

Literature review on work reviewed

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Westendorp, Ingrid. *Violence in the domestic sphere*. Oxford: Maastricht Center For Human Rights, 2005. Print

Ingrid Westendorp is a law expert of the English bar. She has a PHD in European Law. Most importantly, she has actively participated in the agitation of women rights around the world including Africa and Asia.

Summary

The author of the book, *Violence in the domestic sphere*, by Ingrid Westendorp has spent a lot time conducting research in the African continent regarding the practice of female genital mutilation. It is evident in his book that he has come to agree that female genital mutilation is part and parcel of some societies in African continent. Westendorp argues that female genital mutilation is has been practice that has been practices across many cultures in the African continent (Westendorp 23). As a tradition, every rite of passage within the African cultural framework had significance. In many case, female genital mutilation was used to mark the transition of a young girl from childhood to adulthood. This transition in life meant that the young girl had to change in terms of her responsibilities and mentality. After undergoing the process of circumcision the girl has to think about responsibilities such as marriage and her role as a child bearer. In the eyes of the west, this practice would seem to be uncouth and outdated. Confining women into the domestic sphere in the perspective of the West is a practice that should be eradicated by all means. The west claims that women have equal capabilities as their male counterparts. As much as this might sound true, this hypothesis leaves multiple loopholes. It is important to note that the woman from the West is empowered in terms of education, economics,

and social status (Ingrid 31). On the contrary, the woman from the East in most cases strains across cultural pressures to receive at least a high school diploma. Going beyond a high school diploma in Africa is seen as a great achievement while it is the norm in the East. As much as the African continent would love to empower the African woman resources both for the male and feminine gender remains a challenge. Bearing this in mind, it is important to realize that female genital mutilation in Africa should be dealt with not with an iron fist as the one exhibited by colonialist as they strives to colonize the continent but through soft mechanisms.

Unfamiliar Vocabulary

Lay practitioners- Inexperienced women traditional doctors that conduct the art of female genital mutilation

Pertinent Ideas in the Book

The first way in which female genital mutilation can be eliminated without the clash between African and western culture is by civic education. One thing that is important to realize is that many cultures across the world are not ready to give up their cultures for new ideas. Therefore, the culture of female genital mutilation lies in the mental frameworks of the societies that practice female genital mutilation to date. Ingrid argues that the most fundamental step in being able to win the hearts and minds of the societies that practice female genital mutilation today (Westendorp 45). Winning people's minds and hearts is not achieved through armed struggle but through diplomacy. In the African culture, the male gender as the leaders of their households must be actively involved in the process of this civic

education. Among the important things that civic education, within the societies that still practice female genital mutilation, should include the following key areas.

The first area is that the condition under which the art of female genital mutilation is practiced is unhygienic (Westendorp 42). Members of the society should be informed that female genital mutilation can expose women to infections. This is because the lay practitioners that conduct the art of female genital mutilation do not have the necessary tools to be able to make sure that the wound created after female genital mutilation is free of germs. Secondly, the societies that receive civil education should be notified about the risks that a woman faces during the process of circumcision. This would include excessive bleeding as well as future complications that might result during childbirth. In addition, it is important for civic education to explain to members of the society that they address that women can no longer enjoy their sexual pressures once they undergo female genital mutilation. Therefore, in the same way that men would like to enjoy sexual intercourse, women would also like to enjoy it too.

The second way in which we can eliminate female genital mutilation without a class between the African and Western culture is by explaining to the societies that women in other parts of the world have been able to accomplish bigger things than men (Westendorp 34). It is important for these societies to realize that men and women have the same capability if they are given the same resources. Therefore, parents should educate their girl children other than marrying them off to older men in exchange of bride

price. This is because even girls can be of benefit to their parents in their old age if education as a human capital is invested in them.

However, as much as we may be optimistic that societies can change their stance relating to female genital mutilation, it is important to realize that changing a culture does not happen overnight. It takes time. Therefore, the most important thing to do at this particular point is to set institutions that work towards gradual elimination of the female genital mutilation. This involves women empowerment groups, human right movements in Africa, as well as making African girls to understand that they have a right to refuse to undergo female genital mutilation. There should be special camps to house and support girls that run away from their families to evade female genital mutilation. In this way, the culture of female genital mutilation will fade away over time.

Confirming expectations

In conclusion, I agree that there are three important ways that we can use to eliminate female genital mutilation. They include conducting civil education in the societies that practice female genital mutilation, sensitizing the general public that women have done exploits if given the chance and therefore there is no need to confine them to the domestic sphere. Finally setting up institution to empower women will slowly eliminate the culture of female genital mutilation over time.

How material helps answer research question and contributes to your research

Westen book seems to take a diplomatic approach to solving the problem of female genital mutilation in the African continent. This approach to the topic of female genital mutilation contributes to my research in that it brings out the idea that in order to avoid cultural clashes between African societies and the West, it is important to use diplomatic methods to win the minds of parties within the divide both from the African and Western point of view.

Connection between This Reading and Previous Ones – Agreement or Disagreement

I agree with Westen's diplomatic approach with regards to the issue of female genital mutilation. This is in line with Shweder's Article 'What about 'Female Genital Mutilation'? And Why Understanding Culture Matters in the First Place' which argues that if we are going to solve the problem of female genital mutilation in the world, opposing forces such as human rights movements must be willing to admit the fact that cultures have a value and should hence be respected before embarking on laying measures of eliminating the practice.

Identify new questions to explore

Some of the new questions to explore include determining how easy it is to change the cultural framework of African societies. Is this something that can happen overnight? Critically, this cannot happen. Therefore, is financial empowerment of women going to eliminate the problem of female genital mutilation?