

Sexual Orientation Hiccups Surrounding Traditional Male Circumcision (Ulwaluko) in the South African Context: Implications for Social Work

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ABSTRACT

Incontrovertibly, ulwaluko (traditional male circumcision) remains one of the essential rituals in developing an individual's growth and construction of social identity, yet one of the ancient and patriarchal cultures. While some studies have been done on the experiences of homophobia by the LGBTQIA undergoing ulwaluko, there is a dearth of research on how social work professionals can intervene in curbing the homophobic and patriarchal undertones surrounding the traditions. Underpinned by Anti-Oppressive Practice as a theory, this paper argues that ulwaluko becomes problematic because it promotes heterosexualist practices which negate realities and experiences of self-identifying amaXhosa gay men. Through reviewing available literature, this paper argues that although human rights are universal, constructionists believe that social norms and values have an impact on how those rights are implemented, the paper further defined sexuality within the context of amaXhosa and also argues that social workers are not well trained with cultural competency.

KEYWORDS

Sexuality; sex; gender; ulwaluko; social work.

INTRODUCTION

The centrality of social justice within the domain of social work is a defining characteristic that distinguishes this profession from others. Trevithick (2018) posits that this focus is not merely peripheral but stands as the core ethos guiding all practice areas. Further emphasising the integration of theoretical frameworks into practice, Lee et al., (2022) argue that incorporating anti-oppressive practice (AOP) in clinical settings is indispensable. They suggest that for the values of social justice to be truly realised and for social work interventions to be equitable and promote social justice, AOP must be seamlessly integrated into everyday practice. This integration ensures that the practice is not only theoretically sound but also pragmatically effective in addressing the complexities of real-world social injustices.

Moreover, Azzopardi (2020) highlights the necessity for nascent social workers to embark on a continuous journey of learning and professional development. This journey is aimed at cultivating a holistic understanding and application of social work principles, particularly those aligned with AOP. Azzopardi (2020) underscores the importance of developing a congruent blend of awareness, values, knowledge, and skills. Such a blend is crucial for effectively engaging with diverse populations across various social locations and intersectional identities. This perspective reinforces the argument that the foundation of social work practice is deeply rooted in principles of social justice and equity, necessitating a commitment to lifelong learning and adaptation to meet the evolving needs of society. The literature robustly supports the proposition that social justice is not only a fundamental aspect of social work but also a dynamic field requiring the integration of anti-oppressive practices and a commitment to continuous professional development to address the complexities of human experiences effectively (Azzopardi, 2020; Lee et al., 2022; Trevethick, 2018).

Mashabane and Henderson (2020) posit that initiation rituals, serving as a rite of passage from childhood to adulthood, hold significant cultural importance in various South African communities. These rituals not only commemorate the transition but also symbolise the individual's metaphorical death and subsequent rebirth into adult society (Gogela, 2020). Specifically, the practice of *ulwaluko* is highlighted as a critical cultural institution among the *amaXhosa*, designed to inculcate young men with the societal expectations and moral compass requisite for navigating the complexities of adulthood within a predominantly heterosexual framework (Gogela, 2020; Mashabane & Henderson, 2020; Ntozini & Ngqangweni, 2016). This underscores the intricate interplay between cultural rites and the construction of gender identity.

Further expanding on this theme, various scholars, including Azzopardi (2020), Lee et al. (2022), and Macedo (2022), assert that sexuality, as a pivotal aspect of human existence, embodies a multifaceted cultural and social construct. This complexity is attributed to the diverse expressions and interpretations of sexuality across different cultural landscapes, suggesting a richness of phenomena unparalleled in non-human species (Agocha et al., 2014;

Lee et al., 2022). Such observations underscore the intrinsic link between human sexuality and cultural identity, highlighting the need for a nuanced understanding within academic discourses.

