



Behaviours of traditional male circumcision initiates of Cala and Mdantsane, South Africa



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This article focuses on the exploration of behavioural deficits that are manifested by the traditional male circumcision (TMC) initiates of the contemporary epoch. A qualitative research approach amid an exploratory and descriptive design followed by interpretivism paradigm was applied. A purposive sampling technique of non-probability sampling method was used. The in-depth interviews and focus group discussions were used as data collection methods. Cala and Mdantsane were selected as research domains because of their involvement in the practice of TMC. Thematic analysis effected through coding was used to analyse data. The findings revealed that contemporary TMC initiates embrace negative teachings in the initiation school that fails to meet societal moral and ethical expectations, such as the preponderance of violence and abuse of alcohol. It also showed non-compliance to the moral code and cultural goalposts by the contemporary TMC initiates. Furthermore, this study recommends for policies to ensure that the rite achieves its sociocultural objective amid the training of traditional nurses and surgeons to astutely manage the rite.

Keywords: morals; behaviour; culture; traditional male circumcision (TMC); a rite of passage.

Introduction

Internationally, regionally and locally, traditional male circumcision (TMC) is a rite of passage that has been respected for its sacredness and important goalposts (Ntombana 2011). Traditional Male Circumcision is referred to as '*ulwaluko*' in IsiXhosa, and it is carried out by a traditional surgeon referred to as '*ingcibi*' in IsiXhosa, using a circumcision sword (*assegai*) that is culturally referred to as '*umdlanga*' in IsiXhosa (Maleche & Day 2011). This cultural practice in South Africa is performed by the Nguni subgroupings, such as the AmaXhosa, amaPedi and AmaHlubi groups, for the fulfilment of religious and cultural purposes, including health purposes (Mangena, Mulaudzi & Peu 2011).

This study explored the behavioural deficits manifested by the contemporary TMC initiates in Cala and Mdantsane villages of Eastern Cape. This study aimed to achieve the following objectives to (1) explore the policy differences informing TMC practices in yesteryears and those in the contemporary epoch; (2) identify the similarities and differences between the behaviour of the contemporary initiates and those of yesteryears; and (3) establish the environmental factors motivating the change of the behaviour apparent among the contemporary initiates as well as those of the yesteryears. This study was conducted to explore the moral position between the contemporary initiates and those of the yesteryears. This is because most literature abounds indicating that during the yesteryears, the ritual enhanced cultural social capital as it manifested respect, unity, love and consensus in societies (Mpateni 2022). Furthermore, the TMC ritual in the yesteryears instilled cultural ethos that served as a vehicle to achieve good behaviours and morals (Nomngcoyiya & Kang'ethe 2017). Opportunely, the rite has among its purposes moral regeneration and harnesses the behaviours of the initiates (Douglas 2013).

On the contrary, contemporary TMC initiates display behaviours that run counter to the socially approved ones (Mpateni 2022). These behaviours include binge drinking, violence, abuse of substances as well as disrespecting the elderly. This resonates well with the writings of Vincent (2008) who contends that the behaviours of contemporary TMC initiates are unbecoming. He further asserts that the behaviours of the initiates today are influenced by the imperatives of development such as democracy, media and modernisation.

Most importantly, the TMC rite is referred to as an initiation school because of its pivotal role in instilling growth in those undergoing it and the education embedded in it (Baliso et al. 2015).

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Furthermore, the rite is meant to shape good behaviours and morals. Being a traditionally circumcised man means that one must fulfil the cultural expectations of marriage and take key family responsibilities in society such as gracing and directing cultural events. Subjective knowledge and literature state that TMC of today fails to achieve the goalposts associated with it compared to those of the yesteryears (Fuzile & Feni 2015).

