

LAW, CIRCUMCISION AND GENDERED SEXUALITY IN EASTERN UGANDA AND WESTERN KENYA

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ABSTRACT

Circumcision is a cultural practice that has been documented in several ethnic groups in East Africa for both males and females. While it is considered a right by those that practice it, for others it has generated mixed reactions, with many condemning female genital cutting. A lot has been written linking female circumcision and its negative effects on women's reproductive health. However, rarely have these studies focused on how circumcision constructs gendered identities and what implications this has for sexual behaviour. Using qualitative research methods based in a grounded theory design, this study provides a more nuanced understanding of the triad relationship between law, circumcision and sexuality. It shows that circumcision engendered a certain kind of sexuality that is stoical for both males and females. Nonetheless, males occasionally violate the norm by engaging in pleasurable sex whereas women cannot. Moreover, male rule-bending did not attract any penalties, while the consequences for females were quite dire. Furthermore, the social status of males that emerge from circumcision is superior to that of females.