



# The Relationship Between Honor-Based Violence and Female Genital Mutilation in Javanrud County

Osman Mahmoudi<sup>1,\*</sup> and Elham Hosseini<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Hamraz Counseling Center of Javanrud, Javanrud, Iran

\*Corresponding author: Ph.D. in Family Counseling, Hamraz Counseling Center of Javanrud, Javanrud, Iran. Email: mahmoudi.osman@gmail.com

Received 2018 August 27; Revised 2018 September 18; Accepted 2018 September 22.

## Abstract

**Background:** Female genital mutilation (FGM) is an old practice associated with many sociocultural factors.

**Objectives:** The purpose of this survey is to highlight the relationship between female genital mutilation and honor-based violence as a social issue.

**Methods:** The study was based on the hypothesis that these two variables would be positively correlated. One hundred women from a city in Javanrud County participated in this study by completing a questionnaire on the link between honor-based violence and female genital mutilation. The statistical population of this study included all women presenting their case to the Javanrud court in 2017. Among them, 75 women were selected as a sample population using the purposeful sampling method.

**Results:** The results showed a significant relationship between honor culture and female genital mutilation. The outcome of this research can be used to educate men to reduce honor-based violence and female genital mutilation.

**Conclusions:** This study is important to psychology research because as female genital mutilation rates increase, it becomes crucial to understand what social factors impact its increase.

**Keywords:** Female Genital Mutilation, Honor-Based Violence, Javanrud

## 1. Background

It is estimated that more than 200 million girls and women alive today have undergone female genital mutilation in countries where the practice is concentrated (1). Furthermore, there are an estimated 3 million girls at risk of undergoing female genital mutilation every year. The majority of the girls are circumcised before they turn 15 years old (2). According to the World Health Organization, the unofficial, unannounced rates of female genital mutilation are higher than the official rates (1-3). In many cases, female circumcision is based on false beliefs only. In such a situation, the norms of a prejudiced mind (a man or a woman) consider female genital mutilation to be an appropriate act. Experts believe that violence against women related to matters of honor is rooted in social and cultural poverty. Also, narrowing the gender gap between men and women will prevent this crime (1, 2).

In many underdeveloped and even developed societies, honor is part of the identity that defines women and their interactions (4-6). In eastern societies, especially in the Middle East, the word "honor culture" goes far beyond

the woman's sexual identity - the whole identity, life and death of a woman is defined by the concept of honor. For instance, honor culture is closely related to acceptable sexual behaviors for women and directly impact a woman's body and femininity (7). Male honor beliefs and pride are the only achievements of a patriarchal society and factors in subduing women and determining their fate. Every year, large numbers of women are victims of abuse and are forced to tolerate different forms of violence, such as forced marriages and honor violence, under the pretext of chastity and virtue (8, 9).

Fanaticism about masculine honor leads to crimes such as female genital mutilation. This is carried out by relatives (especially mothers) motivated by maintaining honor (2, 10, 11). Mothers and old women are key figures in this kind of domestic violence (1, 12-14). They practice FGM to protect the honor and virginity of women and girls (15). These mothers and elders believe FGM is an unchanging religious order without having any reliable religious sources to cite (16).

## 2. Objectives

Thus, the aim of this study was to investigate the relationship between honor-based violence and the adoption of FGM in Javanrood.

## 3. Methods

This descriptive correlational study recruited 75 individuals (61% women, 39% girls) consisting of females who went to court in 2017. Selected on a voluntary basis, the researcher asked the respondents to complete the survey at the start of their court proceedings. To measure the scope of female genital mutilation, the FGM questionnaire was used. This questionnaire consists of 10 items rated on a 5-point Likert scale from 1 (never) to 5 (always) that measures FGM predictors as independent variables. The FGM questionnaire used in this study had the required psychometric properties. Cronbach's Alpha also confirmed the scale's reliability. Twelve closed-ended questions were designed by the researcher to measure honor-based violence, rated on a 5-point Likert scale from 1 (never) to 5 (always). The pilot study administered the female genital mutilation questionnaire in concordance with the required psychometric properties. Cronbach's alpha also confirmed the scale's reliability.

For data analysis, both descriptive and inferential statistics were used. Descriptive statistics such as mean, variance, standard deviation, and Pearson correlation coefficients were used.

## 4. Results

The information in Table 1 shows the mean and standard deviation of the sample group.

According to the table, the mean age of participants was 27 years, and most of them were high school graduates (73%). Also 21 women (26%) were single and 56 women (74%) were married.