Problem statement

Regrettably, unlike initiates of the yesteryears who fulfilled the goalposts of the TMC rite and its concomitant moral code, the contemporary TMC initiates paradoxically display an array of unbecoming behaviours after leaving the initiation school. Inopportunately, they engage in maladaptive sexual behaviours, manifest a preponderance of binge drinking, perpetrate violence and display gruesome behaviours. This presents a cultural shock as the rite of TMC has always been associated with virtues of inculcating morally elegant behaviours among the initiates. What is apparent today perhaps signals a dire paradigm shift of the goalposts of the rite. It is therefore necessary for the government to work hand in hand with the cultural custodians to address the behavioural deficits that significantly damage the reputation and dignity of the erstwhile sacred rite of initiation. The study will also add to existing literature because most literature focus on health factors associated with the rite of circumcision.

Literature review

Negative teachings in the initiation school

Inopportunately, literature reveals that contemporary initiates receive negative teachings that condone maladaptive behaviour, such as sexual immorality, disrespect, disobedience and criminality (Kepe 2010). Furthermore, Sussman et al. (2004) assert that contemporary epoch initiates upon graduation are encouraged to engage in sexual relationships with multiple sexual partners to prove their masculinity. This runs counter to the cultural expectations and the goalposts of the TMC rite.

The rite of 'ulwaluko' Traditional Male Circumcision condoning alcoholism

The traditional male circumcision rite has always been associated with the use of alcohol, such as traditional beer known as 'umqombothi' in isiXhosa. That was taken under control without any iota of abuse, but today, alcohol in contemporary TMC rites is a contributory factor to a culture of abusing alcohol in South Africa. Today, unlike in the past, contemporary initiates use various brands of alcohol from the West, such as brandy, beer and wines (Schultz & Schultz 2016). Customarily, traditional beer (*umqombothi*) was used during the first stage of initiation (Mpateni 2017). More so, *umqombothi* was also used during 'umosiso', which is the seventh day after the circumcision ritual, and they were also allowed to eat salty food. But

paradoxically today, even the traditional nurses who look after initiates abuse alcohol, and there are myths that a real man profusely drinks alcohol such as brandy than a fake man. This largely contributes to a culture of alcoholism that is apparent today, hence affecting the behaviour of traditionally circumcised men.

Contemporary Traditional Male Circumcision initiates influenced by modernisation

Unequivocally, the contemporary initiates are influenced by forces of modernisation such as eurocentrism, media, globalisation and democracy (Kang'ethe 2014; Mcotheli 2006). This is because forces of development have introduced people to modern lifestyles, which are contrary to the cultural African traditions. In the same vein, Feni (2014) and Kheswa, and Dayi and Gqumani (2014), posit that because of modernisation, culture is in a state of attrition. This is critical considering the state of moral and behavioural deficits manifested in most African societies today, South Africa notwithstanding (Mbachi & Likoko 2013).

Theoretical framework

Anomie theory

This study applied anomie theory. The first sociological use of the term *anomie* was attributed to French sociologist Emile Durkheim (1858–1917) in his book *Division of Labor in Society*, which was initially published in 1893. Durkheim (1983), a founder of modern sociology, defines anomie as a state of lawlessness or normlessness (Downes, Rock & McLaughlin 2017). In the same vein, Coleman (2014) asserts that anomie is a state of societal imbalance, where the values and respected rules are no longer taken into serious consideration by society. Durkheim linked anomie to deviance, which is the behaviour that deviates from accepted and expected social norms and conducts (Boudon 2018). Furthermore, Bygnes (2016) and Webster, Lambert and Bezuidenhout (2008) assert that a situation of anomie occurs when either the processes by which morals and norms that are socially respected and sustained through steady patterns of social interaction are jeopardised through the spread of cultural norms that release egoism. This is one of the reasons the principal researchers chose this theory, as indeed there is a disruption of norms and values in TMC rituals (Mpateni 2017).