Despite the acknowledged importance of sexuality within the human experience, Mintoff (2021) critiques the field of social work for its relative inactivity in addressing issues of human sexuality beyond specialised contexts such as HIV/AIDS prevention, youth services, and eldercare. This critique suggests a broader societal tendency to regulate sexuality through deeply entrenched norms of social control, thereby reflecting on the need for a more proactive and comprehensive approach within social work practices to confront and navigate the complexities of human sexuality (Mintoff, 2021). Through the synthesis of these scholarly perspectives, it becomes evident that the intersection of culture, sexuality, and societal norms demands a more engaged and critically reflective approach within both academic research and practical application, particularly within the domain of social work.

Even though the majority of social workers do not expressly discriminate, most still hold to the notions of normal and abnormal sexuality and behaviour (Mintoff, 2021). The effectiveness of addressing sex and sexuality with prospective clients may be limited if there is a lack of comfort in talking about these issues (Mintoff, 2021). This can be mainly because what is defined as acceptable and unacceptable sexual behaviour varies from culture to culture and from one time period to another (Zastrow, 2016).

Arguably, whether binary or nonbinary, socially construed or biologically determined, beliefs about the ontology of gender/sex, or beliefs about the underlying reality of gender/sex, have become a politically contentious topic on which people can support or oppose the rights of marginalised groups, especially gender/sex minorities (Schudson & van Anders, 2022). In epidemiological research, the terms "sex" and "gender" are frequently used interchangeably even though they may refer to different constructs and their respective applications have a long history and are influenced by social, political, and scientific factors equally (Rioux et al., 2022).

The practice of *ulwaluko*, as delineated in extant scholarly discourse, constitutes a culturally entrenched rite of passage for young males within certain communities, ostensibly preparing them for the responsibilities and roles attendant upon manhood. This preparation encompasses a rigorous initiation process, emphasizing the endurance of pain, the inculcation of independence, and the assumption of responsibility for oneself and others (Magodyo et al., 2017). These rites are posited to embody and transmit core values deemed essential for the transition to adult male status within these societies (Gogela, 2020; Magodyo et al., 2017; Siswana & Kiguwa, 2018). However, Siswana and Kiguwa (2018) critically examine *ulwaluko*, articulating concerns regarding its heteronormative underpinnings. They argue that such practices inherently marginalise and invalidate the lived experiences of self-identifying gay men within the *amaXhosa* community, thereby engendering a cultural milieu that is at odds with the principles of inclusivity and diversity.

The discourse surrounding human rights, according to Taruvinga and Mushayamunda (2018), suggests that while these rights are ostensibly universal, their interpretation and

implementation are invariably influenced by the prevailing social norms and values of a given society. This intersection of cultural tradition and human rights underscores the complex dynamics at play in the negotiation of cultural identity and individual rights within social constructs. In this context, the National Association of Social Workers (NASW, 1999) underscores the primacy of core values such as the importance of human relationships, service, social justice, respect for human dignity and worth, integrity, and competence within the field of social work. These values provide a foundational framework for social work practice, advocating for an approach that is both ethically grounded and socially responsive.

Given this framework, it is incumbent upon the social work profession to actively engage in the discourse surrounding *ulwaluko* and its implications for sexually diverse individuals. This engagement is imperative, not only in the interest of advocating for the rights and dignity of marginalized groups but also in fostering a more inclusive and equitable societal paradigm. Through such discourse, social work can contribute to the reevaluation and transformation of cultural practices that may be at odds with the principles of social justice and human rights, thereby aligning these practices more closely with contemporary values and societal norms.

Despite the substantial progress and momentum related to queer equality and basic human rights (Dentato et al., 2016) in South Africa and elsewhere, sexually diverse individuals are still subjected to exclusion and subjected to varied forms of human rights deficits and atrocities which include, *inter alia* harassment, stigma and stigmatisation (Kasa & Kangethe, 2022). This can be mainly attributed to the social work education curricula's exclusion of queer content, or that contains anti-queer biases, thus, social work graduates tend to fail to address heterosexism and monosexism (Byers et al., 2020; Dentato et al., 2016). Unequivocally, this lack of inclusion leaves the broader social work community impoverished in its understanding of the issues affecting the queer community, thereby limiting possibilities for social work practice with this population (Hillock & Mulé, 2017; Scherrer & Woodford, 2013). Hillock & Mule (2017) further argue that it is very apparent that little is known about what individual social work academics, students, and practitioners actually know about queer-based theories, communities, people, and issues, how they learn, articulate, and use knowledge about LGBTQIA+ community members and their issues, or how they choose to teach and practice in these areas.

