

THE 'HEAT' GOES AWAY: SEXUAL DISORDERS OF MARRIED WOMEN WITH FGM/C IN KENYA

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Abstract

Background: Female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C) has been implicated in sexual complications among women, although there is paucity of research evidence on sexual experiences among married women who have undergone this cultural practice. The aim of this study was to investigate the sexual experiences among married women in Mauche Ward, Nakuru County.

Methods: Quantitative and qualitative data collection methods were used. Quantitative data were obtained from 318 married women selected through multistage sampling. The women were categorized into: cut before marriage, cut after marriage and the uncut. A questionnaire was used to collect demographic information while psychometric data were obtained using a female sexual functioning index (FSFI) tool. The resulting quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS® Version 22. Qualitative data were obtained from five FGDs and two case narratives. The data were organized into themes, analyzed and interpreted. Ethical approval for the study was granted by Kenyatta National Hospital-University of Nairobi Ethics and Research Committee.

Results: The mean age of the respondents was 30.59 ± 7.36 years. The majority (74.2%) had primary education and 76.1% were farmers. Age ($p = 0.008$), number of children ($p = 0.035$) and education ($p = 0.038$) were found to be associated with sexual functioning. The cut women reported lower sexual functioning compared to the uncut. ANOVA results show the reported overall sexual functioning to be significantly ($p = 0.019$) different across the three groups. Women cut after marriage (mean = 22.81 ± 4.87) scored significantly lower ($p = 0.056$) than the uncut (mean = 25.35 ± 3.56). However, in comparison to the cut before marriage there was no significant difference (mean = 23.99 ± 6.63). Among the sexual functioning domains, lubrication ($p = 0.008$), orgasm ($p = 0.019$) and satisfaction ($p = 0.042$) were significantly different across the three groups. However, desire, arousal and pain were not statistically different.

Conclusion: Generally, cut women had negative sexual experiences and specifically adverse changes in desire, arousal and satisfaction were experienced among cut after marriage. FGM/C mitigating strategies need to routinely provide sexual complications management to safeguard women's sexual right to pleasure subsequently improving their general well-being.

Keywords: Female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C), Sexual functioning, Female sexual functioning index (FSFI), Cut and uncut women