

Minds are open only
when hearts are open
analysis essay



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

“ By joining efforts we can surpass the injustices inflicted on the girl child and boy child alike.

If left untreated, these forces will permanently scar our children and threaten the healthy growth of nations. ” - Queen Rania Al Abdullah of Jordan

(presented for our book on Discrimination Against the Girl Child)

Discrimination against the Girl Child While children around the world continue to face various forms of adversity in the 21 st century, girl children in particular are subjected to multiple forms of oppression, exploitation, and discrimination due to their gender. United Nations statistics, national reports and studies initiated by non-governmental organizations repeatedly show that girls, as a group, have lower literacy rates, receive less health care, and are more often impoverished than boys. [1] It is also important to note these conditions, more often than not, do not improve as girls grow to become women. Forms of discrimination against girl children are numerous and vary depending on the traditions, history, and culture of a particular society. In our work to improve the condition of girls, Youth Advocate Program International focuses on three life-threatening practices that impact the lives of millions of girl children - female infanticide, female genital cutting, and honor killing.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) defines a child as a person under the age of 18 unless national laws recognize the age of majority earlier. The age of 18 is now accepted as the world standard, since every country has ratified the CRC except Somalia and the United States . Although YAP International specifically advocates for ending discrimination against girls, we realize efforts to curtail gender discrimination must include

<https://assignbuster.com/minds-are-open-only-when-hearts-are-open-analysis-essay/>

strategies that continue to support women when they reach and pass age 18. Female Infanticide and Sex-Selective Abortion Female infanticide is the murder of a young girl child, often occurring as a deliberate murder of a girl infant or young girl child or as the result of neglect.

Selective abortion – also called gender-selective abortion, sex-selective abortion, or female feticide – is the abortion of a fetus because it is female. Medical technology has made it possible for parents to discover the sex of a fetus at earlier and earlier stages of pregnancy, so many women from communities with a preference for boys practice selective abortion. These practices occur most frequently in societies where a girl child is viewed as culturally and economically less advantageous than a boy child. Female infanticide has been reported in China, North Korea, South Asia (Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan), the Middle East (Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Libya, Morocco, Syria, Tunisia, Turkey) and parts of Africa (Cameroon, Liberia, Madagascar, Senegal, Nigeria). Female infanticide and feticide are predominantly practiced in regions of significant poverty and overpopulation. One reason boys are more valued than girls is preserving lineage, as family lineage and family name are carried only by males in most societies.

Also, children are expected to care for parents in their old age in many countries, so raising a son becomes a better investment because once a girl marries, she becomes the property of her husband and of virtually no value to her parents. Some women resort to female infanticide and feticide in order to protect their daughters from a life of objectification and subjugation in a society dominated by men, where there is a prevalent anti-girl attitude.

Economically, girls often have a lower earning potential than boys, as boys
<https://assignbuster.com/minds-are-open-only-when-hearts-are-open-analysis-essay/>

are more likely to find work and receive higher pay. This is significant in poor communities where each family member is expected to add to the household income. A girl can no longer contribute to her family's income after marriage when she must turn all of her wages over to her husband. In many situations, it is much more of an economic burden to raise a girl, as many cultures require religious and social ceremonies for girls but not boys.

Holding a "proper" ceremony for the purpose of maintaining respectable social stature can be very expensive, often leaving poor families with nothing. Mothers are not the only perpetrators of female infanticide and feticide, as more dominant members of the immediate family, such as the husband or mother-in-law, often encourage or carry out the deed. In addition, women may experience pressure from members of their community, possibly facing physical abuse, disownment from their husband or parents, and homelessness if they choose to keep a child against the direction of others. A wealth of information on female infanticide and selective abortion has come from the world's two most populous nations: India and China. Both countries are predominantly patriarchal, and it is the cultural norm for a girl to leave her family for her husband's after marriage.

India continues the practice of dowry, although illegal, which makes female children especially undesirable as large sums of money must be paid at the time of marriage. For this reason, female infanticide is especially prevalent in rural areas and among lower castes. In China, with the induction of the People's Republic in 1949, the practice of female infanticide was largely abandoned. 2] However, cases of "missing" women increased in the 1980's,

a phenomenon correlated with the one child policy that was launched in 1979 to control exorbitant population growth.