The existing deficiencies within social work research, education, and practice, particularly in relation to the comprehension and acknowledgment of queer individuals, their communities, historical contexts, theoretical frameworks, and prevailing issues, are notably underscored in the scholarly literature (Bragg et al., 2018; Dentato et al., 2016; Hillock, 2016; Hillock & Mulé, 2017; Logan et al., 2017). These gaps manifest as a constrained knowledge base and understanding among social work educators, field instructors, and practitioners. Addressing these gaps necessitates a concerted scholarly effort, as highlighted in the current discourse. This endeavour seeks to bridge the identified lacunae through a meticulous examination of extant literature. Furthermore, it proposes the integration of Anti-Oppressive Social Work practices as a foundational theoretical framework to guide this critical work. This approach not only aims at

enriching the academic and practical dimensions of social work with queer populations but also at fostering a more inclusive and equitable social work practice.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Anti-Oppressive Social Work Practice

The discourse presented herein is firmly anchored within the intellectual framework of Anti-oppressive Practice (AOP), proffering a nuanced exploration of these paradigms in the context of social work. Anti-Oppressive Practice, as articulated by Burke & Harrison (1998) and further expounded upon by Dominelli (2017), is conceptualised as a dynamic and reflexive process, intricately woven into the fabric of socio-relational dynamics that are perpetually evolving. This approach is predicated on a critical evaluative stance that acknowledges and addresses the multifaceted social divisions, encompassing race, class, gender, disability, sexual orientation, and age as manifestations of broader systemic and structural inequities (Burke & Harrison, 1998). Dominelli (2017) emphatically underscores the imperative for social workers to actively contest and dismantle the pervasive negative stereotypes afflicting marginalised cohorts, including, *inter alia*, queer communities. Furthermore, Dominelli (2017) posits that the essence of social work is intrinsically linked to the pursuit of social justice and the fostering of human development within the context of a profoundly unequal global landscape, with a pronounced focus on ameliorating the plights of those rendered vulnerable by their situational contexts.

The goal of anti-oppressive practice is to transform social attitudes and values, as well as to influence social work practices (Collins & Wilkie, 2010). This practice is considered a haven for all oppressed groups and epitomises social justice-oriented social work values and practices (Collins & Wilkie, 2010). It provides a framework for understanding how differences can be used to oppress people (Danso, 2015).

Second, in the context of ongoing struggles against social inequalities caused by racism, sexism, colonialism, and similar power systems, intersectionality emerged as a theoretical framework that acknowledges the complexities of social identities (Collins & Bilge, 2020). It recognises that social identities are not mutually exclusive but intersect and interact, leading to unique experiences of oppression and privilege. Overall, anti-oppressive practice and intersectionality are crucial frameworks that guide social work practice and promote social justice in an unequal world.

METHODS

The study employed a Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) framework to meticulously gather and analyze the data obtained. This approach ensured a comprehensive and transparent methodology for data collection and analysis, adhering to established guidelines for conducting systematic reviews and meta-analyses (Moher, Liberati, Tetzlaff, & Altman, 2009) (see appendix).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

1. How society construes sex, gender, and sexuality

Arguably, the conceptualisation of sex, gender, and sexuality is subject to extensive scholarly debate and varies significantly across different academic disciplines. Muehlenhard and Peterson (2011) delineate a distinction between 'sex', which they argue is rooted in biological determinants, promoting a perspective that the divergences observed between males and females are innate and unchangeable, and 'gender', which they describe as the characteristics and behaviours that a given culture deems appropriate for individuals based on their biological sex. This distinction underscores the notion that while 'sex' may be grounded in biology, 'gender' is a construct that arises from cultural norms and expectations.

