiation between the two families according to local customs (see below).
3. Consent and agreement between the two families is also essential. The approval of the male members of the bride is to some extent important. Their decision may include assessing her parental background, social and economic stand of the family. The bride's fitness physically, mentally, morally will be examined. Her character will also be examined to see that she is not idle, lazy, gossipy, quarrelsome, insubordinate. Beauty as such is not the main factor. The bridegroom is also examined as to his character, self-sufficiency, potentiality, etc. In arranged marriages parents consent is indispensable. In this study our respondents living in Europe indicated the payment of bride price and more importantly the agreement of the parents is essential for the marriage.
4. Other factors such as religion and ethnic affiliation are also important elements that can affect decisions on marriages. Religion in particular can affect decisions as inter-faith marriage is not allowed and accepted by communities, eg. a Christian girl can in no way marry a Muslim man unless she wants to be outcasted from her family and the community. Inter-marriage outside one's own ethnic group is also strongly discouraged.
5. A wedding feast to which family members, neighbours and friends are invited marks the marriage of the partners. The feast will usually depend on the resources of the parents.

## Bride Price (Bride wealth)

The payment of the bride price or bride wealth in the African context is a culture closely attached to the marriage institution both by the FGM and non-FGM practicing communities. In simple terms it is the transfer of resources from one family to another family – from a potential bridegroom to a bride's family. There are many interpretations as to why it takes place. Some see it as a compensation for time and trouble taken to raise a daughter who will be sent off to another group. Others see it as a compensation for the loss of a daughter's economic services or for the children she adds to her new family ([www.umanitoba.ca/](http://www.umanitoba.ca/))



faculties/arts/anthropolgy/tutor/marriage/bride\_wealth.html). Others see it as a symbol of gratitude and an act which cements the friendship created between the two families of the husband and wife (Woman and Law in Southern Africa Research Trust, 1998). Bride price is determined besides other factors by the status of the women's family in the particular community and the status of the woman herself (Dolphyne 1991).

Bride price as a factor cementing relationship can be disputed. The payment is made by the male side only thus giving him more rights than the woman. The Woman and Law Trust clarifies this point as follows:

*"To look at this custom as a merely cementing relation between two families is much too simplistic, especially considering the effects of this custom on women's freedom and liberties. It is this underlying power relations that are underplayed when the traditional view is taken. Yet they are the main source of a woman's problems as she is given the responsibility to live up to certain expectations before and after payment (bride price)".*

The payment of the bride price entails control of women before and after marriage. Her virginity on her wedding day is essential for keeping the payment made to her family. Her fertility is another issue. If a woman is barren or sterile or leaves the marriage, the payment must be returned. There are others also that believe it contributes to the stability of the marriage. In this situation a woman's family will have the interest to solve any problems between their daughter and her husband so as not to repay the bride price in case of a failed marriage ([www. Umanitoba.ca/...](http://www.Umanitoba.ca/...)).

The culture of bride price payment has other consequences – child marriage and polygamy. Parents are willing to give their daughters in marriage at a young age so that they receive the bride price. In the case of it promoting polygamy:

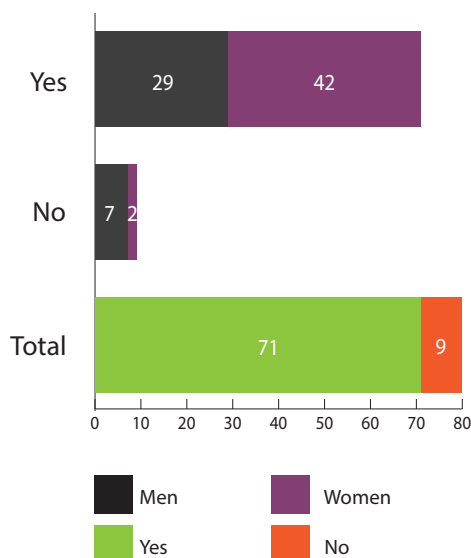
*"...the need for the bride payment supports the institution of polygyny, where men marry more than one wife, since it will take a man a long time to accumulate the necessary marriage wealth. In the process, old men, who have had more time to acquire the requisite resources, will be able to marry several women before their juniors have assembled enough wealth to begin their own material career ([www.umanitoba.ca/...](http://www.umanitoba.ca/...))".*

The payment of the bride price is usually decided and arranged by elders and varies from community to community. In some places the type and amount are fixed according to local custom. Some, in Muslim communities following the instructions of the Prophet Mohammed impose minimal payment. In the urban areas, in some communities, it is being commercialized and payment is made in cash and in the form of modern household goods.