[3] With this stringent law, many families chose to keep a boy child over a girl child because sons can take care of their parents through old age, while daughters are handed over to another person's family. Sex-selective abortion and female infanticide have had consequences beyond the loss of many females' lives. They have contributed to the dramatic change in the ratio of men to women in some countries. As fewer men can find women to marry in societies where these practices are widespread, the trafficking of women from foreign countries to sell as wives has become a profitable business.

Some adoption agencies take advantage of the devaluation of girls and solicit impoverished families to sell their daughters so they may be adopted overseas. Countries like India and China have criminalized female infanticide, although local law enforcement often ignores cases. For example, many doctors in China and India, whose practices are limited to providing sex-selective abortion, are not reprimanded. As legislation and law enforcement cannot guarantee the elimination of these practices, public awareness of the issues and grassroots support of local communities are essential to prevent and eradicate female infanticide and sex-selective abortion. Progress has been made in India where the government has taken steps to implement programs to educate the public and have encouraged NGOs to take action against these practices.

Female Genital Cutting Female Genital Cutting (FGC) refers to any practice that involves the removal or the alteration of the female genitalia. It is a centuries-old cultural practice found in many countries among people following various religions and beliefs, but is most prevalent in Africa . Other terms for FGC include female genital mutilation, female genital circumcision, female genital operations, or clitoridectomies. According to the United Nations Population Fund, “ it is estimated that over 130 million girls and women have undergone some form of genital cutting and at least two million girls are at risk of undergoing the practice every year. [4] FGC is reportedly practiced in 28 of Africa ‘ s 43 countries, most pervasive in Egypt, Eritrea, Mali, Sudan, and the Central African Republic. [5] In the Middle East, FGC is found in Oman, Yemen, and the United Arab Emirates .

Some immigrant populations in the United States, Latin America, and Asia (Indonesia, Sri Lanka, and Malaysia) practice FGC as well. Studies done in areas where FGC is widespread suggest there is a direct correlation between a women’s attitude toward FGC and her place of residence, educational background, and work status. According to the results of a health survey in Egypt , urban women are less likely than rural women to support FGC. There was less support for FGC among women who were employed and among women who had at least a secondary-level education. Research on FGC shows there are short and long-term health effects on girls. Immediate effects include hemorrhaging, pain and shock; severe bleeding, and the inability to urinate have caused the death of many girls.

Girls may develop infections such as tetanus, hepatitis, and HIV. Chronic bladder and pelvic infections, infertility, the development of excessive scar

<https://assignbuster.com/minds-are-open-only-when-hearts-are-open-analysis-essay/>

tissue, cysts at the site of the procedure, and problems during or after childbirth are among the possible long-term complications. In addition, sexual intercourse can be very painful or dangerous after FGC, and many women become unable to experience sexual fulfillment. Scientific evidence for psychology effects of FGC on girls is more scarce; however, personal accounts reveal that girls who have undergone FGC may suffer from anxiety, terror, humiliation, betrayal, and depression. [6] Custom and tradition are the most frequently cited reasons behind FGC.

[7] Other factors include the role of FGC in confirming femininity in some cultures, controlling the sexual behavior of a woman, and preserving aesthetics and cleanliness in cultures that view parts of the female genitalia as dirty or dangerous. [8] Religious justifications are sometimes cited, mostly by Muslims who practice FGC. However, the practice outdates Islam, the majority of Muslims do not practice FGC, and some Islamic leaders deny any link between their religion and FGC. Most other FGC practicing communities adhere to traditional Animist religions. [9] Among the obstacles to eradicating the practice of female genital cutting is the fact that many women, often the victims of the procedure, consider FGC a valuable cultural tradition, and in some cases necessary to be eligible for marriage.

Fortunately, progress has been made through education, legislation, and campaigns to raise awareness. Research has shown a positive correlation between the number of people attending secondary school and the number of people opposed to FGC. Consequently, with more educational opportunities for girls in many countries, there will be more female

opposition to the procedure. Several African countries have legislated against FGC, and other national governments support the eradication.

