FGM/C and ECM: Drawing lessons from research

Jacinta Muteshi-Strachan
Population Council

Follow this and additional works at: https://knowledgecommons.popcouncil.org/departments_sbsr-rh

Part of the Demography, Population, and Ecology Commons, Family, Life Course, and Society Commons, Gender and Sexuality Commons, International Public Health Commons, Maternal and Child Health Commons, Medicine and Health Commons, and the Women's Health Commons

How does access to this work benefit you? Let us know!

Recommended Citation

This Presentation is brought to you for free and open access by the Population Council.
FGM/C and ECM: Drawing Lessons from Research

Jacinta Muteshi-Strachan, PhD.
Population Council

Conference: “Child Marriage Research Meeting: Session on drawing lessons from research on related issues & on forging convergence”.

Geneva, Switzerland.
September 30th to 4th October 2019.
Introduction

- Global consensus: FGM/C and ECM as gendered, socially endorsed harmful practices*.

- Female genital Mutilation/Cutting (FGM/C) often linked to marriageability and thought to be associated with Early/Child Marriage (ECM)

  - ECM and FGM/C may operate alone, in combination or collectively

  ✓ But little rigorous research to clarify the relationship between FGMC & ECM to inform policy, programming and investment.
What are we learning from the FGM/C Research programme? “Investments need to be evidence based”

- Understand the geography and pattern of practice key for targeting investment
  - Critical to highlight sub-national level data, identify hot spots/areas of risk.

- Provide rigorous evidence:
  - “Cultural” practices evolve; shifting discourses and norms, & underpinning structures.
  - Intervention elements that make a difference

- Measurement challenges: understanding the how & efficacy of complex interventions.

- Legislation: a challenged and mixed record
What does the Evidence say about links between ECM and FGM/C?

Recent Demographic and Health survey (DHS) and Multiple Cluster Survey (MICS) data for 10 Sub-Saharan countries and review of the literature

❖ **Prevalence**: Significant variations in national, sun-national & ethnic groups - by country.

❖ **Associations**: Between ECM and FGM/C vary by country, along with predictors for each.
  - Dynamics in which practices occur vary
  - Contextual realities: some settings one practice in decline, in another sustained or rising.
  - In most of our study countries could be a prerequisite.

❖ **Similarities** in causes and underlying drivers:
  - Affords social capital
  - Maintenance of chastity
  - Gendered relational practices based on power structures.
What are the Implications?

1. Knowledge of the drivers and consequences of FGM/C & ECM in specific contexts, to build a detailed understanding that also enables generalizations.

2. Impact of FGM/C and ECM interventions on wider gender norms, which requires strengthened monitoring and evaluation frameworks and systems.

3. Need for more attention to theory-based intervention and evaluation designs.

4. Improved coordination among advocates, implementers, policy makers and researchers.

More evidence needed on the best strategies for supporting abandonment of ECM and FGM/C including:
What are the opportunities for convergence between FGMC and ECM?

❖ FGMC/C a precursor in some context for ECM but not in other contexts.
❖ In contexts where both practices prevalent may not always be strongly associated…..

HOWEVER:

- Both perceived as having important roles that range from “securing the well being and physical security of daughters; and/or securing family honour; and/or offering social and economic advantage to families; and/or enabling transition to adulthood…. But in ways that sustain some of the structural injustices that girls and women may experience.
What are the opportunities for convergence between FGMC and ECM?

❖ Variations and complexities of local realities mean approaches can’t be standard:

BUT:

▪ Secondary education an enabling condition: *Educated mothers likely to keep children in school & not support FGM/C or ECM. Enabled delayed marriage;*

✔ Tested Intervention packages*: educational interventions (provision of school materials, conditional cash transfers, community conversations on social norms) **have high quality results but are they sustainable? Do they translate into livelihood security?**

❖ Laws provide support for abandonment of FGMC & ECM: - Infrastructural responses required?
Conclusion

Lesson:
Our improved understanding of the emerging structural factors that underpin and/or sustain FGM/C are beginning to clarify the mechanisms of action required, & call for more multi-sectoral intervention designs.
The Evidence to End FGM/C programme consortium generates evidence to inform and influence investments, policies, and programs for ending female genital mutilation/cutting in different contexts.

Evidence to End FGM/C is led by the Population Council in partnership with the Africa Coordination Centre for Abandonment of Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting (Kenya); Gender and Reproductive Health & Rights Centre (Sudan); MannionDaniels, Ltd.; Population Reference Bureau; University of California, San Diego; and University of Washington. Evidence to End FGM/C is funded by UK aid by the UK Government.