The payment of the bride price has an indirect control of women even before marriage as it is closely associated with virginity. Virginity goes along with first time marriage and bride price. Virginity which is basically an out come of proper upbringing is wrongly attributed to FGM. In other words bride price is the hidden motivator of the practice.

Table 2. Is a bride price required when getting married?

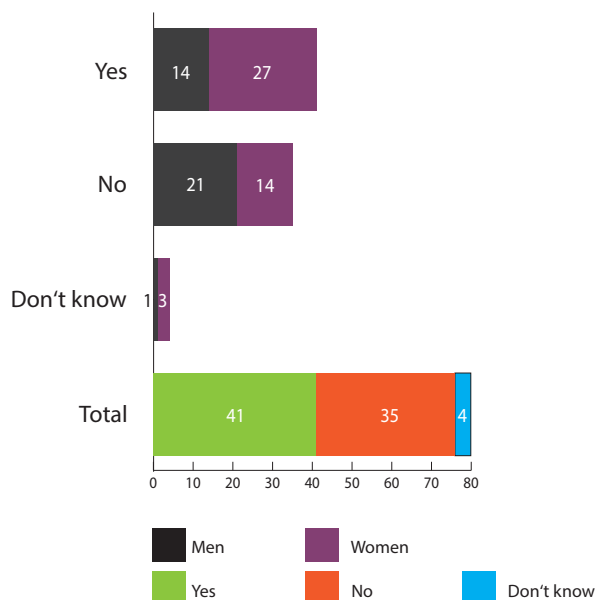


Our case study is no unique to the universal African situation. 89% of our respondents come from communities where bride price is an essential element of a marriage contract, be it traditional or religious marriage.

FGM is believed to exist because of its role in the sexuality of women – virginity and faithfulness. FGM may or may not be raised as an element in marriage contracts. In some communities where infibulation prevails, like in Somalia and the Sudan, it can be a precondition for a marriage arrangement. In this study, the respondents are nearly equally divided on its relation to a marriage condition.



Table 3. Is FGM a prerequisite for marriage?



According to our respondents, 51.2% stated that FGM is raised as a precondition while 43.8% said it has nothing to do with it and is not raised as an issue. The latter claimed that it is not raised because it is assumed parents have made their daughters undergo the operation earlier in their childhood. This assumption is based on the fact that it is a disgrace, dishonour for a family not to have their children circumcised at the expected time period according to the local custom, for example, 7 days after birth for infant girls in highland Ethiopia. The social pressures see to it that it is done according to the time set by the local custom. Secondly, it is assumed that it is done during childhood and need not be raised at the stage of marriage. Since living in small communities gives families to know each other, they will have access to information whether the girl is circumcised or not. In such cases, there would be no need to raise FGM as a precondition.

## Perception of FGM on marriage

Whenever the question of FGM is raised, the most universal justification is that it is perceived as part of culture, something that has been there and will stay there. In this study an attempt was made to find out how both men and women perceive FGM in relation to marriage. There are some who stated that it has no role on marriage as the operation is done during childhood. Men respondents from Austria remarked that it is bad for the woman's health and creates difficulties during sexual intercourse as well as during child delivery. The following are some of the perceptions expressed by our respondents:

### Men:

- It is our culture and we like it.
- Clitoris threatens the penis and if the woman is circumcised she will be a good wife.
- We don't marry uncircumcised women. No marriage without circumcision.
- Uncircumcised women are aggressive and not obedient to their husbands.
- FGM makes women decent and obedient.
- Abhor uncircumcised women because they smell awful.
- It is absolutely forbidden not to be uncircumcised; that would be denying one's culture.
- Uncircumcised woman is bad fortune for the husband.
- It is taken as a must and norm.
- Makes women decent and responsible.

### Women:

- We have no objections, it makes us clean.
- We can't get husbands if we are not circumcised.
- Man expects virginity and FGM as part of it.
- We have to be circumcised, there is no way out of it.
- We have to obey our religion.
- It increases fertility rate.
- Considered outcast if not circumcised.
- Good for the marriage and assures faithfulness and pride.
- Source of pride and acceptance.
- Source of good behaviour for women.

