

Chapter 5

Psychosocial Behaviours of Male Learners After Traditional Male Circumcision in Mdantsane, Eastern Cape, South Africa

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to examine the psychosocial behaviours of male learners after undergoing traditional male circumcision (TMC) in the urban townships of Mdantsane, in the Eastern Cape province of South Africa. In-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with 25 recently circumcised learners, as well as 17 school teachers and four parents of sons who had the procedure. Data were then coded and thematically analysed by means of six coding phases to identify two themes. The first theme pertains to the relationships between parents, teachers, and learners both pre- and post-TMC; the second theme is that of psychosocial behaviour and school performance of participating male learners. The data revealed that recently traditionally circumcised boys become excessively sexually active with some participants having multiple sexual partners. Moreover, these particular initiates tended to indulge in more alcohol abuse and smoking. The findings show that the psychosocial behaviour of male learners changes after undergoing TMC.

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INTRODUCTION

Male circumcision is a long-standing Xhosa tradition that is still widely practised throughout South Africa. It is considered a rite of passage that prepares the initiate for their transition from boyhood to manhood. In particular, the Xhosa community in the above-mentioned region of South Africa regards it as a heritage from their ancestors (Kepe, 2010). A previous study has shown that social determinants play a big part in why boys favour it. These influencing factors include the perceived attainment of social manhood values, benefits, respect, and acceptance within their particular communities (Douglas et al., 2016). Furthermore, initiation schools equip circumcised men with new social roles as adults in terms of essential family and community responsibilities. Therefore, the rite of TMC is regarded as a sacred cultural practice during which boys are formally introduced to their ancestors (Mohlaloka-Sello et al., 2016). Apart from physical changes, TMC also has profound psychosocial effects on its initiates, who work to change their focus, preferences and, ultimately, aspirations on higher education. As previously mentioned, the newly circumcised boys will typically assume new social roles and responsibilities. Psychologically, they are expected to then exhibit behavior associated with a more adult code of conduct (Mbachi & Likoko, 2013).

Notably, a previous study that investigated this phenomenon within the Lusikisiki community in the Eastern Cape only focused on post-circumcised males from initiation school, in neglect of school learners in school (Kheswa et al., 2014). However, there is limited research of initiation schools' influence on learners' behavior. Initiates have worsened disciplinary problems at schools and certain types of misbehavior are attributed to initiation schools (Mohlaloka-Sello et al., 2016). Anecdotal evidence indicates that male initiates in Mdantsane exhibit unruly psychosocial behaviours namely, drug abuse and negative sexual behaviours after their initiation and traditional circumcision. However, there is a lack of empirical evidence pertaining to psychosocial behaviours of male learners after TMC. Consequently, the present study aims to fill this gap by exploring the psychosocial behaviours of male learners after traditional male circumcision.

In this context, the Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) discourses was applied to understand the psychosocial dynamics influencing health behaviour and methods for promoting behavioural change (Glanz et al., 2002). Therefore, SCT is relevant to measure the personal, behavioural and environmental variables that influence behavioural changes in male learners since this population is challenge with not only psychosocial factors, but also environment influences such as substance abuse, sexual behaviour and social factors. Furthermore, this theory is relevant to understanding why positive behavioural changes are essential to ensure health lifestyles and their

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