This theory is aptly applicable to what is happening to the initiates of today who display bad behaviours that society never sanctioned. These behavioural shortfalls include binge drinking, being disrespectful to the elders, manifesting violence and engaging in sexual overtures such as rape. Unequivocally, these behaviours run counter to the behaviour of the initiates of the yesteryears, whose most of the behaviours were socio-culturally fit. This explains the behavioural and moral deficits apparent in society today. That positions this theory in explaining the phenomenon of behavioural lapses displayed by contemporary TMC initiates.

Methods

The research from which this article is extracted compared the behaviours and morality between the initiates of the yesteryears and those of the contemporary epoch in Cala and Mdantsane villages of the Eastern Cape. This article investigates the behavioural shortfalls apparent among contemporary initiates today. This is a qualitative study based on the experiences and subjective views of the participants.

Research approach and design

Methodologically, this study espoused a qualitative approach in tandem with a qualitative paradigm that is interpretivism in nature to gain the people's views of the participants (Rubin & Babbie 2015). This study took advantage of an exploratory and a descriptive research design, with a case study being the specific design. This is justifiable from the fact that only a few samples were investigated in depth to generate insights and perceptions on the differences in behaviours and morality between the contemporary and yesteryears TMC initiates (Creswell 2014). This is because the study described and explored as well as gave some explanations of the differences in behaviours and morality displayed by the two sets of initiates. This paradigm and approach do not allow the results to be generalised but form a platform to conduct other quantitative-based studies on the same domain.

Populations and sampling

As defined by Creswell (2014), a sample is a portion that is taken from the entire population or universe for representation of the entire population during data collection. The population in this study was made up of traditional leaders, contemporary TMC initiates, yesteryears' TMC initiates, parents of the contemporary TMC initiates and those of the yesteryears' TMC initiates, traditional surgeons (*iingcibi*) and traditional nurses (*amakhankatha*). The population in this study was selected from Cala, Sakhisizwe local municipality and Mdantsane, Buffalo City municipality in the Eastern Cape.

In this article, the purposive sampling technique of the non-probability sampling method was used to intuitively select samples that were considered knowledgeable to offer responses for the research. This resonates well with the definition by Creswell (2014) who defines non-probability sampling as a sampling where not all participants have an equal chance of being chosen in this study.

Data collection process and methods

The data in this article were collected within a short span of time, in just a few weeks, thus qualifying it to be a cross-sectional study. Furthermore, the study made use of focus group discussions, one-on-one interviews and key informants' interview research methods (Rubin & Babbie 2015). In an account of ethical ethos, the researcher distributed letters to

community leaders and the chiefs of the study domain to gain access to the participants. During the interviews, this researcher jotted down the responses. The principal researcher also took note of the participants' temperamental cues as well as his observations and intuition to augment the data from interviews and focus group discussions.

Research instrument

This article used an interview schedule to facilitate the focus group discussions and one-on-one interviews (Babbie 2014). The interview guide consisted of open-ended questions to allow the participants to freely express their insights.

Sample selection criteria

This article considered only people who were knowledgeable about the TMC rite. Traditional male circumcision initiates were included in this study based on their direct involvement in the rite of TMC. Parents of both sets of initiates were sampled because of their experience and knowledge of cultural aspects and the behaviour and morality of their children. Furthermore, traditional nurses, or '*amakhankatha*' and surgeons, or '*iingcibi*' were included because they run the trade of the TMC rite. Parents with sons who have not undergone TMC and boys who have not undergone the rite were excluded. This study also excluded men who underwent medical male circumcision.

Data analysis

To analyse the data, the researcher used content thematic analysis by breaking down the voluminous mountains of raw data, through coding, into categories that constituted themes and subthemes (Rubin & Babbie 2015).

Research domain justification

The domain of this article was Cala village of Sakhisizwe Local municipality and Mdantsane village of Buffalo city municipality, in the Eastern Cape province. This is because Cala is a small town, which is surrounded by rural areas that are mostly dominated by AmaXhosa who practice TMC. Mdantsane, on the other hand, is in an urban setting, but mostly inhabited by the AmaXhosa, who also practices TMC. Conducting this study in an urban and rural setting offered an opportunity for diversity and comparison.

