Reviewer's report

Title: When Female Circumcision Comes to the West: Attitudes Toward the Practice among Somali Immigrants in Oslo

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Reviewer: Armelle Andro

Reviewer's report:

This article addresses an interesting research question and an important public health issue. The objective of the study was to assess whether or not immigrants' attitudes toward female circumcision have improved in favor of its abandonment in western countries. After a comprehensive literature review, the authors point out the lack of research on this topic in European countries. The quantitative survey (n=214) investigates the specific case of Somali immigrants in Norway. The research question is well defined by the authors and the limitations of the work are clearly stated. But the discussion is not totally convincing because of the discrepancy between the data analysis and the interpretation. Consequently, the statistical analysis raises several problems and the findings are not wholly supporting the argument of the article.

Major Compulsory Revisions:

The study is based on a respondent-driven sampling method. The research design is well described but we don’t know anything about the number of observations in the final sample (by sex, age, education and migration history) and the wording of the questions, especially regarding the dependant variable. Firstly, it lacks descriptive information on the composition of the sample. For example how many of respondents are married? How many of them have daughters? Secondly, the table 2 is too complicated and would be more appropriate with a separate analysis by sex. It seems difficult to avoid an analysis of gender differences in attitudes toward female genital cutting, but the authors fail to do this in the statistical analysis. A revision of the article should definitely address this gender dimension. In the quantitative analysis, more descriptive information in a cross table between dependant variable and the socio-demographic details should be provided.

The main argument of the article is that Female Genital Mutilation may lose his status-related dimension due to the “social transformation” (i.e assimilation? Where does this social transformation is supposed to occur and for whom?) which ‘alter immigrants’ attitudes and behaviors toward this longstanding tradition ». The premise of the analysis does not take sufficient account of the specificity of the migration experience and the possibility for people for maintaining ties with the society of origin. Actually, some qualitative researches show that in a migration context, female genital cutting is still positively perceived by migrant, especially in the context of endogamic marriages or prospects of
return to the country of origin. The authors say that non-mutilated women are much more likely to attract “boyfriends” but what about “husbands”? In the discussion section authors may add a comment on this point.

The discussion focuses on the fact that Somali men who live in Norway are more likely to have positive attitudes toward female genital cutting. The statistical analysis shows that 40% of the male respondents favor mutilated women to be their wives. It would be interesting to highlight the correlation between these attitudes and the marital status of those male respondents (and the situation of their wife regarding female mutilation).

To sum up this review, the article is not making a full benefit of the data and more analysis are required. According to the objective of the paper, the findings would need more elaboration and discussion.

Minor Revisions:
The article use the term of Female Circumcision which is close to the vernacular term. But, in a public health journal, it seems more appropriate to use the WHO terminology of Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting.

The authors introduce their research saying that it is the first quantitative study in Europe investigating the abandonment of female genital cutting in migrant African family. But it seems that a similar survey take place in Spain and was published in 2010 in the BMC Public Health: see the article of A Kaplan-Marcusan, N Fernandez del Rio, J Moreno-Navarro, MJ Catany-Fabregas, M Ruiz Nogueras, L Munoz-Ortiz, E Mongui-Avila, P Toran-Montserrat. Female Genital Mutilation: perceptions of healthcare professionals and the perspective of the migrant families, BMC Public Health, 2010, 10:193

Female respondents were asked if they have been mutilated as well as the type of their mutilation, but how many of them simply ignore the type of their mutilation?

In table 1, p-values are missing.

**Level of interest:** An article of importance in its field

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**Statistical review:** Yes, and I have assessed the statistics in my report.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I declare that I have no competing interests.