

# An Exploratory Study On The Practice Of Khatna (FGC) Amongst The Dawoodi Bohra Community

*Dawoodi Bohras use “khatna” to refer to the removal of the prepuce from the genitalia of girls. The World Health Organization (WHO) categorizes this as Type 1 FGC. There is strong sentiment amongst the community that this form of “female circumcision” is no way related to “FGM” as recognized by WHO or performed on African countries.*

## ABOUT OUR SAMPLE

385 survey participants  
67% are between the ages of 18–45  
76% are married  
84% consider themselves middle or upper-middle income  
70% continue to identify with Dawoodi Bohra; 17% are no longer practicing  
34% currently reside in India; 31% are in the United States  
80% experienced khatna

## AMONG THOSE WHO EXPERIENCED KHATNA

66% were 6 or 7 years old when the khatna was performed  
67% indicated that their mom made the decision  
70% of the procedures were performed in India

## AWARENESS

88% know a family member on whom khatna was performed  
56% know a friend on whom khatna was performed  
72% believe men are aware of the practice  
27% think men are told about the practice when it is performed on female relatives

## RESULTS

*Are lower income or less educated women more likely to have experienced khatna?* These data do not show a relationship between income level and khatna nor was a relationship between education level and khatna found. This may be affected by the methodology—80% of those surveyed have earned at least a bachelor's degree as compared to 22% among OECD countries.

*Is there a relationship between khatna prevalence and the intention to continue the practice with one's offspring?* Yes, there is, both with one's own daughter and in general. Among those who have not experienced khatna, 0% are OK or slightly OK with the practicing continuing.

*Of those who have experienced khatna:*

10% reported being OK or slightly OK with continuing the practice.

9% reported being OK or slightly OK with performing the practice on her daughter.

## METHODOLOGY

As no large-scale study existed on the practice of "khatna" amongst the Dawoodi Bohra community, in part due to the secret natures of the practice, and the seclusive nature of the Bohras, purposive sampling and snowball sampling methods were used to recruit participants to take the online survey. Researchers, being from amongst the Dawoodi Bohra community, sent out an e-mail inviting other women who were 1) 18+ and 2) raised in the Dawoodi Bohra tradition to take the survey. These women then sent the survey e-mail to their own networks. The survey link remained open from July 25, 2015 until January 25, 2016. The survey tool was created by utilizing past research on FGC, and asking FGC experts and NGOs to review the survey tool before its release.

## LIMITATIONS

Limitations of the study include participants being gathered via the snowball method, which eliminates the possibility of participants being randomly chosen from a sampling frame. Additionally, only those with computer access and knowledge of English were able to take part in the survey.

“I remember my mum whispering with my granny and aunties that time had come now. Then she mentioned to my dad who said do what’s needed. She told me we were going to buy a doll, took me to a woman’s house in a bohra community housing set up. We were told to wait in the sitting area, another friend of mine was sitting with her mum. She was called in first, I heard screaming and then she came out supported by her mum. I was taken in next, the lady told my aunt to lay me on a table, remove my undies. My mum had left because she said she couldn't watch. My aunt held me down tightly, the lady removed a new razor blade in front of me and then bent down between my legs. I felt a sharp cut, heard myself scream and cry. The lady then gave me cotton wool and my aunt put it in my undies to absorb the blood. We were then led out of the room. For a week after, my mum washed my vagina with diluted dettol and the matter was hushed up and never talked about.”

TO LEARN MORE,  
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SURVEY PARTICIPANT