Ethical considerations

With respect to the ethical guidelines of research, the principal researcher made all the essential arrangements before going out to recruit the research participants. Firstly, he applied for an ethical clearance certificate, which he obtained from the University of Fort Hare's Research Ethics Committee (UREC) (KAN021SMPA01). Furthermore, the principal researcher wrote letters to community leaders seeking permission to gain access to the study domain, which was also granted. The principal researcher also ensured compliance with a set of ethical codes, such as

confidentiality, by not revealing the real names of the participants but using pseudonyms. Furthermore, the researchers avoided harm by not asking sensitive and harmful questions. Autonomy was also used, as participants were informed of the freedom of choice to participate and not to give responses when they feel uncomfortable. The researcher also duly paid homage to and respected all the participants (Rubin & Babbie 2015).

Demographic details of the participants

A sample of 40 participants who knew succinctly about TMC was interviewed. Ten were men who had undergone TMC from the year 2000 and (contemporary epoch) aged 18–25 years; another 10 men who were traditionally circumcised in 1994 or before, aged 30–70 years (the yesteryears); 5 parents of the initiates of the contemporary epoch, aged 30–60 years; 5 parents of men who were circumcised in the year 1994 or before, aged 50–80 years; 2 traditional leaders, 1 traditional surgeon from Cala, 1 traditional surgeons from Mdantsane, 2 traditional nurses from Cala, 2 traditional nurses from Mdantsane and 2 representatives from the house of traditional leaders. The principal researcher wrote letters to the community leaders of both Cala and Mdantsane to gain entry into the community.

Age

As summarised in Box 1, research findings indicated that the yesteryears' traditionally circumcised men were between the ages of 46 and 68 years. Their ages meant that they were still able to think and recall how they behaved during their initiation times. Parents who gave responses to the research questions were between the ages of 70 and 86 years. Their ages allowed these researchers to trust that they were knowledgeable about the culture and therefore likely to give valid, reliable and culturally informed perceptions regarding the behaviours and morals of the yesteryear initiates compared to the contemporary ones. Demographically, interviewed contemporary TMC initiates in this study were aged between 18 and 35 years. Their ages fit the contemporary epoch as they were circumcised in the 21st century (from 2000 until today), where life has been greatly influenced by the imperatives of development presented by euro centrism, modernisation, civilisation and globalisation. The ages of the parents of the initiates of the contemporary epoch were between 52 and 60 years. These ages place them in a suitable position to compare the behaviours of the contemporary epoch and those of the yesteryears. Furthermore, traditional nurses were between the ages 40 and 66 years. These ages offer them an opportunity to understand and compare the behaviours

and morality of both the initiates of the yesteryears and those of the contemporary epoch.

Marital status

For this study, as summarised in Table 1, the presented research findings on marital status revealed that seven yesteryear initiates were married while other three were unmarried. That means that for the yesteryear initiates, marriage was seen as the next step post-TMC. Interestingly, according to the demographic information of the participants of this study, all parent participants were married. This means they provided both the mother and the father figures for sound nurturance of their sons. Furthermore, four TMC initiates were married, while six were single. For those who were married, this heralds a symbol of family strength and a fulfilment of TMC goalposts. Furthermore, three parents of the initiates of the contemporary epoch were married, while two were unmarried. Although this may be a close indicator of the general characteristic of South African communities, where most parents are unmarried, however, the two sets of parents offered an opportunity for diversity in terms of their views pertaining to the behaviours and morality of the two sets of initiates. Furthermore, the traditional leader, the traditional surgeon and the traditional nurses were married, meaning that they fulfilled an important goalpost of a successful culture of TMC.

Gender

On gender, this study manifested masculinisation of culture, as there were 33 males and 4 females. Perhaps this is because the culture of AmaXhosa regarding TMC puts forward the significant role of a man rather than a woman, with women taking a passive role (Nomngcoyiya 2015).

