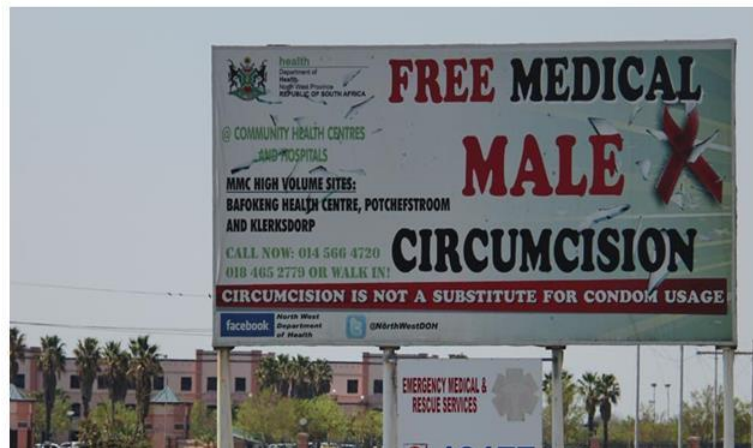




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Experiences of Young Xhosa Men that undergo MMC in the Western Cape South Africa



Introduction

- Circumcision is known as one of the oldest forms of surgical procedures that is practised across different communities around the world (UNAIDS/CAPRISA, 2007).
- In South Africa, traditional circumcision is practiced as an initiation process, viewed as a rite of passage from boyhood to manhood.
- This masculine norm is practised across different tribes such as Pedi, Sotho and Xhosa traditional circumcision.
- Traditional male circumcision (TMC) has been plagued with many complications that put initiates at risk of castration and even death.
- Notwithstanding the numerous reports of complications, Xhosa males still participate in this cultural practise.

introduction (cont.)

Achieving traditional manhood.

- Men become a full member of his community.
- Men are able to marry, to inherit property, and to participate in cultural activities such as offering sacrifices and community discussions.
- As such, men undergo traditional circumcision, because it gives them power and or status in society.

Introduction

Controversy around TMC

- TMC usually takes place during the months of June and December.
- During this time, there are noticeable increases in mortality and morbidity rates amongst young men.
- May be related to TMC, as deaths due to dehydration and failed medical procedures are common (Mavundla et al, 2009).

introduction

Circumcision and HIV

- In a context where HIV has become a medical burden, male circumcision was discovered to curb the spread of HIV.
- Medical male circumcision (MMC) therefore, became one of the key components of prevention strategies adopted for countries with heterosexually driven epidemics (Avert:2017).
- MMC was then recommended as best practice and men were encouraged to take-up MMC as a precautionary measure to decrease their chances of contracting HIV by 60 per cent (WHO:2017).

introduction (cont.)

Circumcision and Legislation

- In an effort to maintain this sense of heritage, while improving the quality of TMC procedures, the department of health, passed a law called adopted the Application of Health Standards in Traditional Circumcision Act (no. 6 of 2001).
- The Act states that:
 - males younger than 18 years of age should produce written consent from their parent or guardian;
 - no person other than the medical nurse, traditional surgeon or any other person authorized by the department of health should do the procedure;
 - within the first 8 days of circumcision the traditional nurse should allow the initiate to have lots of water to avoid dehydration;
 - the traditional nurse should report any signs of abnormality or sickness at an early stage;
 - the traditional nurse should not expose the initiates to any kind of danger within the initiation schools such as beatings.

methodology

- The study used qualitative methodology.
 - Qualitative research is about interpreting and understanding people's behaviour, while giving in-depth meaning to the information that is provided by the participant.

Participants and Setting

- Study participants were purposely sampled via the Care works organization (an NGO that focuses on the mobilisation and rolling out of MMC).
- Participants were 22 to 28 years old, Xhosa men, who resides in predominately black township areas around the city of Cape town.
 - These areas are living spaces plagued with high unemployment and crime rates.
- Men were invited to participate in a semi-structured interviews - some of which were facilitated at the Care works offices.
- Participants received an incentive to cover their transport cost

Methodology (cont.)

Data Collection process

- Semi-structured individual interviews were used to explore men's understandings of their masculine and cultural identities in relation to their decision to opt for MMC.
- After informed consent was obtained, The individual, face-to-face interviews were conducted in isiXhosa.

Data Analysis process

- The interviews were than transcribed and then translated from IsiXhosa to English.
- Thematic analysis was used to analyse the data.

