Content analysis of newspaper coverage on injuries and deaths that are related to traditional male circumcision in the Eastern Cape province, South Africa

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Background and introduction

• Initiation and traditional male circumcision (TMC) is practiced as a rite of passage from boyhood to manhood.

• Eastern Cape province has relatively high levels of TMC.

• Over the last two decades, there has been a wide media coverage about injuries and deaths that are related to TMC.
Influence of mass media

• The mass media has the ability to deliver information to a large proportion of the population.

• Newspapers are generally regarded to be credible and relevant in informing the public and shaping their opinions.

• Recent studies demonstrated that the print media plays an important role in providing information to policy makers.

• A number of studies have investigated a range of health issues highlighted in newspapers like smoking and MDR and XDR-TB.
Objectives of the review

• To assess the prevalence of newspaper articles reporting on injuries and deaths that are related to traditional male circumcision in the Eastern Cape Province covering five year period.

• To examine newspaper content about the challenges facing traditional male circumcision in the Eastern Cape Province covering five year period.
Methods

- Data was collected using newspaper database SA Media and LexisNexis® between 1 January 2010 and 31 December 2014.

- The search terms used were:
  - Traditional male circumcision in the Eastern Cape Province
  - Injuries circumcision in the Eastern Cape Province
  - Deaths circumcision in the Eastern Cape Province

- Over 200 articles were identified and reviewed for duplicates.

- A total of 133 articles were selected for final coding and analysis.
Total no of articles

- Total newspapers: 134
- Daily Dispatch: 61
- The Herald: 26
- The Times: 11
- Mail and Guardian: 8
- Cape Times: 7
- Daily News: 6
- The Star: 4
- Sowetan: 4
- Cape Argus: 4
- Sunday Times: 3
# Voices of stakeholders in media

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stakeholders</th>
<th>Voices</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Political organizations</td>
<td>“The ANC is deeply distressed by the news of yet more young lives that have been tragically cut short in their prime through botched circumcisions” – 08 June 2013, Daily News.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Traditional leaders</td>
<td>“Eastern Cape House of Traditional Leaders chairman Chief Ngangomhlaba Matanzima and cooperative governance and traditional affairs MEC Fikile Xasa expressed shock and disappointment at the high death rate despite efforts by government and traditional leaders to curb it” – 29 July 2014, Daily Dispatch.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Democracy supporting institutions</td>
<td>“…the Commission for the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Cultural, Religious and Linguistic Communities, partnered with the SA Human Rights Commission to conduct public hearings” – 25 June 2014, Cape Times.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Scientists</td>
<td>“We the undersigned concerned scientists and parents call for immediate action by our government to stop the unacceptable deaths and penile amputations among young initiates undergoing traditional male circumcision” – 25 June 2014, Cape Times.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NGOs/CBOs</td>
<td>“CODEFSA Director Nkululeko Nxesi called for the participation of churches in the fight against initiate deaths” – 26 November 2013, Daily Dispatch.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affected people</td>
<td>“in-depth interviews with 21 of the 25 &quot;amputees&quot;...; nine of them reported tightening of their bandages as punishment for &quot;weakness” – 16 August 2013, Mail and Guardian.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opinion leaders</td>
<td>The mutilation and deaths of young men in manhood rituals required <strong>urgent intervention</strong> said Anglican Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu” – 09 January 2014, The Star</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Various sources mentioned in the text.*
Most of the articles contained information about the statistics. Combined statistics of over a period of times was also reported. Some articles compared Eastern Cape statistics with other provinces. A total of 14 articles gave the statistics in their headlines:

“Eastern Cape circumcision death toll rises to 20” – 07 June 2010, Mail & Guardian.


ECDDoH remains the main source of information

“Then at the end of the season, the provincial spokesperson, Sizwe Kupelo, appears on the news and talks about the number of deaths and other problems associated with initiation schools in the Eastern Cape” – 13 June 2014, Daily Dispatch.
OR Tambo district reported as the most affected area.

“Chief Ngangomhlabo Matanzima said there was a "problem" in Pondoland” – 15 July 2010, The Herald.

“Sizwe Kupelo said 130 initiates have been admitted to hospitals in the OR Tambo region and one to Cecilia Makiwane Hospital in East London” – 4 July 2012, Daily Dispatch.

“The Eastern Cape, particularly Pondoland, remains the epicenter of the circumcision-related deaths with 38 deaths of initiates and 10 amputations recorded there between May and July” – 11 August 2014, Cape Argus.
Content about non-medical causes of injuries and deaths

- Commercialization of traditional circumcision
  
  “dangerous commercialization of tradition was fueling the rise of illegal initiation schools in which drug abuse and violence could be rampant” – 25 June 2014, Cape Times.

- Violence
  
  “The initiate allegedly beaten to death by four traditional nurses at a popular initiation school in Mfundisweni, Flagstaff” – 03 August 2013, Daily Dispatch.

- Drugs and gangsterism
  

- Negligence
- Starvation
- Illegal circumcisions
Content about non-medical causes of injuries and deaths
Content about medical causes of injuries and deaths

• Most articles reported dehydration, excessive bleeding, gangrene and septic wounds/septicaemia as the causes of injuries and deaths.

“Already 221 initiates have been admitted to hospitals throughout the Eastern Cape since Friday for septicemia, dehydration, gangrene” – 2 July 2013, Daily Dispatch.

“The health authorities and the house of traditional leaders found that the initiates had died due to negligence including botched circumcisions, excessive bleeding and dehydration” – 25 June 2014, Sowetan.
Content about solutions

• Improve family and community involvement
  “Parents now need to account for their sons. Parents themselves have a responsibility to ensure the safety of their own sons before the community and traditional leaders join in” – 29 July 2014, Daily Dispatch.

• Exchange skills
  “skills exchange among traditional circumcision practitioners, with the veterans in the trade assisting those who lacked the skills in the problem areas” – 29 July 2014, Daily Dispatch.

• Increase law enforcement
  "It cannot be correct that people have a licence to kill and go away with just a smack on the wrist. If the Traditional Circumcision Act is not strong enough, why doesn't our justice system use other laws of the country and charge them with murder," said Kupelo” – 30 June 2014, Daily Dispatch.
Content about solutions

• Medical male circumcision

“The Bhisho administration has announced that if initiates continue to die, it will make male medical circumcision (MMC) compulsory. This means that the circumcision of youths in the bush at the hands of traditional nurses and surgeons will come to an end” – 11 July 2014, Daily Dispatch.

“A resolution by Imbumba Yamakhosikazi Akomkhulu (IYA) at a July 11 gathering supported the introduction of male medical circumcision in problem areas” – 17 July 2014, The Herald.

“Chief Ntandoyesizwe Zweloxolo Ndamase, of Western Pondoland, welcomed attempts to reduce initiate deaths but said he would object to moves to replace traditional circumcision with medical circumcision” – 11 July 2014, The Times.
Conclusions

• This study demonstrated increased newspaper coverage on challenges that are related to TMC in the Eastern Cape province.

• The voices of stakeholders has increased over the years.

• Information about the severity of the problem and proposed solutions was provided.
Next steps

• There is a need to:

  ✓ Explore the role that emerging voices reported in newspapers could assume in reduction of injuries and deaths that are related to TMC.

  ✓ Develop and evaluate interventions aimed to reduce injuries and deaths that are related to TMC.

  ✓ To involve the media in current and future interventions so as to enhance quality reporting.
Thank You