

# Knowledge, attitudes, and practices of Swazi youth regarding the Custom of *Umcwasho*

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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study was to describe the knowledge, attitude and practices of Swazi youth regarding the Swazi custom of *umcwasho*. The study was descriptive and used both qualitative and quantitative research techniques. The target population was school going youth aged between 11 and 24 years which are the most affected and fully understand the whole concept of *umcwasho*. Forty-three schools were sampled. Using a purposive sampling and familiarity in all the four administrative regions of the country with urban peri-urban and rural areas representation. In each school, 40 pupils were randomly selected to participate in the study. Twenty were selected written questionnaire and another 20, for focus group discussions and were divided two groups: one for boys and the other for girls. The statistical package used for data analysis was SPSS

The findings revealed that the respondents were aware about the rites and the objectives of *umcwasho*, and that is of preserving girl's virginity, and to curb the spread of HIV in the country. However, respondents were not happy about the way the rite was reintroduced. The maidens and the general public were not well educated about the rites and this created a huge gap when it was first introduced and when it was practiced. Respondents felt that there had been considerable change since it was introduced and the rules governing the rites need to be revisited in light of changing environmental circumstances.

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