Findings

Contemporary Traditional Male Circumcision initiates embracing negative teachings in the initiation school

Research findings discovered that the teachings that are received in the initiation school today are misleading and differ from those that were given to initiates in the yesteryears. Inopportunely, the contemporary TMC initiates largely deviate from societal norms and values. The following sentiments attest to the finding:

'The purpose of initiating boys into manhood is to grow them through constructive education so that they can be strong and be able to live independently. However, to the contrary, the contemporary initiates come back from the initiation schools displaying some weird and ill behaviours that cast doubt on whether the rite is winning the educational goalposts. Moreover, the contemporary initiates come back with high levels of disrespect for the elderly people including their parents.' (Participant ZH, Key informant, 53 years old, male)

In consideration of the above sentiments, the contemporary TMC is failing in terms of inculcating constructive and socially acceptable behaviours to the initiates. This means the

BOX 1: Thematic findings.

Contemporary TMC initiates embracing negative teachings in the initiation school

Non-compliance with the moral code by the contemporary TMC initiates

Preponderance of violence by the contemporary TMC initiate

Preponderance of alcoholism during the contemporary epoch

TMC, Traditional Male Circumcision.

culture is no longer tenable to uphold its erstwhile purposes and norms.

Non-compliance with the moral code by contemporary Traditional Male Circumcision initiates

Regrettably, the findings indicated that the contemporary TMC initiates do not comply with the moral code of conduct and cultural goalposts bequeathed to TMC. Research findings revealed violence, rudeness, disobedience and crime among the contemporary initiates. The following interview extract from yesteryear's TMC initiate attests to this finding:

'Contemporary traditional male circumcision initiates' behaviours are characterized by violence, rudeness, disrespect, hate and poor embracement of "Ubuntu". A man is supposed to behave in a dignified manner, but the contemporary initiates do not care about their dignity and respect.' (Participants F, FGD, 66 years old, male)

Indeed, the initiates of the contemporary epoch manifest weird and ill-behaved manners that contradict the erstwhile behaviours bequeathed to TMC (Baliso et al. 2015). This means the culture is increasingly losing its dignity.

A preponderance of violence by the contemporary Traditional Male Circumcision initiate

Furthermore, study findings revealed that today's initiates do not comply with the moral code and cultural goalposts. They further alleged that the contemporary initiates manifested gross irresponsibility that ran counter to the sacredness and sanctity of the erstwhile TMC values and norms. A key informant participant alluded to the following:

'Contemporary traditional male circumcision initiates behave in a worrying manner as they engage in activities such as domestic violence instead of providing security in the societies. That contributes to dents in the rite of traditional male circumcision'. (Participants ZF, Key informant, 66 years old, male)

Indeed, the contemporary TMC initiates differ from those of the yesteryears in terms of behaviour and morality. They do not uphold the erstwhile cultural values and norms bequeathed to TMC (Mpateni 2017).

A growing culture of alcoholism during the contemporary epoch

The study revealed that although alcohol was used in the yesteryears, although sparingly, today there is excessive use of it. Regrettably, the use of alcohol for cultural practices is today accompanied by western-centric brands of alcohol, such as brandy. This means that binge drinking by the initiates in the taverns and shebeens has been condoned. They no longer help their parents financially. The following verbatim attests to the finding:

Nowadays' initiates graduate from the initiation school and become alcohol addicts. During the yesteryears, alcohol was taken under control and was allowed only during the cultural events, but today initiates drink inadvertently and therefore denting their behaviour.' (Participants ZF, Key informant, 66 years old, male)

Other participants agreed that upon earning any form of income, the contemporary TMC initiates spend money on alcohol. They further alleged that the contemporary TMC initiates are not prudent in spending their money. One parent lamented the following:

'Once the initiates of today get money, they only think of buying alcohol. They do not take responsibility of assisting their parents financially.' (Participants ZA, Key informant, 60 years old, female)

Evidently, the emergent culture of the preponderance of alcohol among the initiates of today makes them grossly imprudent to responsibly handle family responsibilities (Bala 2017).

