IJNRD.ORG   ISSN : 2456-4184

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF NOVEL RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT (IJNRD) | IJNRD.ORG

An International Open Access, Peer-reviewed, Refereed Journal

TOPIC- Unveiling the shadows: A comprehensive exploration of female genital mutilation in Sub Saharan Africa

NAME - DHARVI SINGHAL
COURSE - BA (HONS.) INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS
BATCH- 2021-2024
FACULTY GUIDE- Dr. ASHUTOSH SINGH

AIM: To conduct an extensive and comprehensive examination of female genital mutilation (FGM) in the Sub-Saharan African region is the principal goal of "Understanding the Shadows: A Comprehensive Exploration of Female Genital Mutilation in Sub-Saharan Africa."

The following precise goals are the focus of this research:
1) Recognise the historical and cultural context-
Examine the cultural and historical underpinnings of female genital mutilation (FGM) in order to gain an understanding of the rituals and beliefs that sustain it in Sub-Saharan Africa.
Consider the evolution of female genital mutilation and its significance in various communities.
2) Humanize the Issue by Personal Narratives-
illustrate the economic, psychological, and physical facets of the accounts of individuals who have undergone female genital mutilation, shedding light on their real-life experiences.
Use personal accounts to humanise the effects of FGM on individuals, families, and communities.
3) Analyse the FGM Complexities-
Consider the various aspects of female genital mutilation (FGM), accounting for regional, cultural, and socioeconomic differences that impact the practice's prevalence.
Examine the relationships between female genital mutilation and socioeconomic structures, gender, and identity in communities across Sub-Saharan Africa.

4) Examine Legal and Human Rights Frameworks-

Assess the legal and human rights perspectives on female genital mutilation in Sub-Saharan Africa, paying particular attention to the effectiveness of the region's existing national and international legal frameworks.

Ascertain the barriers and shortcomings in the implementation of legislation intended to prevent FGM and protect individuals' rights.

HISTORY

Cultural Origins and Historical Development: Female genital mutilation (FGM) is a practice that has its roots in Sub-Saharan Africa and is strongly associated with prevalent practices and cultural beliefs. Cultural Foundations and Historical Development: Female Genital Mutilation has long been considered to be an act of passage, signifying acceptance by the community, purity, and femininity. This practice has significant origins in particular ethnic communities, where upholding social standards and cultural expectations is crucial. Academics like Shell-Duncan (2008) draw attention to the complex cultural significance of female genital mutilation (FGM), demonstrating how deeply embedded it has become in some countries.

It is clear from studying the historical development of FGM practices that the custom has not stayed unchanged. Research by Mackie (1996) and Nnaemeka (2005) show changes in FGM practices throughout time, suggesting adaptability and localised variances. Comprehending the historical background is essential to acknowledging the fluid character of female genital mutilation and the creation of strategies that tackle the intricate dynamics of different cultural groups.

Humanizing the Lived Experiences: To truly understand the impact of FGM, it is essential to humanize the experiences of individuals who have undergone the procedure. Morison et al. (2001) and Banks et al. (2006) provide insights into the physical consequences, revealing the immediate and long-term health effects faced by those subjected to FGM. The pain, trauma, and health risks become more palpable when considering the personal narratives of individuals. The psychological and social dimensions explored by Behrendt and Moritz (2005) and Khaja et al. (2017) humanize the emotional toll of FGM. Beyond the physical scars, the studies illuminate the challenges in interpersonal relationships, self-esteem, and mental well-being. By amplifying these voices and sharing individual stories, the dissertation seeks to create a platform for empathy and understanding. Navigating Stigmatization and Social Dynamics: Johansen and Diop (2016) and Berg and Denison (2012) delve into the stigmatization faced by individuals who have undergone FGM. These studies bring to light the societal pressures, judgment, and discrimination experienced by those who choose to speak out against the practice. By exploring the social dynamics within communities, the research aims to humanize the struggle of individuals navigating the complexities of cultural norms and expectations. Legal and Human Rights Framework: The backdrop of FGM in Sub-Saharan Africa is further shaped by a complex legal and human rights landscape. Dirie and Lindmark (1992) and Shell-Duncan and Hernlund (2000) frame FGM as a violation of human rights, highlighting the international conventions and treaties aimed at addressing this issue. The studies emphasize the need for a rights-based approach, grounding the discourse in the fundamental principles of human dignity and equality. Within specific Sub-Saharan African countries, Yoder and Khan (2008), Ahmed et al. (2019),

Kimani et al. (2018), and Ouedraogo et al. (2017) investigate the effectiveness of national legal frameworks and the challenges in their implementation. These works underscore the struggle to translate legal provisions into tangible protection for individuals at risk, adding a crucial layer to the understanding of the complex dynamics surrounding FGM. In sum, the background of Female Genital Mutilation in Sub-Saharan Africa is a tapestry woven with cultural traditions, historical evolution, individual experiences, and legal complexities. By humanizing the multifaceted dimensions of FGM, the research seeks to move beyond statistics and provide a profound understanding that can guide meaningful interventions and policy changes.