Expanding upon these notions, Bristow (2010) offers an in-depth analysis of 'sexuality', positing it as an intricate intersection of physical bodies and sexual desires, each exhibiting vast variability. Bristow (2010) further elucidates that 'sexuality' transcends mere corporeal and desire-based dimensions, extending into the realm of human eroticism's meanings. This complexity is further highlighted when 'sexuality' is prefixed with terms such as 'bi', 'hetero', or 'homo', which serve not only to categorise sexual orientations but also to define the identities of individuals characterised by these orientations (Bristow, 2010; Parker, 2009).

Moreover, Cook (2021) contributes to this discourse by emphasising the context-dependent nature of 'sexuality'. According to Cook (2021), the understanding and expression of 'sexuality' are profoundly influenced by the socio-cultural milieu, suggesting that 'sexuality' cannot be fully comprehended without considering its social and cultural dimensions. This assertion aligns with the broader academic consensus that 'sexuality' is not merely a personal attribute but a complex phenomenon that is socially and culturally constructed (Parker, 2009; Bristow, 2010; Cook, 2021). Thus, the academic exploration into the concepts of sex, gender, and sexuality reveals a multifaceted and nuanced field of study. The works of Muehlenhard and Peterson (2011), Bristow (2010), and Cook (2021) collectively underscore the importance of distinguishing between biological, cultural, and social determinants in understanding human sexuality and its various expressions.

There is a myriad use of the terms sex, gender, and sexuality. According to Muehlenhard and Peterson (2011), it is difficult to differentiate between these terms based on their use, making some scholars avoid the definition of these terms, their conceptualisation and usage thus, they prefer to define the related concepts such as sex differences, gender differences, sex roles, gender roles, gender identity, or sexual orientation. Various authors use the terms female and male as sex as they associate it with biological factors, while women and men refer to gender, which, according to them, is associated with social and cultural factors (Bristow, 2010; Cook, 2021; Klysing et al., 2021; Muehlenhard & Peterson, 2011; Weeks, 2016). Thus, for our societies, *sex* is biological, *gender* social and cultural, while *sexuality* is who you are attracted to and in line with culture and sex. Thus, according to Kasa and Kang'ethe (2023), *sexuality* is socially construed to demand conformity and adherence to heterosexual norms, as society

agrees that *sexuality* defines who we are as humans. *Sexuality*, argues (Weeks, 2016), is as much a product of the culture as it is of nature.

2. Sexuality and cultural complexities in traditional amaXhosa society

The fluidity and adaptability of sexual identity, characterised by its chameleon-like capacity to assume various appearances and manifestations, renders it a particularly delicate medium through which cultural influences and consequently, social divisions are conveyed. This phenomenon underscores the notion that sexuality, far from being merely a means of procreation, occupies a central role in the cultural and societal framework (Parker, 2009; Weeks, 2016). Stevens Jr. (2020) further elaborates on this concept, positing that sexuality is foundational to the structure of human society. However, a critical analysis by Muza and Naidoo (2023) identifies a significant shortfall in the current approaches to sexuality education programmes. These programmes, they argue, often fall short of their objectives due to a lack of consideration for the socio-cultural context, thereby underlining the imperative need for these educational initiatives to engage with broader social issues, including culture and gender inequality. Muza and Naidoo (2023) advocate for a comprehensive approach to sexuality education, one that not only encompasses society in its entirety but also addresses critical issues such as gender, human rights, and power dynamics. This approach should be tailored to fit within the nuances of local cultural settings, recognising that cultures are not static but rather dynamic entities, constantly evolving due to variances in individual personality, motives, attitudes, values, perceptions, and emotions. The consideration of cultural context thus becomes paramount in these educational endeavours (Bolin et al., 2021).