Results

What Influence the decision to opt for MMC

- **Hygiene:**

Sipho: *“For me personally it was for hygiene purposes and the health benefits it reduces chances of getting HIV/STI's by 60%. Knowing that the procedure is done by a professional medical practitioner. Having to do the procedure at a hospital with trained professionals is amongst the reasons that influenced my decision to opt for MMC”.*

Siya *“The benefit is to live a healthy life, to prevent ourselves from diseases like HIV/AIDS and STI's and so forth”*

Results

What influences the decision to opt for MMC

o The influence of Media on the decision for MMC

Sipho: *"I found out it was like on Facebook there this Brothers for life campaign there was Kagiso and yeah his favorite actor. He was like on the 11 March they are going to Kathohong and called upon men to get circumcised, there was a number that they provided that you must call and they will book a nearest clinic and I called and booked and they booked me to a clinic in Observatory so I went there and got circumcised.*

Sphamandla: *"I heard about it on television adverts and also newspapers. When I was in taxi I would see billboards of the Brothers for Life campaign. This than is what prompted me to actually go on google and to search for medical male circumcision. The information that I received assisted me in understanding more about MMC*

Siya: *"Yes for me social media had I not seen the Brothers for Life Campaigns trending than I would have not actually been influenced. It was after I saw their campaigns then I was prompted to go for MMC"*

Results

What influences the decision to opt for MMC

o Masculinity –Not Considered as a Man

Sakhile: "Ndiyathukwa nje sisi wamie andinikwa chance tuuu, abafuni ukundamkela njengendoda epheleleyo "They swear men and they do not give me chances at all .They do not want to accept me as a full man I am considered as half a man".

Sipho "Yes (grins) I can say yes because won't be considered as a man because there is always that thing of people discriminating you "you didn't do this so you are not man enough" they are things and principles they are taught that you don't understand so like yeah you not considered as a man where I am from. It depends who you want to be a man to" 25 year old Sipho

Siya: 'In the Xhosa culture you are not considered as a man they say uyinkwenkwe (small boy).A man in Xhosa culture is a person that went to the mountains or bushes to get circumcised anyone who does not do that is not considered as a man "

Results

What influences the decision to opt for MMC

○ Traditional Male Circumcision as Ancestral ritual

Siya *Traditional male circumcision is not just about cutting of the foreskin but it is also about connecting with your ancestors as being the only one in the family that opted for MMC I feel like I have broken a connection with my ancestors my father questioned me if is this what I will teach my children by throwing away our culture or is it just my decision''*

Zamani *Unfortunately in a sad way to say that the traditional circumcision comes from our ancestors it a chain or a cycle that is forbidden for somebody to break or do otherwise. So I would say partly yes you are not considered as a man.''*

Results

Sipho: iBuhlungu lento my sister kuba xakuthethwa nezinyanya uyagxothwa wena kuthwa andaziwa zizinyanya kuba andolukaknga andiyondoda andinalo ilungelo yokuba ndakhetha indlela indlela yesilungu yokwenza . (This thing is painful my sister because when people at home speak to the ancestors I am told to leave the room because I am not a man I did not go to the mountains so I don't not have the authority to be in the presence of ancestors because I have disappointed them and chose the English way of doing things"

discussion

- The health benefits and access to health care systems was among one of the main influences that prompted the young men to opt for MMC
- The fact that MMC reduces the chances of one contracting HIV/AIDS and STI's.
- Social media played a huge role in providing information on MMC and influencing young men to opt for MMC
- The Brothers for Life campaigns was amongst one of the most effective campaigns that assisted to reach out to men out there and encourage them to get circumcised.
- In the Xhosa culture according to Messiner and Buso (2007) stated that "a man cannot marry until he is initiated, so initiation is coffered socially approved adult status and with it marriageability

- Initiation meant that a man will have greater social standing in the community he will be able to be accepted as an adult within his family household and as a member of the community
- Ritual circumcision is an important aspect of Xhosa culture that serves to legitimize a person as a man and a full member of the community (in the emic sense); hence, one of the important reasons why Xhosa men prefer to undergo ritual circumcision is that it gives them power in society (Meissner & Buso, 2007).
- They are called derogative names and belittle hence they still feel inadequate that they are not fully men as expected with their culture. Although these young men opted for MMC their culture is still important in shaping who they are as young Xhosa men.

Conclusion/policy implications

- Medical male circumcision in South Africa is done for health related reasons it is said that MMC reduces the risk of infection of HIV/AIDS among heterosexual men
- . The government came with the intervention that there should be a legislation to try to curb and minimize all complications of traditional circumcision.
- The Application of Health Standards in Traditional Circumcision Act (no. 6 of 2001), was set to regulate TMC
- This legislation is called the Application of the health standards was said to be implemented in local communities
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cont

- Traditional leaders felt that medical male circumcision is there to alter their culture and that the government was being disrespectful and diluting their culture by wanting to allow woman or uncircumcised or medically circumcised anywhere near initiation schools.

Recommendations

- The department of health could train traditional surgeons on performing the procedure ensuring that they use sterilized instruments. The traditional surgeon can get a license that certifies them cutting of the foreskin
- To curb the death of initiates the department of health together with Traditional leaders can come to a consensus that the young men should go to the cutting at the hospitals and then come back to camp in the mountains whereby they will receive the teachings of elders on how to transition into manhood.
- The Department of Health should provide the Traditional surgeons with a circumcision pack. That has the cutting tools that are sterilized and they should be educated that one instrument per person hence that will reduce transmission of HIV/AIDS and STI's amongst initiates.