

Female Genital Cutting (FGC) in Pakistan: Reasons, Implications & Evolution of this Tradition

Female Genital Cutting (FGC) is practised on young girls within the minority community of *Dawoodi Bohras* in Pakistan. Lack of data and no national statistics on this custom has led to a wide research gap about how it happens, why it exists and whether it has any implications. This research aims to find out the reasoning and effects of FGC while exploring its cultural and religious importance within the community. Furthermore, it explores differences of generational views and attitudes about FGC and how the practice has evolved into a medicalised procedure.

Abstract

This research focused on the political invisibility of Female Genital Cutting (FGC) within the minority community of *Dawoodi Bohras* in Pakistan. It is rooted in cultural and religious notions to reinforce women's chastity and controlled sexuality. There is lack of political and governmental dialogue about it which explains the absence of national statistics or legal acknowledgement of FGC. This allows for girls to be cut at a very young age where they cannot provide consent therefore, compromising their bodily autonomy. The study aims to provide contextualised reasoning and possible implications of FGC in the community. It explores the absence of FGC within women's activism in Pakistan and investigates how and why it continues to exist in an Islamic society. In essence, it studies the effects of this practice on women and its grave absence from activist and humanitarian circles in Pakistani society. This study employed a qualitative methodology where *Dawoodi Bohra* women were interviewed and divided into categories of personal and collective experiences. It creates a correlation between FGC and the overall treatment of women in society through the lens of post-colonial feminism and political Islam. The qualitative data reflected a generational variation of views and attitudes towards FGC which are generally maintained through silence and use of cultural euphemisms. Furthermore, it investigated the contemporary use of medicalisation of FGC on young girls, unlike traditional cutting. This research is a significant step towards bridging the national data gap for social scientists and understanding its importance to the *Dawoodi Bohra* community.