The conceptualisation of culture encompasses a multifaceted spectrum of shared realities among individuals, extending beyond mere ideas to encompass patterned behaviours within various societal constructs, including groups, communities, whether defined geographically or ideologically and regions. This definition posits culture as an amalgam of skills, attitudes, beliefs, values underpinning behaviour, and the behaviours themselves (Bolin et al., 2021). Conversely, Muza and Naidoo (2023) offer a broader perspective, arguing that culture embodies a conglomeration of material, intellectual, spiritual, and emotional aspects of a society or societal subgroup. This encompasses an array of elements such as values, beliefs, art, literature, traditions, and lifestyles, thereby presenting culture as a complex entity. Further elaborating on this complexity, Bhowmick (2021) asserts that culture constitutes the entirety of knowledge, beliefs, morals, laws, customs, and any additional capabilities and habits that individuals acquire as members of society. Collectively, these perspectives highlight the intricate and comprehensive nature of culture, underscoring its significance as a pivotal component of human social existence.

The discourse on development, democracy, nationhood, citizenship, violent crimes, and cultures in South Africa has been observed to predominantly reinforce heterosexual norms, as posited (Kasa & Kang'ethe, 2023; Sanger, 2010). Ngqangweni (2014) contends that the cultural practices of the *amaXhosa* people are inherently discriminatory, especially in their

interpretation of sexuality and gender. This is exemplified by the rituals of *ukuzila* (mourning), which necessitates that widows adhere to certain dress codes, and *ulwaluko*, which symbolises the essence of manhood and is often linked to masculinity and heteronormativity (Ngqangweni, 2014; Ntozini & Ngqangweni, 2016; Siswana & Kiguwa, 2018). Siswana and Kiguwa (2018) argue that certain constructs of black masculinity become unattainable when juxtaposed with sexuality and culture. Cultural practices often reinforce gender binaries, including hegemonic constructs of masculinity that reinforce male sexual prowess and domination over alternative genders and subordinate masculinities (Siswana & Kiguwa, 2018).

3. Implications for Social work

The foundational ethos of the social work discipline unmistakably lies in its unwavering commitment to fostering social justice for, and in collaboration with, populations subjected to oppression and marginalization. This assertion is robustly supported by the scholarly contributions of Bragg et al. (2018) and further expanded upon in the works of Kasa (2024), alongside Kasa and Saunders (2022), who collectively underscore the profession's dedication towards these ideals. In alignment with the framework delineated by Bragg et al. (2018), it is imperative to acknowledge the core values that underpin this profession, notably the provision of services, the upholding of dignity for all individuals, the paramount importance of human relationships, and the adherence to professional integrity. These values serve not merely as ethical guidelines but as beacons that light the way towards achieving social justice in an increasingly multifaceted and dynamic societal landscape. The role of social workers as advocates for marginalised communities is critical, as they champion the cause of social justice and self-determination for these groups, a sentiment echoed by Bennett & Gates (2021). Through their dedicated efforts, social workers embody the principles of equity and inclusion, striving to enact meaningful change in the lives of those they serve.

Cultural competence, cultural safety, cultural awareness, and cultural responsiveness are all terms that have been used to describe the attributes, skills, and knowledge required to engage and work with indigenous peoples, according to Bennett and Gates (2021). Arguello (2022) opines that social work programmes are often remiss in properly addressing the social inequalities of queer individuals. The social work practice readily falters in centring sexualities and genders when conducting assessments and interventions. This is despite the declaration and commitment for social workers to promote social justice and to end oppression and discrimination (Atteberry-Ash et al., 2019).

Van Den Bergh and Crisp (2004) state that social work paradigms that aim to address diversity have mainly focused on ethnic and racial groups, despite the growing use of cultural competence, which has played a vital role in establishing a more comprehensive definition of diverse groups. Lum (1999), the founder of cultural competence in social work practice, describes it as an ability to understand culture and cultural practices within the context of a client's situation, which is aligned with social work generalist and ecological perspectives.

