Reviewer's report

Title: Correlates of consistent condom use among recently initiated and traditionally circumcised men in the rural areas of the Eastern Cape Province, South Africa.

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Reviewer: Tigistu Adamu Ashengo

Reviewer's report:

Overall the authors need to be consistent and upfront that they are talking about “traditional male circumcision” and not medical male circumcision, about which there has been enough publication on post circumcision risk compensation or lack thereof.

“The aims of this paper are to report the prevalence of consistent condom use and its psychosocial correlates among recently initiated and traditionally circumcised men in rural areas of the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa”

This objective that is in the introduction texts needs to be used in the abstract.

1. Is the question posed by the authors well defined?

Party, the question needs to be consistently described while making the case for it. there are multiple back and forth between traditional and medical circumcisions. There are detailed information about the traditional practice… these are good but seems to dilute the message and the question the authors are trying to answer. Please minimize information that has no direct relationship with the questions at hand.

2. Are the methods appropriate and well described?

The method section doesn't describe the design well, especially the sampling technique need to be clearly communicated. E.g. the chiefs were selected by the help of so and so…. I think there needs to be more information about how many chiefdoms within the selected area were there and how representative the selections are – in what measure rather than simply saying representativeness. Also the methods section is not clear about how the sample size of 2337 men selected for interview came about? How were these men selected? Are these all the initiates during the study period? What is the average duration of time between initiation and this interview?

No qualitative method is used? Please clarify.

3. Are the data sound?
How many community research assistance (CRA) were recruited? Why was it a requirement for the CRAs to have had experience of initiation and traditional circumcision themselves? Especially since the authors acknowledge the bias this would introduce? Why wasn’t an independent group of interviewers recruited? Please explain that in the recruitment as I believe it is key information.

4. Does the manuscript adhere to the relevant standards for reporting and data deposition?

Partly- there is confusion between the result section and the methods section… a number of what looks like findings are described in the methods section i.e. methods and scale construction section.

Definitions used are not clear “government condoms” doesn’t necessarily mean free condoms. So there must be a clarification/definition when it is mentioned for the first time – if government condom equals free condom.

5. Are the discussion and conclusions well balanced and adequately supported by the data?

“With regards to subjective norm, significant others were more likely to approve consistent condom use with the main sexual partner. It maybe that prevention of unwanted pregnancy influenced their support for consistent condom use among steady relationships.”

Is this a question research participants answered about their partners’ (significant others opinion)? Or the researchers interviewed a sample of significant others of initiates? Clarify this in the discussion section… it is not clear.

“With regards to measures related to the cultural and tradition belief system of male initiation and circumcision, beliefs about male circumcision and STI protection was positively associated with consistent condom use. However, received general teachings about responsible man and subjective norms towards responsible man’s family welfare were negatively associated to the dependent variable. This could suggest a prevailing belief that responsible man do not need to use to consistently use a condom as he is ought to be faithful to his sexual partner.”

The explanation of the finding in the last sentence doesn’t make any sense. Please re-write to clearly communicate what you mean here.
In the conclusion section:

Our results highlight the need for a focused cultural sensitive STI/HIV intervention, which can be integrated into the initiation practices and health education programmes for initiates and relevant stakeholders. There is a need to conduct further research to explore how community support structures could be of any assistance in the fight against risky sexual behaviours including inconsistent condom use.

The authors need to be very clear about the conclusion – the research question is not about “STI/HIV intervention”. I suggest a re-write of the conclusion with a focus on condom use and the role of educational intervention as opposed to just STI/HIV intervention. Also I don’t understand why the authors are recommending further research to explore how community support structures…..? This doesn’t seem to be connected with what the authors are trying to communicate in this research paper. If there is a real interest in the influence of community support structures… it should have been somehow captured either in the result or discussion sections. This is the first time this is discussed, so I suggest removing or para phrasing to something that is connected to what the authors found.

6. Are limitations of the work clearly stated?
Yes-

7. Do the authors clearly acknowledge any work upon which they are building, both published and unpublished?
Partly- but there is a mix of description and reference between traditional and medical circumcisions, making it difficult to relate the context the research is conducted with the findings from other studies that are referenced.

8. Do the title and abstract accurately convey what has been found?
Partly- the abstract need to capture the objective clearly

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

Quality of written English: Needs some language corrections before being published

Statistical review: No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

Declaration of competing interests:
I declare that I have no competing interests