Analysis focused on the correlation between honor culture and female genital mutilation. The Pearson correlation was used to analyze differences between participants subjected to bias and factors for female genital mutilation. The relationship between caring for women as a subscale of honor-based violence and female genital mutilation was positive and significant ( $r = 0.732$ ,  $N = 75$ ,  $P = 0.000$ ). In the second factor, there was a positive, significant relationship between restricting activities for women as a way of keeping their honor and female genital mutilation ( $r = 0.604$ ,  $N = 75$ ,  $P = 0.001$ ). In the last factor, the greatest significant relationship was observed between sexual bias and female

**Table 1.** Demographic Information of the Sample Group

Variable	Value
Sex	Women
Frequency	75
Mean of age	27.3
Marriage status, No. (%)	
Single	21 (26)
Married	56 (74)
Education, No. (%)	
Under the diploma	15 (20)
Diploma	55 (73)
Bachelor and higher	5 (7)

genital mutilation ( $r = 0.818$ ,  $N = 75$ ,  $P = 0.001$ ). Also, the relationship between the total score for female genital mutilation variables and honor-based violence was positive and significant ( $r = 0.718$ ,  $N = 75$ ,  $P = 0.000$ ) (Table 2).

## 5. Discussion

Female circumcision is an old practice and global issue (1-3). This kind of violence occurs in particular cultures and religions (although this is not limited to a particular religion). There are no detailed statistics on this particular practice in Iran (3). However, masculine honor beliefs and honor-based violence are among the most common ways of abusing women's rights in society. This is more intensely practiced in religious communities (17). The importance of honor in Islam has been highly emphasized (18). Criminal law and Islamic jurisprudence in this field complement each other (19).

The original hypothesis postulated that honor-based violence and female genital mutilation would be positively correlated. Overall, it seems that these two constructs definitely impact each other, but in a way that is slightly different from expectations. According to the results of this research, we need more efforts by nongovernmental organizations and intellectuals to reduce honor-based violence where there is a direct connection with FGM, because the existing approach to dealing with violence against women is ineffective and sees no reason to end female genital mutilation. However, scientific research shows the psychological, sexual and physical complications of this practice and considers it an inhumane act practiced by patriarchal, underdeveloped societies. Women's emancipation from gender bias can only be achieved through their struggles against what society condones in the name of honor and dignity for women.

**Table 2.** Correlation Between Honorary Fanaticism and its Factors with Female Genital Mutilation<sup>a</sup>

	FGM	Caring Women as Honor	Control and Restrict Activities of Women	Sexual Honor	Honorary Prejudice
<b>FGM</b>					
r	1	0.732 <sup>b</sup>	0.604 <sup>b</sup>	0.818 <sup>b</sup>	0.718 <sup>b</sup>
P value (2-tailed)		0.000	0.001	0.001	0.000
<b>Caring women as honor</b>					
r	0.732 <sup>b</sup>	1	0.831 <sup>b</sup>	0.811 <sup>b</sup>	0.611 <sup>b</sup>
P value	0.000		0.001	0.001	0.001
<b>Control and restrict activities of women</b>					
r	0.604 <sup>b</sup>	0.831 <sup>b</sup>	1	0.732 <sup>b</sup>	0.643 <sup>b</sup>
P value	0.001	0.001		0.000	0.001
<b>Sexual honor</b>					
r	0.818 <sup>b</sup>	0.811 <sup>b</sup>	0.732 <sup>b</sup>	1	0.747 <sup>b</sup>
P value	0.001	0.001	0.000		0.000
<b>Total - honorary prejudice</b>					
r	0.718 <sup>b</sup>	0.611 <sup>b</sup>	0.643 <sup>b</sup>	0.747 <sup>b</sup>	1
P value	0.000	0.001	0.001	0.000	

<sup>a</sup> N = 75.<sup>b</sup> Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