Human rights organizations, like the World Health Organization (WHO), oppose the medicalization of FGC in any form and favor complete elimination. However, in some communities, milder forms of FGC remain legal, and thus legitimate. Honor Killing Honor killing is the practice of killing girls and women who are perceived to have defiled a family's honor by allegedly engaging in sexual activity or other improprieties before marriage or outside of marriage. "Improper" behavior justifies grounds for killing, however, has expanded to include transgressions that are not initiated by the girl, including rape, incest, sexual abuse, or sexual rumor. A girl is killed most often by male kin - father, husband, brother, uncle, or cousin - to restore honor to her family. Criminal penalties for honor killing are lenient in countries where this practice is most prevalent.

Because many cases go unreported, it is difficult to determine the number of women who are the victims of honor killing. The United Nations Population Fund (UNPF) estimates as many as 5, 000 females are being killed each year as a result of honor killings. [10] Honor killing occurs most frequently in Muslim countries, although neither Islamic religion nor law sanctions the practice. Other countries where such killings have been reported include Bangladesh, Britain, Brazil, Ecuador, Egypt, India, Israel, Italy, Norway, Jordan, Pakistan, Peru, Morocco, Sweden, Turkey, Uganda, and Venezuela .

Violations of honor include engaging in an illicit sexual relationship, eloping, being raped, being sexually abused by a family member and then running

away, seeking divorce, and being seen alone with a man or boy even if the interaction is innocent. Some children are killed for being born to a mother who is accused of violating a family's honor. Allegations of these activities or other improprieties are enough to instigate honor killings, often little or no proof is necessary. Depending on the country, community, and specific situation, girls can be strangled, shot, beaten to death, stabbed, hacked to death, or in some cases, burned. In communalistic societies, actions committed by any family member affect the social stature of the entire family.

The family's reputation comes before an individual's interests or safety. Men in many societies consider their family's honor to be inextricably tied to their own honor, and thus perform honor killings to cleanse the family's name from the improper deeds of girls or women. Particularly in Arab and Islamic communities, a family's honor is often determined by the actions of its girls and women. Also, patriarchal traditions force women to face the odd duality of being perceived as both fragile beings who need male protection, and evil persons who threaten to taint society. The punishment for men who commit honor killings is often non-existent or extremely lenient. In some cases, judges extend light sentences because they often empathize with men who claim to have killed in defense of their honor.

Legislation in some countries condones honor killings. In Iraq , Iran , and Pakistan , men are allowed to kill their wives for adultery. Egyptian law allows for a husband to receive a reduced sentence if he can prove he killed her in defense of his honor. However, countries like Lebanon and Jordan have made progress towards giving more severe punishment for perpetrators.

<https://assignbuster.com/minds-are-open-only-when-hearts-are-open-analysis-essay/>

According to former Article 340 of Jordan's penal code, " A husband or a close blood relative who kills a woman caught in a situation highly suspicious of adultery will be totally exempt from sentence.

"[11] In December 2001, this article was revised to allow a reduction in penalty only if the murder is committed immediately following the first-hand sighting of the victim in the act of committing adultery. [12] Significant steps have been taken in the last decade to stop the practice of honor killing and to hold men who murder female family members more accountable for their actions. Public awareness of the issue has increased, as mass media, non-governmental organizations, and international organizations like the United Nations are examining the problem and taking action to eliminate the practice. In 1994, a Jordanian journalist, Rana Husseni, began writing articles that exposed cases of honor killing in the Jordan Times, an English-language publication. Soon other newspapers and publications followed, and a national campaign to end honor killing was born.

In June 1999, representatives from Egypt, Palestine, Lebanon, Yemen, Syria, and Jordan attended a two-day conference on the " prevention of honor crimes" that has led to further efforts by governments to take a firm stand and effective action against honor killing. How You Can Help If you are interested in helping to stop female infanticide, sex-selective abortion, female genital cutting, or honor killing, you can start by embracing an attitude of sensitivity to the specific issues girls face and disseminating ideas of gender equality to people you interact with - colleagues, students, children, lawmakers, and friends. You can support organizations, like Youth

Advocate Program International, whose work addresses discrimination
<https://assignbuster.com/minds-are-open-only-when-hearts-are-open-analysis-essay/>

against the girl child, write letters to government officials to raise their concerns and encourage them to act aggressively against a specific practice, and get involved in grassroots organizing which can lead to local, national, and international improvement.