Discussion of findings

Contemporary Traditional Male Circumcision initiates embracing negative teachings in the initiation schools

Research findings discovered that the teachings provided in contemporary initiation schools largely deviate from the societal values, norms and concomitant goalposts. This is because the current education in the initiation schools runs counter to the cultural goalposts of TMC such as instilling moral and elegant behaviours among the initiates (Nyembezi et al. 2012). This may be attributed to immature cultural custodians who have high jacked the rite of TMC for pecuniary gains, instead of fulfilling its esteemed goalposts (Nyembezi 2016). This finds support from the writings of Ntombana (2011) and Feni (2014) who assert that the commercialisation of TMC is responsible for an array of moral deficits such as negative teachings, clinical health hazards, hospitalisation and year in, year out deaths of initiates.

In the same vein, Abrahams (2017) concedes that the commercialisation of TMC contributes to the glaring lacunae that have been common in the rite today, including health hazards, moral lapses and negative teachings. This can undeniably be attributed to those running the circumcision practice in botched circumcision schools who lack the prerequisite skills and knowledge to conduct the trade. Furthermore, this can be justified by the fact that botched circumcision schools are run by culturally blind custodians who do not care for moral regeneration but are interested in profit-making in the trade (Douglas & Maluleke 2018; Feni 2014). Inopportunistly, these custodians offer negative teachings that provide an environment that motivate disobedience and immoralities, such as binge drinking, disrespect, violence and criminality among the circumcision graduates (Baliso et al. 2015). Notably, also, those managing botched circumcision schools lack the requisite experience

and astute training. Previous studies report that they lack the appropriate knowledge of cultural ethos (Ntombana 2009). Ntombana further asserts that with the commodification of the rite, the traditional surgeons and nurses are more interested in the number of young men who go through the circumcision process for pecuniary gains.

Non-compliance with the moral code among contemporary Traditional Male Circumcision initiates

Study findings indicated that the contemporary initiates do not comply with the moral codes of conduct and the fulfilment of cultural goalposts of TMC. According to Sussman et al. (2004), the behaviour presented by contemporary initiates is characterised by non-compliance with cultural norms and values. Apparently, they manifest poor respect and honour for humanity, or 'Ubuntu', by participating in weird and criminal behaviours such as violence, theft and indulgence in substance abuse (Dumbili 2015). This behaviour has contributed to social ills such as human immunodeficiency virus (HIV)/acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS), teenage pregnancy and gender-based violence (GBV) (Statistics South Africa 2018). In the same vein, Mpateni (2017) established that some traditionally circumcised boys contracted sexually transmitted diseases, as a result of what is seen to be a *laissez-faire* attitude among the newly initiated men in South Africa. Subjective knowledge purports that sex in the yesteryears was only a preserve of marriage, and any indulgence in it other than in marriage was considered a taboo and attracted cultural penalties.

Notably, youths are becoming sexually active at an increasingly younger age today (Khuzwayo & Taylor 2018). This is explained by Emile Durkheim's anomie theory, which views the manifestation of deviant behaviour in society as a deviation from culturally or socially approved ones (Baliso et al. 2015; Sennett 2006). Apparently, the role of TMC in inculcating elegant and morally acceptable behaviours among the youth is in doubt. The newly initiated men are on the record of exhibiting a disrespect of cultural values and norms as well as engaging in unacceptable behaviours (Adams & Govender 2008; Caine et al. 2019). Perhaps a strong synergy between the government and the traditional leaders could come up with a workable intervention to put the rite back in its adorable place of shaping the morals and behaviours of the initiates.