In the realm of social work, it is universally acknowledged that practitioners who exhibit cultural competence are more adept at achieving outcomes that are aligned with the principles of social justice. This assertion underscores the imperative for social work educators to rigorously prepare future professionals in the art of cultural competence, thereby enabling them to engage effectively with diversity and difference in their practice. This perspective is supported by Jani et al. (2016), who emphasize the educators' role in fostering these essential skills. Furthermore, Ross (2007) articulates a specific mandate for South African social workers, considering the nation's rich tapestry of ethnic and religious diversities. He contends that it is critical for these professionals to deliver services that are not only culturally sensitive but also appropriately tailored to meet the needs of all societal groups. This approach necessitates a profound respect for the cultural beliefs of diverse groups, while simultaneously safeguarding the rights of individuals, including those of queer individuals navigating the complexities of *ulwaluko*. Such a balanced approach is vital for ensuring that social work practice is both ethically grounded and socially just (Ross, 2007).

However, according to Mkhize and Maharaj (2021), queer youth are often subjected to stigmatisation, marginalisation, and societal rejection. Additionally, Kasa and Kangethe (2022) argue that culture reinforces gender roles and contributes to homophobia, as anything that deviates from socio-cultural-gender norms is deemed un-African and a threat to traditional ethos. *Ulwaluko* disregards and takes for granted the sexual orientations of initiations (Kasa & Kangethe, 2022). However, in general, the experiences of queer individuals and social work roles in *ulwaluko* are not well documented, thus, to conceptually grasp the experiences of queer individuals and social work roles, it becomes imperative to consider writings outside the realms of experimental research and conventional scholarship. According to Majied and Moss-Knight (2012), this includes examining personal narratives and testimonials that reflect the perspectives of the communities being studied. Thus, this makes it difficult for social workers to be better positioned to grasp queer issues in the field of *ulwaluko*.

In defining knowledge, Ngenda (2016) notes that it refers to facts, feelings or experiences known by a person or group of people; awareness, consciousness, or familiarity gained by experience or learning; specific information about a subject. It can be gained through experience, the media, and interaction with others, such as friends, colleagues, health workers and parents (Ngenda, 2016). Williams (2019) states that *ulwaluko* is patriarchal, and masculinity is its key element. *Ulwaluko* is performed between the ages of 15 and 16, and during the process, the initiates go through a process of seclusion, during which he is looked after by an experienced male elder (Gogela, 2020; Mashabane & Henderson, 2020; Ntozini & Ngqangweni, 2016). Thus, there is a dearth of literature for social workers in dealing with queer issues during *ulwaluko*.

CONCLUSION

South Africa has a dearth of literature regarding cultural competence, with little evidence on how best to train students in the professional fields to provide culturally competent care (Matthews & Van Wyk, 2018). Social Work itself is from a Western paradigm; thus, Chipps et al. (2008) cited by Matthews and Van Wyk (2018), question the relevance of the international literature in using the South African context. To this end, cultural competence describes the ability and capacity to function effectively within the context of culturally integrated and diverse patterns of human behaviour. In Social work practice, cultural competence implies a heightened consciousness of how clients experience their uniqueness and deal with their differences and similarities within a larger social context. Laws that address the legacies of discrimination and promote social justice, equality, and human rights for all have been enacted in South Africa. This has been done to promote diversity and inclusion in all spheres of society.

As a cornerstone of the legal framework, the country's Constitution guarantees fundamental human rights and protections from all forms of discrimination based on gender, age, and sexual orientation, amongst other grounds. The limited literature on cultural competence in South Africa, as such, questions the role of institutions of higher learning in producing social workers who are culturally incompetent to deal with the diverse populations and clientele that they serve. According to Kasa and Kang'ethe (2023), South Africa is still a hub of homophobia. It is a homophobic and heterosexist society where various cultures pathologise homosexuality and where cultural discourses such as the notion that heterosexuality is the only recognised way of life as it is deemed 'unAfrican' (Ntozini & Ngqangweni, 2016). Cultural competence is about attaining knowledge, skills and attitudes that enables practitioners within the field to provide effective service to diverse populations within the persons' values and reality (Simmons et al., 2008), as recognised by the country's constitution, thus it is necessary for social workers to possess this competence.

