

P4.4. Readiness for HIV Testing among In-School Youth: The Role of Socio-Demographic and Behavioral Factors, Case Study of Secondary School Students in Mwanza City - M.F. Herman, Pathfinder International, Tanzania; **A.D. Kiwara,** Muhimbili University of Health Allied Sciences
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Background/Significance: It is estimated that in 2005, there were close to five million new Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) infections worldwide, 3 200 000 (64%) of these were in sub-Saharan Africa alone. Half of all new HIV infections worldwide are occurring in the 15-24 aged groups. Prevalence of HIV is higher among Tanzanian youth. In 2000, for example, the youth made up 30% of the total population and accounted for 60% of the new HIV infections. In 2004 overall prevalence of HIV for the youth 15-24 years was 4%. HIV/AIDS counseling and testing has been proven to be an important measure to address the epidemic. The provision of HIV and AIDS- related counseling services in Tanzania started in 1988. Since then, VCT services have been expanded gradually. Currently, there are over 521 VCT sites, most of the VCT sites provide free service to the youth. By the year 2004, only 14.5% of young women and 9.8 percent of young men aged between 14-24years reported to have ever undertaken an HIV test in the country.

Main Question/Hypothesis: The high rate of HIV infection among youth calls for the establishment of programs to prevent infection and mitigate the effects of HIV in this age group. There is therefore, increasing interest in extending these services to young people even though the youth's readiness for HIV testing in Sub-Saharan Africa in general and Tanzania in particular is relatively low. The reasons why most youth are not ready for HIV test are still not well understood. Little is known on how socio-demographic and behavioral factors might affect readiness of young people to test for HIV.

Methodology: A cross-sectional study was conducted between May to July 2006 in six day secondary schools in Mwanza city of Tanzania to determine the socio-demographic and behavioral factors affecting in-school youth's readiness for HIV testing. The study involved 299 secondary school students (from one to form six) aged between 14- 24 years, these were selected randomly from a list of 3510 students. Mwanza region is one of the regions with higher HIV prevalence among people aged between 15-49 years than the national average. The city has many VCT centers and high number of co-education secondary schools scattered in all parts. Data collection was done using self administered questionnaires. Unit of study and analysis were individuals and their responses on the given questions. Computer [Epi info version 3.3.2] was used for data entering and data analyses.

Findings: The results show that 19.4% surveyed youth reported having tested for HIV, whereas 68.5% indicated they would like to be tested in the future. HIV testing among schooling youth is significantly associated with age, having sexual partner, being sexually active (having sex) and talking with parents about VCT. Out of 129 youths who have had a sexual partner 28.7 % of them were tested for HIV, the study revealed that in-school youth who have sexual partner(s) were more likely to test for HIV compared to those with no sexual partner (p-value= 0.0004). Out of 99 youths who ever had sex 33.3 % of them were tested. Out of 200 youths who never had sex 12.5 % of them were tested, the study revealed that youth who had sex were more likely to test compared to those who never had sex (pvalue= 0.00002)

Knowledge Contribution: At this moment whereby many governments has scaled-up VCT and ARVs services, the study provide useful findings needed for understanding the possible socio-demographic and behavioral factors affecting VCT up- take among youth for the future goal of improving VCT program. The presentation therefore, focusing on bridging the existing knowledge gap and contributing to VCT related program improvement.