

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)



Eco-Age (2019)

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) is a procedure where the genitals of a female are intentionally injured, cut or changed. However, there is ultimately no medical purpose for this being done (NHS, 2019).

FGM is often carried out on young girls anytime from infancy to the age of 15, usually before puberty begins, although it can sometimes still take place on older women. This practice is a form of child abuse and is illegal in the United Kingdom. The procedure itself is very painful, unnecessary and can have a major impact on the women and young girls health.

Not only does it have physical health effects, which include possible issues with childbirth and sexual intercourse, it can also have a long-term impact on their mental health. Resulting in the individuals suffering from anxiety, depression, flashbacks to the event in which the procedure took place and nightmares (NHS, 2019)

Statistics:

It is still unknown exactly how many women and young girls on a global scale have been subjected to the practice that is FGM. However, it has been estimated that no less than 2000 million women and girls have undergone one of the four types of

FGM in at least 30 countries, according to representative data. Although, in recent decades there has been an overall decline in the practice in most countries, with 1 in 3 girls aged between 15 to 19 having undergone FGM in today's society, in comparison to 1 in 2 during the 1980's. Although, there is still room for improvement in several other countries where the decline rate and pace has been incoherent (UNICEF, 2019).

The different types of FGM:

Female Genital Mutilation has been categorised under 4 different types according to The World Health Organisation (WHO). Below is a brief outline of the four types of FGM.

Type I: partial or entire removal of the clitoris and/or the prepuce.

Type II: partial or entire removal of the clitoris and labia minora.

Type III: known as the most severe form, the procedure consists of the narrowing of the vagina orifice, by cutting and bringing together the labia minora and the labia majora to make a seal, with or without the removal of the clitoris.

Type IV: this consists of other harmful procedures being done to the female genitalia that is unnecessary and has no medical purpose, including piercing, pricking, cauterization, incising and scraping. (UNICEF, 2019).

Laws in the UK that support and protect individuals that have undergone FGM and to further prevent the procedure:

Prohibition of Female Circumcision Act 1985 - this Act enforces the criminalisation of FGM in the United Kingdom, stating that female genital mutilation is a criminal offence. This Act also states that an individual who performs or takes part in the procedure, will be held liable and given the appropriate punishment, whether that being a conviction, fine or imprisonment (*Prohibition of Female Circumcision Act 1985, c.38*)

Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003 - this Act, similar to the Prohibition of Female Circumcision Act 1985, enforces that the procedure of FGM is illegal throughout the UK, and those who perform or aid in the practice will receive the suitable penalty (*Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003, c.31*).

Both of the Acts above have been put in place with the purpose of protecting women and young girls in the UK who have been victims of FGM, and also to further prevent this practice taking place.

Signs to look out for if you are worried someone may have been a victim of FGM and how to report it:

There are signs to look out if you are concerned that someone you know has been a victim of FGM, these include:

- Coming across anxious, depressed and quiet.
- A change in behaviour after returning to school or college after an absence.
- Seeking help and advice, even if they are not upfront about the issue they are worrying about due to being frightened of the consequences.
- Frequent and longer visits to the bathroom/toilet.
- Hesitant to have routine medical examinations in the doctors.

(NSPCC, 2019)

What to do if you have reason to believe someone you know has been a victim of FGM, and how to report it:

If it is a **child** you know who has undergone or is at risk of FGM, call the **NSPCC** on their free, anonymous FGM dedicated helpline on **0800 028 3550**, alternatively you can get in touch by email fgmhelp@nspcc.org.uk (NSPCC, 2019).

If someone is at high risk or immediate danger of the procedure taking place, contact the police by directly calling **999**.

It is also important to remember that if you are a healthcare professional, and have someone in your care that is under the age of 18 who has had FGM, it is the professionals responsibility to protect and safeguard the young girl.

If you have personally had FGM performed on yourself, there are a number of things you can do. Get in touch with and receive help from a specialist NHS gynaecologist, or to find out about local services in your own area, contact your GP or a health professional.

If it is yourself or your daughter being pressured into receiving FGM, get in touch directly with your health visitor or your gp for advice, support and help on what to do.

(NHS, 2019)

Who is most at risk of FGM?

Young girls and women who live among communities where FGM regularly occurs are most at risk of the practice being performed on themselves. In the UK, it has been established by the Home Office that girls from specific communities are more at risk, these include:

- **Sierra Leonean**
- **Somali**
- **Egyptian**
- **Nigerian**
- **Ethiopian**
- **Kurdish**
- **Kenyan**

(NSPCC, 2019)

Rationale

The content being discussed for the leaflet is on the very relevant issue that is Female Genital Mutilation (FGM). FGM is not widely discussed in the media and is somewhat seen as a taboo subject, regardless of the fact that it is still very much going on worldwide, and even in the UK. The target audience is mainly for women and young girls, however it is targeted at men and young boys too, to broaden their knowledge on FGM and to raise awareness for this ongoing issue in today's society, not just in the UK but on a global scale. Being aware of FGM and the consequences which can result from this practice is majorly important for all to know, considering that it affects at least 2000 million women and young girls in over 30 countries (UNICEF, 2019). Unicef (2019) state that FGM is a complete violation of women and girls' human rights, yet it is still happening in several countries on worldwide. Although there has been a decrease in the practice over the past few decades, the procedure is still yet to be diminished.

As stated in the leaflet, the NHS (2019) have made it evident that there is no medical purpose for FGM, meaning that the procedure is entirely unnecessary and causes nothing but physical and mental pain for those who have to endure this procedure. Therefore, it is important for all women and girls to be made aware of what the procedure entails, who is most at risk of FGM, who to get it touch with and what to do if one is concerned of another individual being at risk of this procedure.

Included in this leaflet is the different types of FGM, which are important to know when covering this topic as FGM consists of different levels, each having different consequences (UNICEF, 2019). Also included are signs to look out for if one is concerned that an individual has been a victim of FGM, including these points are essential to ensure the audience are made fully aware of what to look out for if they are ever put in a position

where they believe an individual has been a victim of FGM (NSPCC, 2019). Being

aware of who is most at risk is fundamental when covering the topic of FGM. As previously stated, it is young girls who are most at risk, however there are particular communities where these girls are at high risk of undergoing the procedure. These communities have been pointed out in the leaflet, ensuring the audience is made aware of what communities are still very much taking part in the illegal practice (NSPCC, 2019).

The design layout consists of a clear, pale and neutral background, with the purpose of not drawing too much attention away from the content. A picture is also used at the beginning of the leaflet, which reveals a group of women, all holding signs in protest against FGM, all stating different reasons for why FGM needs to be eradicated. One may see this picture as a powerful statement, as it is a group of women demonstrating that they will not allow FGM to continue on.

Word count: 1480

References

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