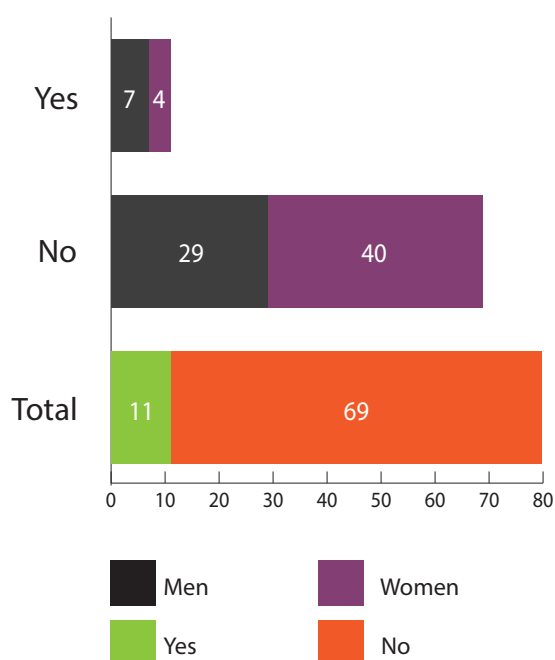
## FGM and virginity

Virginity is a prerequisite for first time marriage. Parents make sure that their daughters remain intact both for the family honour and also for a good marriage arrangement. It can be argued that the physical mutilation of the external female genitalia in the form of excision and clitoridectomy cannot guarantee the preservation of virginity of a young girl. A circumcised girl can have premarital sex. On the other hand, infibulation is assumed to protect virginity as intercourse is impossible without defibulation. Virginity is maintained by other means and not by physical intervention. It can be guaranteed only through proper upbringing, educating young girls of the social norms, the disadvantages of premarital sex, etc. Some include the role of religion in the upbringing of their children where premarital



sex is condemned. In the Muslim communities the movement of young girls is controlled by parents to reduce temptations to experiment with premarital sex, for example, discouraging mixing of girls with boys, girls allowed only to join with close family boys.

Table 4. Does FGM protect virginity?



Even though it is normal to hear that FGM preserves virginity, many who have been reached through anti-FGM campaigns realize that there is no connection between the two. In this study 86% of the respondents clearly stated that there is no relation between FGM and virginity. 91% of the women questioned also believe so. However, the remaining 9% do believe there is a connection. Their reasons include that FGM reduces desire for sex including premarital; makes women aware of sex abuse; gives women better sex control.

## FGM, Divorce, Prostitution

Marriages are not indissoluble. There are many factors leading to its breakdown. Traditional arranged marriage is no exception. It can be dissolved "when the two families reach the conclusion that the ends for which they had come together were not being, or could not be, achieved, or when neither negotiations nor compromise were able to provide satisfaction in case of grievances (Women and Law in Southern Africa Research Trust, 1998). The most commonly invoked reasons include adultery, barrenness, desertion, insanity and

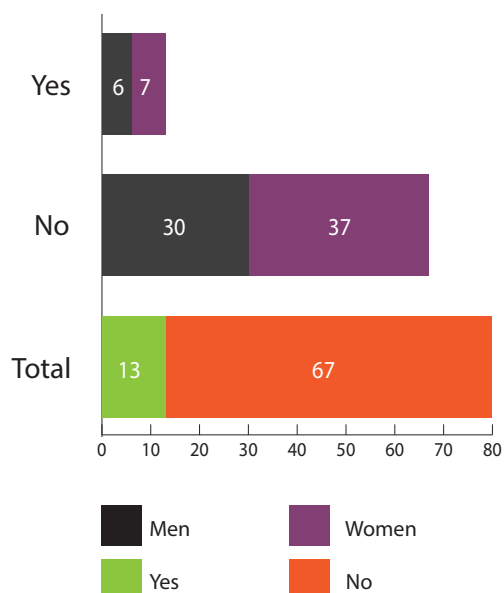


gross misbehaviour. Adultery and barenness are grounds typically available for the husband against the wife. The reverse does not work. Gross misbehaviour for the husband consists of gross ill-treatment, failure to provide for the family, neglect of sexual duties and cruelty; and for the wife it consists of disobedience, quarrelsome disposition, neglect of household duties and children, refusal of conjugal rights (Women and Law in Southern Africa Research Trust, 1998).

Divorce is the consequence of the incompatibility of two partners arising from economical, moral or emotional behaviours. FGM doesn't control divorce. Lack of virginity at the time of wedding may lead to divorce and consequently to prostitution. In this situation, prostitution is an outcome of the society's and the parents' rejection of the girl as she has been a disgrace to her family through premarital sex. Girls who find themselves in that position have no alternative to earn a living except to run away ending up as prostitutes. In our study 70% of the respondents claimed that virginity has no direct relation with divorce or prostitution.

