

Female Genital Cutting, or **Khatna**, in the Dawoodi Bohra community

A study of the practice in the present day

“Khatna”, “Khafz”, or Female Genital Cutting (FGC) refers to the removal of the prepuce from the genitalia of girls. The **World Health Organization (WHO)** categorizes this form of FGC as Type 1, however, a sentiment exists amongst some strongly adherent Dawoodi Bohra community members (a Shia Muslim sect, with origins in India) that this form of “female circumcision” should not be included in the WHO definition of FGC.

Study Demographics

385 participants

- **70%** still identify as Dawoodi Bohra
- **76%** married
- **67%** between 18-25 years of age
- **84%** middle or upper-middle income
- **34%** from India, **31%** from the US

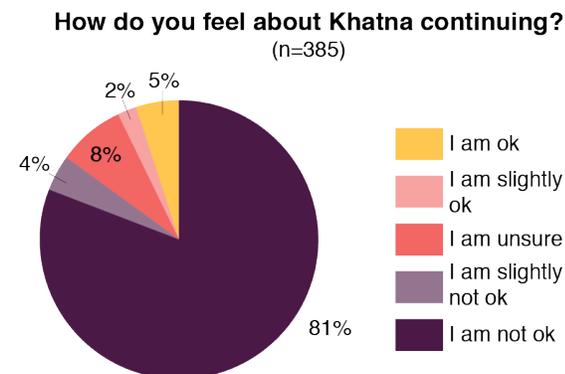
80%
experienced
Khatna.

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Responses

Awareness of Khatna

- **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 performed on female relatives



81% do not want Khatna to continue.

Experience of Khatna

- **66%** were 6-7 yrs old when Khatna occurred
- **67%** said their mother made the decision
- **70%** of Khatna procedures were performed in India
- **97%** of Khatna procedures were performed in a hospital or clinic
- **66%** did not know what type of cutting was being performed on them

"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."

Methodology

Due to the secret nature of the practice, no large-scale study previously existed on Khatna as it occurs in the Dawoodi Bohra community. Purposive and snowball sampling methods were used to recruit survey participants. Researchers invited women who were 18+ and raised in the Dawoodi Bohra tradition to take the survey. These women then sent the survey to their own networks. The survey was open from July 25, 2015 until January 25, 2016.

Limitations

Participants were not randomly chosen as they were gathered using purposive sampling and only those with computer access and knowledge of English took part.

To learn more, contact info@sahiyo.com

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