The physical and psychological well-being of females is significantly impacted by Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), which has significant health repercussions. The following is a summary of the health effects of FGM: -

Relevant Challenges:
 1) distress and Shock: The process itself might result in sudden shock and cause excruciating agony.
2) Excessive Bleeding: FGM frequently causes excessive bleeding, which increases the risk of anaemia and haemorrhage.
 3) infections: Using non-sterile instruments during the surgery raises the possibility of developing infections, such as sepsis and tetanus.

Impacts on Physical Health Over Time:
1) Urinary Problems: Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) has been linked to recurrent urinary tract infections (UTTIs) and pain during incontinence.
2) Menstrual Problems: Pain and trouble controlling blood flow are common menstrual problems.
3. Obstetric issues: There is a correlation between female genital mutilation (FGM) and an increased risk of obstetric complications, including prolonged labour, tearing, and the need for caesarean sections.
4) Sexual Health Issues: FGM survivors report experiencing painful sex and feeling less satisfied after having sex.

Effects on Long-Term Physical Health:
1) Urinary tract infections: Following female genital mutilation, women may experience ongoing difficulties urinating. The surgery has the potential to restrict urine flow, which raises the risk of UTIs and hurts to urinate. Recurrent infections can have a major negative impact on kidney health.

2) Menstrual Issues: FGM may have an effect on the menstrual cycle. Women who experience issues with menstrual blood flow may experience period pain and discomfort.
Moreover, the scarring from the treatment can make irregular menstruation worse, which could affect reproductive health.

3) Obstetric Complications: The association between female genital mutilation and obstetric issues during childbirth is one of the most concerning long-term effects. Anatomical abnormalities and scarring brought on by FGM increase the risk of labour tears and the need for caesarean procedures. This poses a major risk to the health of mothers and their babies.

4) Issues with Sexual Health: Sexual health is significantly impacted by female genital mutilation. Sexual activity can cause genital tissue to be removed or altered, which can cause pain and suffering. Women who have undergone female genital mutilation may also have decreased general sexual well-being in addition to decreased sexual satisfaction.

Consequences for Emotion and Psychology:
1)Trauma: Female genital mutilation frequently results in deep emotional wounds. The procedure-related trauma may have a significant negative effect on a person's mental health and general well-being.
2) Anxiety and despair: Women who have had female genital mutilation may be more susceptible to anxiety and despair. These mental health issues are partly caused by the psychological trauma resulting from the bodily integrity violation and the cultural background of female genital mutilation.
3) Effect on Self-esteem: Female genital mutilation has a major impact on one's perception of one's body. The social stigma associated with female genital mutilation (FGM) and the changed genital anatomy can exacerbate psychological discomfort by fostering emotions of shame and inadequacy.

Problems with Reproductive Health:
1) Infertility: There is a higher chance of infertility in those who have had FGM. Women who want to get pregnant may find it difficult due to reproductive organ injury and scarring.
2) Gynaecological Problems: Persistent gynaecological difficulties are one of the long-term repercussions of female genital mutilation. Anatomical changes and scarring can result in persistent discomfort, infections, and other problems that call for continuing medical care.

In conclusion, the long-term consequences of female genital mutilation on women's health cannot be overlooked. Addressing these health challenges requires a holistic approach that includes community education, healthcare interventions, and advocacy for the rights and well-being of women and girls. FGM must end in order to protect the wellbeing, dignity, and human rights of people affected by this harmful practice.

Female genital mutilation (FGM) in Sub-Saharan Africa: Factors Including Social Roles, Control Dynamics, and Economic and social Affects
In many Sub-Saharan African countries, female genital mutilation (FGM) is still a deeply ingrained cultural practice that is influenced by a complex web of interrelated causes. Among these, the persistence of FGM is mostly dependent on gender roles and power relations as well as socioeconomic factors. Developing successful solutions to end this harmful practice requires an understanding of the complex interactions between these components.

Gender Roles and Power Dynamics: Women usually hold positions in lower roles in Sub-Saharan Africa, where conventional gender roles largely drive social expectations and conventions. In this setting, female genital mutilation turns into an expression of deeply ingrained power relations and control over women's bodies. The perception that FGM is required to guarantee a woman's acceptance within her community is reinforced by the way the practice is often portrayed within a cultural framework that associates femininity with modesty and purity.