In this case study respondents were asked if FGM leads to breakdown of marriage. Their reply is an indication that other factors play the role and not FGM.

Table 5. Does FGM lead to marital breakdown?



84% see no role of FGM in the breakdown of marriages. The other 16% believe it has a role on the grounds that it controls the sexuality of women. They state that being uncircumcised itself is a ground for divorce. Their other reasons is that uncircumcised women are usually oversexy, indecent, bad mannered which will gradually lead to the dissolution of the marriage. This again is based on the false belief that FGM fulfills its mythical attributes of controlling women's sexuality.





## Prostitution

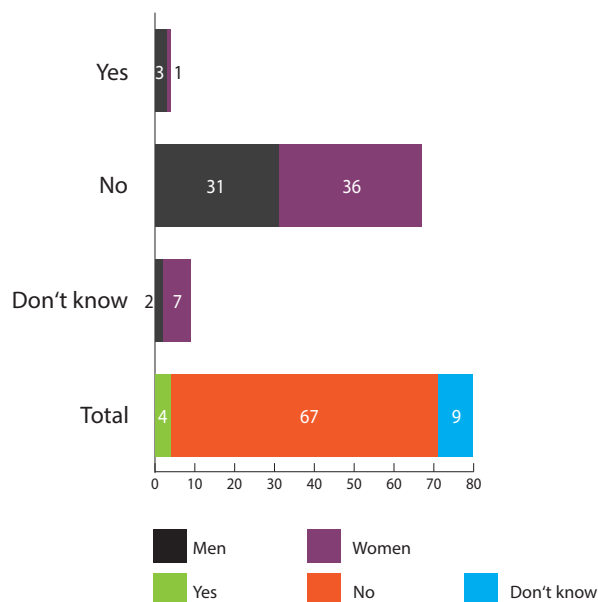
Prostitution is indulging in promiscuous sexual relationship for cash or material gain and is characterized by payment for the service, promiscuity and emotional indifference. The reasons range from the obvious logical need for survival, disillusionment, hopelessness to peer influence.

Women go into prostitution because it is a way of earning a living. They are forced by socio-economic disadvantages. They do it as a means of providing themselves and their children with the basic needs of shelter, food, clothing, etc. Most of them have no skills or education to find an alternative means of income. The factors creating their situation may include any of the following: family full of problems; poverty and too many children in the family; unwanted pregnancy; school dropouts; revenge for failed marriage; unfortunate social background; unbearable mistreatment by in-laws; husbands deserting wife with many children; pregnancy out of wedlock; failed marriages; parents' and society's rejection due to failed marriage; urbanization and migration; women trafficking where an unsuspecting girl or woman is promised education or a job only to find herself in a brothel.

Prostitution is practised both by the circumcised and non-circumcised. It is a global phenomenon existing both in the FGM risk countries as well as areas where FGM is totally unknown. It is absolutely wrong to claim that it is only those who have not been circumcised are the only ones engaged in the prostitution industry. It is primarily a question of poverty and lack of options in the developing world. In the FGM risk countries like Ethiopia, Kenya, Nigeria for example where over 90% of the women are mutilated, it would be difficult to claim that the prostitutes are only the uncircumcised ones. In our case study 84% stated that prostitution is not associated with FGM.



Table 6. Is prostitution and FGM related?



The respondents reporting that it has relation based their case on the simple assumption and which can't be verified that uncircumcised women become prostitutes. They have not looked deeply into the root causes of why a woman becomes a prostitute – the driving force behind her decision – economy.

Another important question raised in the interviews was the question of FGM in preventing FGM. This question was asked because one of the justification was that FGM prevents woman from becoming a prostitute. Out of our 80 respondents 54 (67.5%) replied that FGM has no role in preventing prostitution. The other 21% argue that FGM has a role in the prevention of the socially evil activity of prostitution. Their argument is based on the still not confirmed or verified attributes given to FGM regarding the sexuality of women and her emotions. It is based on the notion that women must be shy, must not express their sexual emotions, must be passive when it comes to express their feelings. Their argument is that FGM makes the women less sexy; limits her to one partner; makes her cool and decent; makes them less shy; makes them respectable thereby preventing them from prostitution. The attributes cited are more or less subjective and depend on the local norm.