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APPENDIX

Section/topic	#	Checklist item	Reported on page #
TITLE		Page 1	
Title	1	Identify the report as a systematic review: Sexual orientation hiccups surrounding traditional male circumcision (ulwaluko) in the South African context: Implications for social work	1
ABSTRACT		Page 1	
Structured summary	2	Incontrovertibly, ulwaluko (traditional male circumcision) remains one of the essential rituals in developing an individual's growth and construction of social identity, yet one of the ancient and patriarchal cultures. While some studies have been done on the experiences of homophobia by the LGBTQIA undergoing ulwaluko, there is a dearth of research on how social work professionals can intervene in curbing the homophobic and patriarchal undertones surrounding the traditions. Underpinned by Anti-Oppressive Practice as a theory, this paper argues that ulwaluko becomes problematic because it promotes heterosexualist practices which negate realities and experiences of self-identifying amaXhosa gay men. Through reviewing available literature, this paper argues that although human rights are universal, constructionists believe that social norms and values have an impact on how those rights are implemented, the paper further defined sexuality within the context of amaXhosa and also argues that social workers are not well trained with cultural competency.	1
INTRODUCTION			
Rationale	3	Despite the acknowledged importance of sexuality within the human experience, Mintoff (2021) critiques the field of social work for its relative inactivity in addressing issues of human sexuality beyond specialised contexts such as HIV/AIDS prevention, youth services, and eldercare. This critique suggests a broader societal tendency to regulate sexuality through deeply entrenched norms of social control, thereby reflecting on the need for a more proactive and comprehensive approach within social work practices to confront and navigate the complexities of human sexuality (Mintoff, 2021). Through the synthesis of these scholarly perspectives, it becomes evident that the intersection of culture, sexuality, and societal norms demands a more engaged and critically reflective approach within both academic research and practical application, particularly within the domain of social work.	

Objectives	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ To bridge the identified lacunae through meticulous examination of literature. ➤ To Propose the integration of Anti-Oppressive Social Work Practice as a tool for solving sexual orientation hiccups surrounding ulwaluko. ➤ To enrich the academic and practical dimensions of social work with queer individuals and foster more inclusive and equitable practice 	Page 6
METHODS		Page 5-8	
Protocol and registration	5	SEALS and OPAC	-
Eligibility criteria	6	Articles and books on ulwaluko, sex, sexuality, culture, queer, gender issues published between the year 1998 to 2024	-
Information sources	7	Google Scholar, ResearchGate, Elsevier, and OpenED with searches between the years 1998-2024. The keywords used in searching are the same as the ones used in the eligibility criteria	-
Search	8	The electronic strategy that was used in the study was the use of available information on the said sources of information to extract data such as articles and books. This was done through selecting relevant data that is required for the article.	-
Study selection	9	The sources of evidence were checked based on the requirements of this systematic review article, in that the evidence that was extracted during the selection process is the one that was analysed and discussed by the article.	-
Data collection process	10	N/A	-
Data items	11	Articles and books on ulwaluko, sex, sexuality, culture, queer, gender issues published between the year 1998 to 2024 as seen	6, 7
Risk of bias in individual studies	12	N/A	-
Summary measures	13	N/A	-
Synthesis of results	14	N/A	-

Section/topic	#	Checklist item	Reported on page #
Risk of bias across studies	15	N/A	-

Additional analyses	16	N/A	-
RESULTS			
Study selection	17	48 studies that were screened, assessed for eligibility, and included in the review. All the studies that were excluded did not have the information that was required for the analysis.	-
+Study characteristics	18	N.A	-
Risk of bias within studies	19	N/A	-
Results of individual studies	20	N/A	-
Synthesis of results	21	N/A	-
Risk of bias across studies	22	N/A	-
Additional analysis	23	N/A	-
DISCUSSION			
Summary of evidence	24	Queer individuals undergoing ulwaluko are discriminated against. There is an ample misinterpretation and misunderstanding of sex, gender, and sexuality.	-
Limitations	25	N/A	-
Conclusions	26	Social Workers are excluded in the ulwaluko with a limited studies that have been done on this. For future research, there should be studies that assess a need for social work inclusion.	-
FUNDING			
Funding	27	N/A	-

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