

Female genital multilation

Sociology



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Female Genital Mutilation Female Genital Mutilation Female genital mutilation (FGM), also known as “ female circumcision” is a procedure that involves “ partial or total removal of the external female genitalia, or other injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons” (World Health Organization (WHO), 2012, par 2). According to the World Health Organization, there are four main types of female genitalia mutilation namely the clitoridectomy, excision, infibulation and other procedures to the female genitalia for non-medical purposes (2012, par 5). The clitoridectomy is the “ partial or total removal of the clitoris (a small, sensitive and erectile part of the female genitals) and, in very rare cases, only the prepuce (the fold of skin surrounding the clitoris)” (WHO, 2012, par 5). The second type is the excision which is the “ partial or total removal of the clitoris and the labia minora, with or without excision of the labia majora (the labia are “ the lips” that surround the vagina)” (WHO, 2012, par 5). The third type is the infibulations which is “ the narrowing of the vaginal opening through the creation of a covering seal. The seal is formed by cutting and repositioning the inner, or outer, labia, with or without removal of the clitoris” (WHO, 2012, par 5). The fourth type includes “ all other harmful procedures to the female genitalia for non-medical purposes, e. g. pricking, piercing, incising, scraping and cauterizing the genital area” (WHO, 2012, par 5). The origin of FGM is not very clear but it is believed that it dates back from the 5th century B. C. in Egypt. Although most victims of FGM come from Africa, historically it also occurred in other countries including the Arabian Peninsula, Asia, Australia, France, England and the United States (Estabrooks, n. d.). According to a report by WHO, FGM is practiced by followers of different religions such as Muslims, Christians and Animists and other non-believers (World Health <https://assignbuster.com/female-genital-mutilation/>

Organization, 2001). Various reasons have been cited for the practice of FGM. Socio-cultural reason is one of the major reasons why FGM is performed among girls. FGM is a source of income for the traditional excisor who is a well-respected member of the community. It is for this reason that she wants to keep the tradition alive (WHO, 2012). Other cultures consider FGM as an assurance that a girl will retain her virginity prior to marriage. Some communities view FGM as “ a rite of passage into womanhood” (WHO, 2001, p. 23). Another reason cited by WHO why FGM is practiced in some societies is because of hygienic and aesthetic reasons (WHO, 2001). Some cultures believe that removal of the body parts believed to be unclean such as the clitoris, makes a girl clean and beautiful (WHO, 2012). Spiritual and religious reasons are also mentioned as justifications for FGM. In some communities, the removal of the external genitalia of a woman makes her spiritually clean (WHO, 2012). Other societies practice FGM for psycho-sexual purposes (WHO, 2012). It is deemed to enhance further the sexual pleasure of the males. Furthermore, other cultures considers FGM as a way of controlling the supposedly overactive sexual desires of the female. There are no health benefits to women who undergo FGM. On the contrary, there are several short-term and long-term health problems associated with FGM (U. S. Department of Health and Human Services Office on Women's Health, 2009). In the short-term, FGM may cause severe bleeding or hemorrhaging, which may even lead to death of the girl. Another short-term effect is the risk of infection of the wound which may develop into an abscess. Fever, sepsis or shock may occur, which may lead to the death of the woman if left untreated. Pain is another problem which the woman may experience during the procedure because of the absence of anesthesia. After the procedure,

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the woman will also suffer from pain when urinating. FGM is traumatic for the woman both physically and psychologically. Aside from the short-term health complications, a woman who undergoes FGM will be confronted by future health problems (U. S. Department of Health and Human Services Office on Women's Health, 2009). These include problems with urinating and menstrual bleeding. Menstruation may be painful because of the inability to pass all the menstrual blood. Others may feel pain during sexual intercourse because of the scars that cover the vagina. Pap smear test and pelvic exam becomes more complicated because the normal tools cannot be used. Since most people who perform FGM do not have the medical training, there is an increased risk of being infected by sexually-transmitted diseases, including HIV. Another long-term health concern of women who undergo FGM is the problem of infertility. If they do get pregnant, it is highly probable that they will experience difficulties in childbirth and other pregnancy-related health issues such as post-partum hemorrhage and episiotomy. FGM may result in various psychological problems on the girls such as depression and anxiety. Due to the harmful effects of FGM, the World Health Assembly passed a resolution (WHA61. 16) on the elimination of FGM (WHO, 2012). In several countries including Egypt and the United Kingdom, FGM is illegal. In the UK, it carries a penalty of up to 14 years of imprisonment. FGM is an outright violation of human rights. WHO regards FGM as a practice “ associated with gender inequalities, a form of discrimination against girls and women, a form of torture, cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment of girls and women and an abuse of the physical, psychological and sexual health of girls and women” (WHO, 2001, p. 34). These are more than enough reasons why FGM should be prohibited worldwide. References Estabrooks, E. A. (n. d.). Female <https://assignbuster.com/female-genital-mutilation/>

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