## FGM, Indecency and Immorality

FGM is claimed by its practitioners, guardians and sponsors that it enforces the decency and morality of women. In other words, uncircumcised women are branded as indecent and immoral. In reality an individual conforms to the standards of what is good and right set by the local norm and it pertains to character, conduct, intentions and social relations. Indecency and immorality is engaging oneself in morally offensive and unbecoming behaviours. How does one become decent and moral? In the first place one must be aware of the proper standards of the community – what is the norm, what is accepted and what is abhorred. This basically comes through socialization – an input of the parents, family members, schools, community, religious institutions. Society sees to it that given standards are fulfilled by the members of the community and the society. It is a question of behaviour. Behaviours can't be changed through physical interventions. The question of FGM playing a role in changing one's behaviour is very questionable and need to be looked into in depth.

In this study, our respondents were asked to identify the behaviours and actions considered immoral and indecent in their community. Their reply mainly focused on sexual behaviours. Depending on the frequency the behaviours cited, the following are the indecent and immoral behaviours identified by our respondents beginning with the most cited one:

- Premarital sex
- Loss of virginity before wedding
- Adultery
- Extramarital sex, promiscuous sexual behaviour
- Pregnancy out of wedlock
- Religiously unacceptable behaviour
- Disrespect for tradition and culture
- Not being circumcised

Other immoral and indecent behaviours less frequently cited include criminal activities mainly theft, flirting, drunkardness (mostly for women), betrayal, rape, divorce and unfaithfulness in marriage. In most cases women are the victims but they are accused of it. In cases like unfaithfulness, drunkardness, flirting it becomes an issue mostly in the case of women.

There appears to be differences in our respondents' priorities in identifying behaviours. In the case of replies originating from Africa, the frequency of citing is given to premarital sex, adultery, pregnancy out of wedlock, criminal activities (theft of property), non-virginity at



the time of wedding and not being uncircumcised. While in the case from Europe the list is headed by promiscuous behaviour, non-virginity, prostitution and pregnancy out of wedlock.

Society controls and ensures that immoral and indecent behaviours according to its own norms do not prevail in the society. There are two approaches – peaceful and forceful. Respondents were asked as to the existence of a mechanism to ensure that individuals behave properly according to the social norm. The need of proper upbringing cannot be overemphasized. It is a must. Our respondents' reply can be grouped into two:

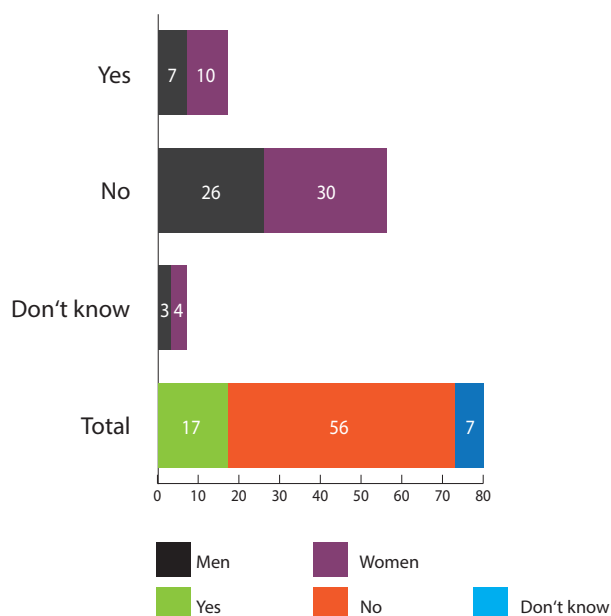
1. Most of the respondents identified the peaceful approaches as the main control mechanism. This consists of family members and elders providing advice in case of misbehaviour. Grandfathers and grandmothers have the big role in advising. A big role is also given to religious leaders to give advice on proper behaviour reflecting the instructions of the scriptures.
2. The second mechanism involves force. This involves that misbehaved individuals may find themselves fined, penalized, taken to court, expelled from the area or outcasted from the society. Physical punishment (flogging) may be carried out in case of adultery or loss of virginity. Other methods such as elders' curse, public exposition, forced divorce may be carried out.

The respondents believe that proper behaviour can be realized through proper upbringing, proper education (sex education for girls) and practicing one's religion properly.

Indecency and immorality are questions of an individual's behaviour within a given norm. How does FGM contribute towards it? Does FGM have any relation with it? Our respondents believe that there is no relation.



Table 7. Is immorality and FGM related?



According to 70% of the respondents, FGM has no role in preventing indecency and immorality. 21% however believe FGM plays a role in preventing improper behaviours. Again, the reasons they give evolve around FGM's attributes of controlling women's sexuality. Some of their replies include: the woman would be less sexy and a good wife; the woman will be less strong and lead an obedient life; the woman will be satisfied with her husband and will behave properly; the woman will get sense of reasoning to see good and bad.