Because they are frequently the main decision-makers in society, men have a major role in the continuation of FGM. Men's control over women's sexuality is sometimes perceived as the reason behind the practice, which serves to uphold the patriarchal system. Males may see female genital mutilation (FGM) as a cultural duty, and those who oppose or disagree with it risk social exclusion. Thus, breaking the structural underpinnings of FGM requires confronting these deeply rooted gender stereotypes.

The expectations and pressures of society can also contribute to the continuation of female-genital mutilation. Women may support the continuance of FGM, even lobbying for it in certain situations, because of a fear of social rejection and a desire for respect within the society. It is crucial to understand that gender-based power dynamics play a crucial role in the social fabric that allows FGM to persist, and that confronting and changing these dynamics is a necessary part of any effort to halt the practice.

The continuance of female genital mutilation (FGM) in Sub-Saharan Africa is mostly due to socioeconomic considerations. FGM persists because of the intersection of poverty, limited educational opportunities, and economic reliance on traditional practices.

Socioeconomic Factors Influencing FGM:

Communities with less access to education frequently hold on to traditional customs—including FGM—more firmly. By encouraging critical thinking and increasing awareness of the negative repercussions of the practice, education has the power to challenge these conventions. A lack of knowledge on the psychological and physical effects of female genital mutilation (FGM) is a common problem in societies with limited access to education.

Reliance on the economy is another important element. Women may be economically dependent on men in many Sub-Saharan African countries, which increases their propensity to adhere to procedures like FGM in order to obtain social and financial support. Women's economic empowerment can break this cycle of reliance by giving them other sources of income and, as a result, lessening the motivation to follow damaging cultural customs.

Social restrictions are also associated with a lack of knowledge about the consequences of female genital mutilation. Due to a lack of awareness, communities may continue to see female genital mutilation (FGM) as a rite of passage without realising the harmful consequences of the practice. To disrupt the cycle of disinformation and encourage informed decision-making, community education and awareness campaigns are crucial.

The situation is made more complex by the intersectionality of these issues. For instance, there is a negative feedback loop that encourages people to continue with archaic practices like female

genital mutilation because poverty and poor educational opportunities frequently coexist. Because of this, any comprehensive approach to addressing the continued prevalence of FGM must include the complexity of these interrelated issues.

In summary, intricate processes including gender roles, power structures, and socioeconomic reasons are at the core of the perpetuation of female genital mutilation in Sub-Saharan Africa. Interventions need to be multidimensional in order to effectively combat this detrimental behaviour, addressing the cultural as well as the economic factors that support its perpetuation. It is feasible to establish a revolutionary atmosphere that opposes FGM and defends the rights and welfare of women and girls by empowering women, questioning conventional gender norms, encouraging education, and encouraging community involvement. Communities, governments, non-governmental organisations, and the international community must work together to eradicate FGM and effect long-lasting change.

The impact of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) on education in Sub-Saharan Africa is significant and multifaceted, affecting both the access to and the retention of girls in schools. Here are some key aspects to consider:

School Dropout Rates:
Girls are more likely to drop out of school when they are victims of FGM. The practice's psychological and physical effects could result in health problems, which would make it difficult for girls to finish their school.

Cultural norms and prioritization:
In certain cultures, customs related to female genital mutilation (FGM) may place a higher value on marriage and family obligations than on a girl's attending an official school. One factor undermining girls' education is the cultural background surrounding female genital mutilation.

Health Issues and Lack of attendance:
 Girls who have had female genital mutilation may encounter health issues include persistent pain, infections, and menstrual irregularities. These health problems may cause them to miss school frequently, which may have an effect on their academic achievement and overall educational experience.

Early Marriage:
FGM and early marriage customs have occasionally been connected. FGM-affected communities may prioritise early marriage for girls, which could cause them to drop out of school at a young age.

Prejudice and Stigma: Girls who have not had female genital mutilation may experience prejudice and stigma in their societies. Girls may be discouraged from attending or remaining in educational institutions as a result of this social pressure, which can also create an unwelcoming climate in schools.

Lack of Recognition: A lack of preventive actions may be caused by a lack of knowledge about the effects of FGM on schooling. Parents, communities, and educational institutions might not completely comprehend the connection between female genital mutilation (FGM) and its effect on girls' academic aspirations.

Fixes and Awareness Campaigns: Educational campaigns and awareness campaigns have the potential to significantly lessen the negative effects of female genital mutilation on education. With knowledge about the detrimental impacts of FGM on health and education, these programmes can empower girls, parents, and communities.

Teachers can act as advocates for females who have been raped or mistreated by forced marriage. To foster a welcoming and inclusive learning environment, educators must be trained to identify and help the difficulties faced by girls who have had female genital mutilation.

Policies that specifically address FGM and its effects on schooling can be put into place by governments. Girls can get protection from legislation that guarantees their right to an education and keeps them protected from damaging customs.