A preponderance of violence by contemporary Traditional Male Circumcision initiate

Study findings showed that contemporary TMC initiates engage in violent behaviours that run counter to the expectations of those who have undergone the teachings of the rite. Inopportunistly, traditionally circumcised initiates of today have been reported to be the perpetrators of various forms of violence such as domestic violence and GBV (Baliso et al. 2015). It is regrettable and shaming that a

number of social workers report dealing with reports of women and children who are abused by men who have been traditionally circumcised, and that presents a cultural shock as traditionally circumcised men are supposed to be vanguards and beacons of safety to the communities (Mpateni 2017). This is a cultural spinoff, as it indicates a failure of the culture to inculcate good behaviours and sound morals. Today, TMC initiates have been reported engaging in killing, stealing and assaulting, as the world is battling with endless cries by women who suffer gruesome treatment from men. It is evident that TMC is undergoing a state of cultural attrition (Nomngcoyiya & Kang'ethe 2017). This resonates well with Emile Durkheim's theory of anomie, which defines the societal state of normlessness and chaos that is caused by loose values and norms in societies.

A growing culture of alcoholism in the contemporary epoch

The study revealed that although alcohol was used during the yesteryears, albeit sparingly, inopportunistly there is increased consumption of it during the contemporary TMC rituals (Dumbili 2015). Notably, the use of alcohol has been common as part of the ceremony in both epochs, but in yesteryear's epoch, the custodians were more stringent in controlling its use (Ntombana 2011). Generally, during the initiation process, *umqombhothi* was sparingly used during the first stage of 'ulwaluko' (Mavundla et al., 2009; Mpateni 2017; Vincent 2008). As part of the ceremony, the initiate has to sip alcohol at each stage to fulfil the cultural demands. Also, it is used during the ceremony of 'umosiso' (Baliso et al. 2015). 'Umosiso' is a Xhosa word that connotes entering of the second stage of the initiation process, when the initiate is allowed to resume his full dietary allocations (Mpateni 2017; Nqeketo 2008).

Furthermore, the study discovered that in the contemporary epoch, *umqombhothi* is no longer used alone, but it is spiced with other modern and Western brands of alcohol such as brandy, Castle, Black Label and wines (Ritzer & Stepnisky 2018). Arguably, therefore, the inadvertent and *laissez-faire* drinking culture among the initiates is entrenched during the initiation process. Furthermore, when society evidences a culture of drinking among their sons after exiting from the initiation schools, they may not be accused of any illusion for associating the culture with a *laissez-faire* license to be abusing it (Smook et al. 2014). This behaviour can be explained by the social learning theory, which contends that all behaviour is learned. Accordingly, Akers (2017) posits that according to social learning theories, contemporary generations learn the behaviour of alcoholism from parents, peers and other people who abuse the substances. In the context of this study, what happens in the initiation schools may encourage episodes of immorality and other maladaptive behaviours. Seemingly and paradoxically also, the community members are no longer attending TMC rituals to provide good teachings to the initiates, but it is an opportunity to enjoy free alcohol.

Conclusion

This article explored the moral deficits that are manifested by the TMC initiates of the contemporary epoch. Qualitative approaches and designs were used to explore the behaviours in two domains: Cala and Mdantsane. The findings validated the existence of moral lapses and behavioural shortfalls apparent today from the initiates. Because the anomalies the culture is manifesting continue to damage the once-adored culture of TMC, it is recommendable that members of the social service professions continue to unleash advocacy. This implies imploring the cultural custodians in synergy with the government and non-governmental organisations to respond to an array of lacunae that continue to damage the behaviours of the young men who exit the initiation schools. Furthermore, it is recommended that the government should work synergically with traditional leaders in ensuring that TMC offers positive and constructive teachings to those who undergo the practice. Therefore, policies should be reinforced to fight against botched circumcision schools that are run by unlicensed custodians.

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Authors' contributions

A.M. conceptualised and wrote the article. S.M.K. supervised.

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Data availability

Data sharing is not applicable to this article as no new data were created or analysed in this study.

Disclaimer

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