## Family honour and FGM

One reason attributed to FGM is that it maintains or promotes the honour of the family and especially the parents. In the first place, families that carry out the FGM operation are considered responsible individuals for maintaining and protecting their tradition. Unconformity is the sign of irresponsibility. Sexual misbehaviour brings disgrace to families and indicates that the parents have not done their homework in bringing their daughter properly. Honour is manifested in nearly all areas of life – economic, social and moral. For example, a hardworking family is honoured whereas a family noted for theft and laziness will have no face in the community.



Families will be honoured in accordance to their fulfillment of the social norm. In the preceding section we have seen behaviours and actions that are considered immoral and indecent. Here we shall try to see what brings shame and dishonour to a family. Even though honour killing as practised in parts of the Middle East it is unknown in Africa, its consequences have huge impacts on marriages and social relations.

In our study we have made an attempt to see what situations or events lead a family to lose respect and face in the community and what role FGM plays in it. Firstly, the main conditions for dishonours based on the frequency cited by our respondents are:

- Pregnancy before marriage
- Losing virginity before marriage
- Prostitution
- Premarital sex
- Extramarital sex

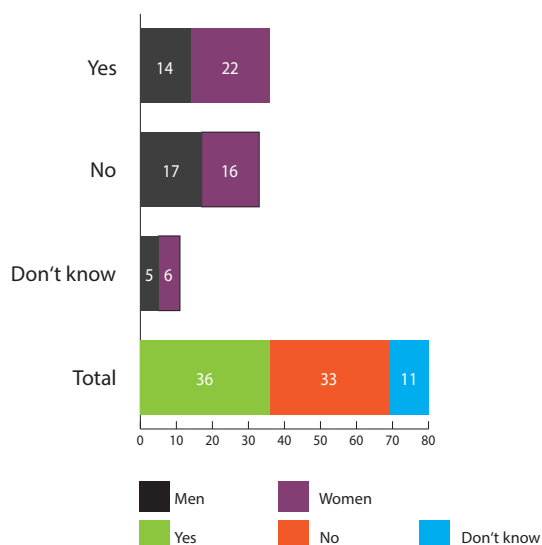
If we see the responses from the origin of our respondents; i.e. African interviewees and those from Europe we see some variations of classification. Our respondents from Africa have more frequently cited the following actions that result in the disgrace and dishonour of an individual or a family: pregnancy before marriage; loss of virginity before wedding; theft; adultery and marrying outside parents' choice. Other behaviours of less frequency include: premarital sex; extramarital sex; flirtation; girl proposing marriage; alcoholism; prostitution and marrying outside of ones' class.

In the case of the respondents from Europe, the list of disgraceful behaviours is headed by prostitution; pregnancy before marriage; extramarital sex and premarital sex. Others less cited include unfaithfulness, fornication, divorce and criminal activities.

The roots of dishonour and disgrace evolve around sexual behaviours. The big question is what has FGM got to do with it. FGM is a physical operation and the other is a behaviour which results in various consequences. This is one element of FGM and its attributes that needs further detailed social research. In our study many of the respondents believe that FGM has a role in preventing disgrace or dishonour especially from the interviews made in Africa. 45% of our respondents believe that FGM is related to family honour.



Table 8. Does FGM play a role in preventing shame or dishonor?



The interviewees claiming that FGM has a role argue firstly that it is a disgrace for the family not to have their daughters circumcised within the time set by the local norm. Parents who do not abide by the norm are considered irresponsible and therefore denied respect. According to them not being uncircumcised gives rise to many unsocial behaviours which in the end create conditions that put the family in shame. The women, not circumcised, will be denied the social recognition and respect. It is also claimed that the attributes associated with FGM such as decency and beauty (not affirmed) will give honour to parents. The other reason given is that in communities where FGM and marriage are inseparable, the family that can't find a suitor for their daughter will have no respect among their peers and the community. There are others who believe that avoiding the FGM operation is an insult to the culture.

## FGM and Faithfulness

The sex act is closely tied with age and development of the sexual organs. Both men and women are active within a given period of their life. It is natural to experiment with sex at young age, and probably FGM is practised to discourage such experiments, especially in the case of infibulation. The emphasis and the need of the operation is based on a false notion that women are over sexy. This must not be related to nymphomania. Oversexiness is noted as a women's uncontrolled engagement in sexual intercourse with various partners to fulfill sexual emotions and needs. It is assumed that the woman will not be satisfied with one partner.