Independence through Education: In spite of these obstacles, education is nevertheless a very effective means of empowering women and dismantling damaging societal conventions. Having access to a high-quality education gives girls the information and abilities they need to stand up for their rights and promote good change in their communities.

A comprehensive strategy involving communities, educators, legislators, and international organisations together to establish a setting where girls can pursue education without fear of harmful practices is necessary to address the impact of FGM on education.

Factors Contributing to the Persistence of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) in Sub-Saharan Africa: Gender Roles, Power Dynamics, and Socioeconomic Influences

A complex web of interrelated variables continues to influence many Sub-Saharan African nations' deeply ingrained cultural practice of female genital mutilation, or FGM. Among these, gender roles and power relations, together with socioeconomic factors, are crucial in ensuring that female genital mutilation continues. To effectively develop methods to end this destructive habit, it is imperative to comprehend the complex ways in which these components interact.

Gender Status and Authority Dynamics: Women are typically positioned in lower roles in Sub-Saharan Africa, where conventional gender roles largely drive social expectations and conventions. In this setting, female genital mutilation turns into an expression of deeply ingrained power relations and control over women's bodies. The perception that FGM is required to guarantee a woman's acceptance within her community is reinforced by the way the practice is frequently presented within a cultural narrative that associates femininity with modesty and purity.

Because they are frequently the main decision-makers in society, men have a major role in the continuation of FGM. Men's control over women's sexuality is sometimes perceived as the reason behind the practice, which serves to uphold the patriarchal system. Males may see female genital

mutilation (FGM) as a cultural duty, and those who oppose or disagree with it risk social exclusion. Thus, breaking the structural underpinnings of FGM requires confronting these deeply rooted gender stereotypes.Because of social pressures and expectations, women may also contribute to the continuation of FGM. In many instances, women may even advocate for the continuation of FGM due to their fear of social marginalisation and need for approval within the society. Recognising that gender-based power dynamics play a crucial role in the social fabric that allows FGM to persist is vital, as is the need to confront and challenge these dynamics in order to bring a stop to the practice.

TO SUMMARIZE-

Millions of girls and women worldwide—especially in Africa, the Middle East, and some regions of Asia—are still subjected to the deeply ingrained cultural practice of female genital mutilation, or FGM. The present dissertation has investigated the various dimensions of female genital mutilation (FGM), including its historical origins, cultural importance, potential health risks, legal policies, and efforts to eradicate it. Numerous significant findings about the problem of FGM are revealed by a thorough research of the literature, data, and case studies.

First of all, it is clear that FGM is a complicated sociocultural phenomena that is ingrained in communities rather than just a medical issue. The custom, which has been passed down through the generations as a rite of passage or a way to guarantee marriageability, is frequently linked to ideas of purity, chastity, and societal acceptance. Therefore, the cultural norms and societal attitudes that support FGM must be acknowledged and addressed in any effective intervention.

Second, the effects of FGM on health are extensive and wide-ranging. These effects include long-term implications like sexual dysfunction, obstetric problems, and psychological trauma, as well as immediate ones like severe pain, bleeding, and infections. These health hazards highlight the critical need for all-encompassing healthcare services that are adapted to the requirements of impacted women and girls. These services should include medical care, psychological assistance, and reproductive health care.

Furthermore, by enacting laws that forbid, penalise, and provide preventive measures, legal frameworks are essential in the fight against FGM. Even though law against FGM has advanced significantly in many nations, gaps in implementation, cultural resistance, and economic scarcity make enforcement difficult. Assuring responsibility and defending the rights of women and girls require actions to fortify legislative frameworks and encourage community engagement in law enforcement.

Additionally, it becomes clear that education is essential for dispelling myths around female genital mutilation, giving people the power to make educated decisions, and supporting neighborhood-based reform movements. In order to dispel false views, advance gender equality, and stress the value of maintaining one's physical integrity and sexual liberty, educational campaigns must interact with powerful local leaders, religious leaders, and other individuals

In the worldwide campaign against FGM, international cooperation and collaboration are equally essential. Through the exchange of best practices, global resource coordination, and global policy change advocacy, the international community may step up efforts to end FGM and assist impacted communities on their road to recovery.

Finally, it should be noted that eliminating of FGM necessitates a multimodal strategy that takes into account its legal, cultural, health, and educational aspects. Acknowledging the authority and equality of those impacted, efforts must be rights-based, community-driven, and holistic. There is still much to be done to completely eradicate FGM, despite the fact that efforts to raise awareness and mobilise action against it have progressed. We cannot guarantee a future in which every girl and woman can live without fear of female genital mutilation and enjoy all of their basic human rights unless we make a consistent commitment to advocacy, collaboration, and partnership.