

Call for abstracts for a panel submission to the African Humanities Association

Conference: hybrid and in person in South Africa, November 2023

Abstract deadline: 26th April 2023

Title: Interrogating the criminalisation of FC/FGM

Awareness-raising and international campaigning have resulted in well over fifty countries enacting specific legislation banning Female Circumcision or Female Genital Mutilation (FC/FGM), but legislative approaches, their effectiveness and the responses of local communities have been diverse. For example, legislation has been situated as a facet of child's rights, women's rights, reproduction, crime against the person and as an alien cultural phenomenon. Most of these national laws and policies are gendered and apply to all women and girls regardless of age and legal capacity. In some countries, despite this flurry of legislative activity, there has been a notable and widespread lack of use of legal measures, something often blamed on political apathy and disinterest – i.e. prejudice and racism in the Global North and misogyny and cultural intransigence in the Global South. In other countries, police action has sent the practice underground and discouraged families from seeking healthcare. At the local level, some individuals and groups have pushed for such legislation against FC/FGM, some have welcomed regulations imposed on them, some have mobilised it for alternative agendas, and some have resisted. There remain questions as to whether the specific legal approaches have been divisive or unifying, and whether these issues have contributed to their apparent lack of efficacy. There is also a need to consider the implications of these policies for existing gender power dynamics and social norms.

We are an interdisciplinary (sociology, law and policy, and anthropology) group of scholars who would like to invite anyone working on this area in any local, national or international context to join us in discussing responses to the criminalisation of FC/FGM, particularly in Africa, the Middle East and Asia. Papers might address one or more of the following questions:

1. In what ways has FC/FGM been criminalised and what impact has this had on legislative efficacy?
2. Who has led the drive for criminalisation? Have campaigns, policies and legislation been divisive or unifying?
3. Have there been unforeseen harmful consequences of legislation and policy?
4. How have laws and policies which outlaw FC/FGM been received, tested and/or challenged?

5. How have they reinforced or disrupted existing gender power dynamics and social norms?
6. How do legal contestations of anti-FGC/M legislation/policies challenge, alter, or reinforce the international hegemonic discourse on FC/FGM?

We invite abstract submissions (300 words) for a panel submission for oral (in person or online) presentation at the [African Humanities Association Inaugural Conference](#) taking place from 27th November to 29th November 2023. We will be working towards a special issue submission following this conference. We would be delighted to welcome colleagues and friends from in and outside of the academy at all career stages, particularly those based in Africa, the Middle East and Asia. Unfortunately we do not have funding for travel to the conference. Please send your abstract and any queries to Dorothy Takyiakwaa (dtakyiakwaa@ucc.edu.gh) by 26th April 2023.

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