In our study the respondents view this behaviour as an immoral and shameful act. It is not tolerated and is condemned by the society. Some correlate it with prostitution which is immoral and indecent behaviour.

Faithfulness is another subjective behaviour that is associated with FGM. The FGM myth includes faithfulness as a behaviour that is maintained and protected through the practice of FGM. The definition of faithfulness includes firm adherence to promises and avoid temptations that go against it. Here in our case, it evolves around the marriage institution – before and after wedding. In our study there appears to be differing views on faithfulness. Our men interviewees emphasize maintaining virginity before marriage, controlled sexual affairs and respect of tradition as factors of faithfulness, and on the other hand women emphasize on loyalty, keeping one's promise and partnership for life as indicators of faithfulness.

Our respondents measure faithfulness using any combination of the following factors:

- Honesty to partner, family and others
- Keeping one's promise (especially in marriage)
- Trustworthy and responsible
- Loyalty and respect
- Obedience to husband
- Living by the rules and norms of the community
- Living properly according to one's religion
- Partnership for life
- Faithful to marriage; no extramarital affairs
- No sex before marriage



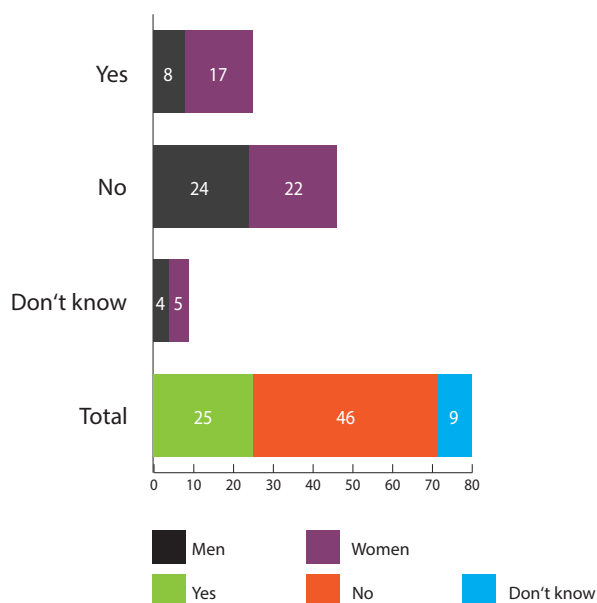


There are many factors leading to unfaithfulness by both parties ranging from bad friends to adventurism. In our study the respondents mainly attribute the causes to misunderstanding, incomptability, nonfrankness and bad friends as the main causes. However, they also believe that any of the following factors may induce unfaithfulness: sexual mistrust between partners; adultery (mainly by the women); extramarital affair; prostitution; husband's mistreatment of wife and family; disvirginity before marriage; flirting; curiosity; economic problems; temptations; retaliation to poor sexual performance; bad friends and environment; forced marriage; bad upbringing; alcohol; lack of self respect and personal behaviour.

How does the community ensure faithfulness to prevail in the community? Since this is a behavioural action society will have control mechanisms. In our study 55% of the respondents claimed mechanisms exist for that purpose. The main guarantee for faithfulness is through proper upbringing. In the process of socialization the virtues of faithfulness must be inculcated by parents, schools and community members. The other tool is the contribution made by spiritual leaders to preach about faithfulness. Elders play a pivotal position in propagating good social relations and behaviour. In cases of misbehaviour they give advice to the offenders and where necessary impose symbolic punishments to discourage others. The role of the elders and the family in controlling misbehaviours is part of the social control.

The role of FGM in maintaining faithfulness need to be affirmed through intensive research in social relations. One may argue that it has logically no relation. In our case 58% of the respondents see no effect of FGM on faithfulness.

Table 9. Does FGM have an impact on Faithfulness?



Those who see a relation again cite the still not affirmed attributes given to FGM. They state that women become reserved, and faithful; reduces sexuality thus assuring faithfulness; discourages adultery; limits women to one partner, etc. All these effects need to be looked into to see whether they reflect the reality or not. The cited behaviours are the results of other factors other than FGM.

## IV. Suggestions

In this small study based on 80 interviewees we have attempted to see some of the main attributes given to FGM. FGM seems to still play a main role in the communities social and moral life. It still has an indispensable role in the marriage institution. This study has not covered all the attributes.

