

The Nature and Causes of Male Circumcision in Clermont-KwaDabeka in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa

Makho Nkosi

School of Education, University of KwaZulu Natal, South Africa

KEYWORDS *Ukweluka*. Male Circumcision. HIV and AIDS. Condoms. Masculinities. Manhood. Gender

ABSTRACT This paper reports on an investigation carried out to ascertain the nature and causes of male circumcision cases in KwaZulu – Natal in South Africa as they take place nowadays. The study utilized a qualitative survey design. In- depth and semi- structured interview method was used to collect the data on a purposefully selected sample of ten (10) women and (10) men. The sample comprised of circumcised men and uncircumcised males, women who had sexual experiences of circumcised and uncircumcised men, *iingcibi* (traditional surgeons), *amakhankatha* (guardians), *ixhwele* (traditional healer), as well as *ikrwala* (newly initiated men). The sample consisted of ten (10) women and (10) men comprising of circumcised men and uncircumcised males, and women who had sexual experiences of both circumcised and uncircumcised men. The study collected data from the *iingcibi*(traditional surgeons), and *amakhankatha* (guardians), *ixhwele* (traditional healer), *ikrwala* (newly initiated men), as well as uncircumcised men and women, as defined above. Content analysis, through emerging themes, was used in analysing the data. The study revealed that ritual male circumcision takes place in the bush and initiates have to undergo pain endurance as a rite of passage to manhood. Furthermore, the study revealed that although medical circumcision is vigorously practiced in Clermont – KwaDabeka but Xhosa men still opt for ritual circumcision done in the bush. Male circumcision is a tradition and a cultural practice among Xhosa men. Research participants stated that it was not easy to contract Sexually Transmitted Infections when circumcised hence a perception that a circumcised man was not at risk of contracting HIV because of *ukubhungqa* (lack of foreskin). The study concludes that the nature and causes of male circumcision cases in Clermont KwaDabeka varied depending on the context where it was taking place. Recommendations were made that the customary cut be made safer. Given the fact that culture is not static, but fluid, this paper suggests that male circumcision rituals could be perhaps ‘modernised’ to reflect the changing socio-political, cultural, public health and legal ethos of the democratic landscape in South Africa.