## References

- Ortensi LE, Farina P, Leye E. Female genital mutilation/cutting in Italy: An enhanced estimation for first generation migrant women based on 2016 survey data. *BMC Public Health*. 2018;18(1):129. doi: [10.1186/s12889-017-5000-6](https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-017-5000-6). [PubMed: [29329573](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/29329573/)]. [PubMed Central: [PMC5767052](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/PMC5767052/)].
- Abolfotouh SM, Ebrahim AZ, Abolfotouh MA. Awareness and predictors of female genital mutilation/cutting among young health advocates. *Int J Womens Health*. 2015;7:259–69. doi: [10.2147/IJWH.S78664](https://doi.org/10.2147/IJWH.S78664). [PubMed: [25759602](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/25759602/)]. [PubMed Central: [PMC4346006](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/PMC4346006/)].
- Odukogbe AA, Afolabi BB, Bello OO, Adeyanju AS. Female genital mutilation/cutting in Africa. *Transl Androl Urol*. 2017;6(2):138–48. doi: [10.21037/tau.2016.12.01](https://doi.org/10.21037/tau.2016.12.01). [PubMed: [28540220](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/28540220/)]. [PubMed Central: [PMC5422681](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/PMC5422681/)].
- Novin S, Oyserman D. Honor as cultural mindset: Activated honor mindset affects subsequent judgment and attention in mindset-congruent ways. *Front Psychol*. 2016;7:1921. doi: [10.3389/fpsyg.2016.01921](https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2016.01921). [PubMed: [28018263](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/28018263/)]. [PubMed Central: [PMC5145876](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/PMC5145876/)].
- Fahs B, Swank E. Social identities as predictors of women's sexual satisfaction and sexual activity. *Arch Sex Behav*. 2011;40(5):903–14. doi: [10.1007/s10508-010-9681-5](https://doi.org/10.1007/s10508-010-9681-5). [PubMed: [20878224](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/20878224/)].
- Simmons R, Mita R, Koenig MA. Employment in family planning and women's status in Bangladesh. *Stud Fam Plann*. 1992;23(2):97–108. [PubMed: [1604463](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/1604463/)].
- Walker LE. Psychology and domestic violence around the world. *Am Psychol*. 1999;54(1):21–9. doi: [10.1037/0003-066x.54.1.21](https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066x.54.1.21).
- Moffitt TE, Caspi A, Rutter M, Silva PA. *Sex differences in antisocial behaviour*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; 2001. doi: [10.1017/cbo9780511490057](https://doi.org/10.1017/cbo9780511490057).
- Dickson P. Understanding victims of honour-based violence. *Community Pract*. 2014;87(7):30–3. [PubMed: [25167728](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/25167728/)].
- Isman E, Ekeus C, Berggren V. Perceptions and experiences of female genital mutilation after immigration to Sweden: An explorative study. *Sex Reprod Healthc*. 2013;4(3):93–8. doi: [10.1016/j.srhc.2013.04.004](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.srhc.2013.04.004). [PubMed: [24041729](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/24041729/)].
- Berg RC, Denison E. A tradition in transition: Factors perpetuating and hindering the continuance of female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C) summarized in a systematic review. *Health Care Women Int*. 2013;34(10):837–59. doi: [10.1080/07399332.2012.721417](https://doi.org/10.1080/07399332.2012.721417). [PubMed: [23489149](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/23489149/)]. [PubMed Central: [PMC3783896](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/PMC3783896/)].
- Dalal K, Lawoko S, Jansson B. Women's attitudes towards discontinuation of female genital mutilation in Egypt. *J Inj Violence Res*. 2010;2(1):41–5. doi: [10.5249/jiv.v2i1.33](https://doi.org/10.5249/jiv.v2i1.33). [PubMed: [21483197](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/21483197/)]. [PubMed Central: [PMC3134892](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/PMC3134892/)].
- Omer-Hashi KH. Female genital mutilation: Perspectives from a Somali midwife. *Birth*. 1994;21(4):224–6. [PubMed: [7857469](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/7857469/)].
- Costello S. Female genital mutilation/cutting: Risk management and strategies for social workers and health care professionals. *Risk Manag Healthc Policy*. 2015;8:225–33. doi: [10.2147/RMHP.S62091](https://doi.org/10.2147/RMHP.S62091). [PubMed: [26719732](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/26719732/)]. [PubMed Central: [PMC4687955](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/PMC4687955/)].
- Okeke T, Anyaehie U, Ezenyeaku C. An overview of female genital mutilation in Nigeria. *Ann Med Health Sci Res*. 2012;2(1):70–3. doi: [10.4103/2141-9248.96942](https://doi.org/10.4103/2141-9248.96942). [PubMed: [23209995](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/23209995/)]. [PubMed Central: [PMC3507121](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/PMC3507121/)].
- Hayford SR, Trinitapoli J. Religious differences in female genital cutting: A case study from Burkina Faso. *J Sci Study Relig*. 2011;50(2):252–71. doi: [10.1111/j.1468-5906.2011.01566.x](https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-5906.2011.01566.x).
- Paige S, Hatfield E, Liang L. Iranian-American's perceptions of prejudice and discrimination: Differences between Muslim, Jewish, and non-religious Iranian-Americans. *Int J Personal Relat*. 2015;9(2):236–52. doi: [10.5964/ijpr.v9i2.194](https://doi.org/10.5964/ijpr.v9i2.194).
- Dhami S, Sheikh A. The Muslim family: Predicament and promise. *West J Med*. 2000;173(5):352–6. [PubMed: [11069879](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/11069879/)]. [PubMed Central: [PMC1071164](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/PMC1071164/)].
- Chaleby KS. Issues in forensic psychiatry in Islamic jurisprudence. *Bull Am Acad Psychiatry Law*. 1996;24(1):17–24. [PubMed: [8891327](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/8891327/)].