This study has set out with the clear understanding that its findings will not be the final word on the subject. Its objective has been to raise some issue that have been frequently raised to justify the myths of FGM. Our objective has been to initiate more discussions and research on this subject. We believe there exists sufficient research and findings on the consequences of FGM on the health of women and children. Two areas that still need further research are the psychological consequences of FGM on women and children and the second is the justifications of FGM, the points we tried to raise in this paper. We strongly recommend that NGOs and researchers should do further on the impact of FGM on the moral and social relations at the grass root level. Some of the issues need long time observations.

We also believe that anti-FGM campaigners should focus on the moral and social aspect of FGM. In principle the elimination of FGM requires a change of values and norms. People must be shown that the attributes given to FGM are not the consequences of the operation itself but other factors practiced by individuals and families. Anti-FGM campaigns must include information on the relationship of the attributes to the reality, for example, they must be showed that virginity is in no way preserved by FGM, that faithfulness is not assured by FGM. In order to provide these information detailed grassroots level researches and investigations must be made on a wider basis.



# V. Annex: Questionnaire

## Moral and Social Aspect of FGM

### I. FGM and Marriage

1. What are the prevalent types of marriage in the community?
  - a) Muslim Marriage
  - b) Traditional Marriage
  - c) Civil Marriage
  - d) Christian Marriage
  - e) Other? \_\_\_\_\_
2. How is a marriage arrangement made?
  - a) Early Marriage
  - b) Arranged Marriage
  - c) Forced Marriage
  - d) All of the above
  - e) Other? \_\_\_\_\_
3. What are the essential elements of the marriage arrangements?  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. Is the payment of bride price a part of marriage agreement and how is it determined?  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. Is the issue of FGM raised as a precondition for the arrangement?  
(a) Yes                      (b) No                      (c) Don't know
6. What is the role of FGM on marriage? How do men and women perceive it?  
\_\_\_\_\_
7. Is FGM important in maintaining virginity?  
(a) Yes                      (b) No  
If yes, how? \_\_\_\_\_



8. Is virginity related to divorce and prostitution?

(a) Yes (b) No

If yes, how? \_\_\_\_\_

9. Has FGM any contribution towards the break down of marriage?

(a) Yes (b) No

If yes, how? \_\_\_\_\_

## II. FGM and Indecency, Immorality

10. What are the behaviours or actions that are considered indecent, immoral?

Please list them \_\_\_\_\_

11. What are the community's social mechanism to control indecency, immorality?

\_\_\_\_\_

12. Does FGM have a role in preventing indecency, immorality?

(a) Yes (b) No (c) Don't know

If yes, how? \_\_\_\_\_

13. Is prostitution associated with FGM in the community?

(a) Yes (b) No (c) Don't know

If yes, how? \_\_\_\_\_

14. What is the role of FGM in preventing prostitution?

\_\_\_\_\_

15. What brings shame or disgrace to a family in your community?

\_\_\_\_\_

16. Has FGM got anything to do with family honour?

(a) Yes (b) No (c) Don't know

If yes, how? \_\_\_\_\_



### III. FGM and Faithfulness and Chastity

17. How does the community you live in perceive oversexiness?

---

18. How does the community define faithfulness?

---

19. Has the community any mechanism to ensure faithfulness?

(a) Yes                      (b) No

If yes, what are the mechanisms 

---

20. What are the root causes of unfaithfulness?

---

21. How does FGM contribute towards ensuring faithfulness?

---



## References

Women and Law in Southern Africa Research Trust, *"Family in Transition: The Experience of Swaziland"*, 1998, Swaziland.

Women and Law in Southern Africa, *Uncovering Reality: Excavating Women's Rights in African Family Law*, Working Paper, number 7.

Iris Berger and E. Frances, *Women in Sub-Saharan Africa: Restoring Women to History*, Indiana University Press, 1999.

Florence Abena Dolphyne, *The Emancipation of Women: An African Perspective*, Ghana University Press, 1991.

Tracey Skeleton and Tim Allen (ed), *Culture and Global Change*, 1999.

Catherine Coquery, *African Women: A Modern History*, Westview Press, 1997.

Minority Rights Group International, *Female Genital Mutilation: Proposals for Change*, 1996.

Fran P. Hosken, *The Hosken Report: Genital and Sexual Mutilation of Females*, Women's International Network News, 1993.

Nahid Toubia, *Female Genital Mutilation: A Call for Global Action*, 1993.

Els Leye, Maria de Bruyn, Stan Meuwese, *Proceedings of the Expert Meeting on Female Genital Mutilation*, Ghent-Belgium, Nov. 5-7, 1998.

